

27/09/97

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BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON

TUE 03 AUG 97 17:19
CONFIDENTIALBritish Embassy
Washington

26 September 1997

Sir J Coles KCMG
PUS
FCO3100 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008-3600Telephone: (202) 588-6512
Facsimile: (202) 588-7870

From the Ambassador

*Free
29/9*

Sandy

SANDY BERGER

1. Sandy Berger and I had a farewell talk tonight. Much of it, about Northern Ireland, can be recorded very briefly, because his principal concern was to convey congratulations on the Prime Minister's and Mo Mowlam's 24 September success in the Belfast talks. I urged him to see David Trimble when Trimble comes here in 10 days time: he agreed to do so.
2. On Bosnia, I have sent a telegram describing his unease about the current US domestic debate on post-SFOR.
3. On NATO enlargement, we agreed that the real ratification debate here would actually be about Bosnia, and burdensharing. He agreed that the Administration should produce no more unilateral estimates of the costs of enlargement; and that the NATO machine couldn't be expected to produce real numbers before December. He liked our idea that, for Congressional purposes, cost numbers should be accompanied by data on ongoing European force modernisation programmes, and that the Administration should be talking up European efforts in Washington, even if they were banging the table in Brussels for greater effort. (Speaking with two voices, in this way, is something the Pentagon don't find easy.)
4. On Iran, I recalled our many conversations about Al-Khobar, and expressed the personal view that the passage of time would make it more difficult for America's Allies to support any retributive action against Iran. Berger, like Talbott on 25 September, said that the contingency seemed less likely to arise. But the US would still face a serious dilemma if they were to find conclusive proof that the most senior levels of the Iranian hierarchy had ordered the bombing. The issue would then be deterrence: if Tehran knew that Washington knew, and Tehran saw Washington do nothing, wouldn't there be a greater risk of further such bombings in future? Berger emphasised that he was speaking only hypothetically; and he renewed his long-standing commitment to consult us early on if hypothesis looked like turning into actuality.

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5. Berger said that he hoped to see me when the Prime Minister came to Washington early into the New Year. We noted that, among the options which suited No 10, the White House now seemed likely to pick the first week of February for the visit: a decision is likely next week, when the date of the State of the Union speech will be settled (probably for 27 or 28 January).

I leave this weekend: Stephen Wright is fully up-to-speed.

Yours ever,
John
John Kerr

cc: PS/Secretary of State
Mr Greenstock, FCO
Mr Holmes, No 10
Sir John Goulden KCMG, UKDel NATO
Minister
Mr Sawers
Mr Gray
Mr Cary

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