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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON
17-18 DECEMBER 1979

STEERING BRIEF

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Introduction

1 President Carter is preoccupied with three things: the Iran crisis, ratification of SALT II and his own standing in the US. His chances of securing both the Democratic nomination and eventual re-election have recently improved, largely because of his handling of the Iran affair. In addition the media and thus the public have taken a closer look at Senator Kennedy and have not liked what they have seen.

British Objectives

- 2 Our objectives for the visit as a whole are:
- (a) to underline the importance we attach to our relationship with the United States (which is wholly consistent with the new Government's greater commitment to Europe) and the value we attach to keeping in close contact with our most powerful ally;
 - (b) to ensure that we are consulted on US handling of the Iran crisis, particularly in advance of any American action which could affect British and Western interests;
 - (c) to ensure that the United States continues to adopt a helpful attitude towards our policies on Southern Africa,

/particularly

particularly Rhodesia;

(d) to discuss with President Carter world economic issues, including energy;

(e) to ensure that the US Administration at a high level is in no doubt about the realities of the Northern Ireland situation and about the Government's approach to it. Also, if still necessary, to apply pressure on the Americans over arms for the RUC;

(f) to discuss defence and arms control matters, including prospects for ratification of SALT II, for a SALT III Agreement and the TNF modernisation programme;

(g) if necessary to reassure the President that our resolute attitude towards Britain's budgetary contribution to the EEC need not have repercussions on the Community's cohesion or commitment to our common objectives.

(h) to demonstrate to the American public that Britain is under new management and following new policies but that the close relationship between Britain and the United States continues;

(i) to continue the working relationship between the Prime Minister and the President.

Probable US Objectives

3 President Carter will see the visit as an opportunity to show himself to his electorate as a President who is not a lame duck but in command of affairs and enjoying the confidence of one of America's principal allies; and to the Prime Minister as a President fully supported by his people. During the talks with the Prime Minister he will wish:-

(a) to secure continuing British support over Iran without restricting US freedom of action;

(b) to maintain British support for the ratification of SALT II.

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He will probably ask the Prime Minister to take a helpful line with the members of Congress she meets. He may also wish to discuss arms control and defence matters, including TNF modernisation;

(c) to discuss world wide economic and energy issues and the economic outlook in the United States and the United Kingdom against the background of United States preoccupations with inflation and dependence on imported oil;

(d) to be assured of the Government's determination not to allow our current arguments in the EEC to weaken the latter's cohesion as an effective partner in the Western democratic system;

(e) to learn how Her Majesty's Government see the way ahead on Rhodesia and Southern Africa;

(f) to secure continuing British support over Camp David and to exchange views in general over the Middle East;

(g) to seek a more active British role in the Caribbean area;

(h) to continue the working relationship with the Prime Minister.

Strategy and Tactics

4 The talks with President Carter are scheduled to last only $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours. There will be no other suitable opportunities for making our main points to him. The four most important for us are:-

(a) certain defence matters (see separate briefing);

(b) the US handling of the Iran crisis: and in particular that eventual US action against Iran should be such as to avoid damage to all our interests;

(c) to keep the record straight on Northern Ireland and press

the President on the question of arms for the RUC (if still unsettled); and

(d) to ensure continued US support for our Rhodesia policy.

5 President Carter may be interested in the outcome of the Dublin European Council and concerned that wrangling in the Community over the budget problem could impair European unity and reduce the ability of the Member States to respond effectively on a joint basis to current international problems. The Prime Minister could point out the seriousness of the budget problem and the necessity of solving it if the Community is to make progress towards its major goals. The UK will remain firm on the substance of the problem; and a period of difficulty may be unavoidable if at the next meeting of the European Council there is a lack of political will to provide an equitable settlement. But it will be the British objective to confine the argument to the Community itself and to avoid repercussions on defence and on international cooperation; and we would expect our partners to share that approach.

6 The rest of the time with the President could be used for (in some cases further) discussion of broad defence and arms control issues, plus international economic, monetary and energy questions. Detailed defence and arms control matters could be left over for the session in the afternoon with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Calls on the UN Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly

7 These are essentially courtesy calls and we have no pressing objectives. For suggested topics, please see Resumé of Briefs, paragraph 21.

