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Prime Minister

PM/90/097

PRIME MINISTER

Consider for us  
to withdraw the  
Embassy within the  
week?

007/11/Kii

British Embassy in Kuwait

1. Now that there is a good prospect of the British community leaving Kuwait before the end of this week, we need to consider whether to retain the British Embassy there.

2. Mr Weston (Ambassador) and Mr Banks (Consul) have been on their own in the Embassy in Kuwait since 8 October. They have been performing two main functions:

- providing a lifeline for the remaining British community, who until recently numbered around 400 and have been in hiding;
- showing the Iraqis that we reject their occupation and annexation of Kuwait, and their decision to close down foreign Embassies.

With the departure of British nationals, the first of these functions will fall away. The second remains valid, and Mr Weston has recently confirmed that he attaches sufficient importance to this political objective to be willing to stay on in Kuwait, if necessary after 15 January, the deadline set by SCR 678. Mr Weston and Mr Banks have provisions to last at least until the end of January.

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3. I believe, however, that the time has come to withdraw Mr Weston and Mr Banks. They have shown enormous courage and resilience under siege. But the Embassy is vulnerably sited on the sea front and has no hardened shelter. They would be in serious danger in the event of hostilities. We should therefore withdraw them while we can in the overriding interest of their safety. Mr Weston has already made a powerful political statement by holding out until now. He will be the last Ambassador to leave Kuwait.

4. The American Ambassador and his staff are being withdrawn on 11 December.

5. Subject to discussion in OPD(G) on 12 December, I would propose to make an announcement later that day that we intend to withdraw Mr Weston and Mr Banks. We need not specify a date at this stage, but I have in mind that they should leave by 18 December at the latest. We would make clear that, while the staff are being withdrawn, the Embassy remains formally open. An early announcement might usefully have the effect of persuading some of the community who are remaining in Kuwait not to hang on indefinitely.

6. I am copying this minute to OPD(G) colleagues and to Sir Robin Butler.

DH

(DOUGLAS HURD)