



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

6 June 1980

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As
Pmt
Dear John,
The Kharg

Prime Minister
To be aware of the exchange of
letters
Pmt

1. Thank you for your letter of 29 May about the use, if necessary, of military force to prevent the Kharg from sailing.
2. Lord Carrington agrees that, if at all possible, measures should be taken which will make it impossible for the Kharg to put to sea, rather than having to resort to military force. It also remains true that at present the crew are showing no signs of wishing to try sailing the ship away, no doubt realising that this would almost certainly be beyond their capacity. However, the possibility, though remote, remains that an instruction might be sent from Tehran for the ship to set to sea, and in those circumstances we would need to do whatever is necessary to prevent this happening. If the Iranians were to get away with it, this would cause us the acutest embarrassment with the Americans, and public ridicule.
3. The suggestion that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has delegated to officials authority to use the Royal Marines is incorrect. Several weeks ago when FCO Ministers were consulted about the possible use of the Marines, they authorised FCO officials to state on their behalf that Marines should be used if absolutely necessary, if for any reason an FCO Minister could not be contacted promptly enough, eg over a weekend, in time to prevent the Kharg sailing.
4. It remains Lord Carrington's view that the Marines should if necessary be used to prevent this. Equally, he agrees that the appropriate Ministerial discussions should take place, if there is time. It is, of course, understood that the Home Secretary would be in the lead on this.
5. I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours
G.G.H.

J A Chilcot Esq
PS/Home Secretary
Home Office

(G G H Walden)
Private Secretary

16 JUN 1960

