

**National Archives**

**Iraq's war against the Kurds, 1963**

**FO 371/170479**

**EQ 1192/21**

**Foreign Office to Embassy Amman, 10 April 1963**

*Iraq is interested in "buying 250 Saracens (armoured personnel carriers) from the United Kingdom possibly for use if needed against the Kurds; buying from the United Kingdom eight Hunter fighter aircraft and possibly a further fourteen; the early provision of rockets for Iraq's existing Hunters, again possibly for use against the Kurds; the provision of extensive training facilities, for Air Force officers, including many to be withdrawn from Russia, and for army officers. We hope to be able to help over courses (we did so for Qasim prior to the dispute over Kuwait). We must satisfy ourselves that the supply of equipment will not seriously increase the potential military threat to Kuwait...On the other hand, although we wish as far as possible to avoid involvement in internal matters such as difficulties with the Kurds, there are strong arguments in favour of meeting these requests. There are recent indications that the Iraqi armed forces want to lessen their dependence on the Russians. We attach great importance to helping them to do this and there would also be a considerable commercial advantage...On balance, we are inclined to meet the Iraqi request but a final decision on this may take a little time". The UK has "long supplied Iraq with arms and ammunition".*

**Embassy Ankara to Foreign Office, 11 April 1963**

*Reply to above. Turkish reaction to supply of arms to Iraq would "probably not (repeat not) be unfavourable... The possible use of equipment against the Kurds would be unlikely to disturb the Turks".*

**EQ 1192/25**

**Ministerial Committee on Strategic Exports, Brief for a meeting on 8 April 1963**

*The arms deal is worth £6 million. No mention of impact on Kurds but simply on Kuwait.*

*As well as reducing dependence on the Soviet Union, "there are considerable commercial advantages to be gained...the scope for military exports is considerable... the risks are probably outweighed by the benefits".*

*Ministers decided on 11 April to approve these arms exports to Iraq. Saracens are manufactured by Alvis. Another file notes that this arms deal represented a relaxation of the present restriction on the supply of "dangerous" weapons to Iraq.*

#### **EQ 1018/10**

#### **D.Goodchild, Foreign Office, to H.Maynard, Embassy Baghdad, 17 May 1963**

"In your letter ... of April 23 you were good enough to warn me about the activities of Lord Russell and his minions, which were unlikely to do so much to improve Anglo-Iraqi relations. May I by the same token give you advance warning of another possible source of irritation? A group, consisting predominantly of Labour MPs, has just been formed here under the name of the British Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Iraq. Its declared aim is to follow up reports of repression by the new regime and to put pressure on it to forebear [sic] if the reports prove true. It intends to set about raising money for a fact-finding mission to go to Iraq and investigate reports reaching it from Iraqi students of large scale imprisonments and killings". *Notes that "we shall do our best to keep track of it" [ie, the new group].*

#### **FO 371/170478**

#### **EQ 1192/16**

#### **R.Allen, Baghdad embassy, to Foreign Office, 2 April 1963**

*The Military Attache was asked yesterday by Iraq if the UK would supply 250 Saracens. "It seems... that the latter [ie, Saracens] are intended for use in Kurdistan where they would be invaluable on road-opening operations... The anti-Communist bias of the regime and in particular of the armed forces seems now to be firmly established". The Iraqi regime is interested in switching from Soviet to Western weapons. Minute recommends that Britain should supply.*

## **FO 371/170480**

**EQ 1192/41**

### **P.Cradock, Cabinet briefing, 'Arms for Iraq', 24 April 1963**

*The Cabinet agreed on 11 April to supply Iraq with Saracens (armoured personnel carriers), medium artillery ammunition, Hunter aircraft rockets and training but in view of announcement of Egypt, Syria and Iraq to establish a federal state, to defer action to give effect to the decision until the situation can be assessed. The establishment of the UAR does not provide adequate grounds to refuse the Iraqi requests. On May 2 the government decided to supply the 250 Saracens and the other equipment.*

**EQ 1192/52**

### **G.Hiller, FO, 'Arms for Iraq', Minute, 29 May 1963**

"We may want to go slow on the supply of rockets since these are primarily required against the Kurds. We must give the Iraqis some of their requirements in order to enable them to hold their own vis-à-vis the Kurds, but it may be inadvisable to give them too generous supplies, since this might only encourage them to be more intransigent [*sic*] with the Kurds and, if fighting breaks out and there are indiscriminate rocket attacks, there might be parliamentary and public criticism."

### **Philip de Zulueta, PM's office, to J.Thomas, Foreign Office, 23 May 1963**

*On arms sales to Iraq:* "The prime minister expressed the hope that this matter was being pushed forward energetically."

### **J.Thomas to P.de Zulueta, 30 May 63**

"All the requests for arms originating from Qasim's day have now been cleared and delivery is going ahead". *The aim is for Hawkers to have delivered eight Hunters in eight months.* "The Iraqis have decided to take up the option to purchase a further 16 Hunters. The War Office are ready to supply the 250 Saracens, although the order cannot be completed in less than 15 to 18 months". *Ammunition is also being provided.* "We may be able to let the Iraqis have at once about 2,000 of the 20,000 rockets for Hunters which they have asked for, the rest to follow within 18 months. The Iraqis are also interested in helicopters, transport aircraft, Vampire trainers and light bombers". *Notes that "only the light bombers will be really difficult" since UK readiness to supply these would also provoke demand from Jordan and Israel. Also agreed to train 50 Iraqi pilots in the UK.*

**EQ 1192/57**

*On 10 June 10 the Iraqi government resumed its war against the Kurds.*

**FO brief, "Iraq: Possible suspension of Soviet arms supplies", 25 June 1963**

"We are ready to do our best to meet Iraqi requirements in the field of arms and training, though the complication of the Iraqi Kurdish war may make a delay in supplying certain items, eg rockets, advisable... The Iraqis are now pressing for rockets for use against the Kurds. We have to take account of the likely Kurdish and United Kingdom public reaction to the supply of items so directly relevant to the fighting and may eventually agree to a phased supply of small quantities". *The UK has so far agreed to supply: 250 Saracens, 22 Hawker Hunter fighters, 2 Hunter trainers, and ammunition.*

**FO 371/170489**

**EQ1224/4**

**Foreign Office to Tehran, 22 April 1963**

*Foreign Office recommends supplying Iraq with six Hunter aircraft. "It may also strengthen the ability of the Iraqis to be masters in their own house (the Iraqi air force played an important part in overthrowing Qasim and achieving control of Baghdad)".*

**EQ1224/8**

**G.Hiller, Foreign Office brief, "Arms for Iraq", 7 June 1963**

*The Iraqi government wants to order a further 16 Hunters in addition to the already agreed eight. "The Prime Minister is anxious that in general Iraq's arms requirements should be met as quickly as possible... We shall also have to bear in mind the course of the dispute between the Iraqi government and the Kurds...a resumption of fighting seems likely. The Iraqis are intensifying their military build-up in the North. We must give the Iraqis enough to enable them to hold their own with the Kurds, since an Iraqi collapse would seriously affect our own interests in the area. But equally by being over-generous we risk encouraging the Government to be intransigent [sic] with the Kurds and to seek a solution by force of arms. Most of the items we have agreed to supply so far do not seem to be of special relevance to the Kurdish war, but one order, rockets for Hunters, is urgently required by the Iraqis for just this purpose and we have already agreed in principle to supply. There has been some press criticism...of our decision to supply arms which the Iraqis are likely to use against the Kurds and if fighting breaks out and the Iraqis make indiscriminate rocket attacks against Kurdish positions and villages there could be more widespread parliamentary and public*

criticism." *UK could supply 2,000 of the 20,000 rockets wanted but need to consult Roger Allen and "suggest to him that even 2,000 might be too many to provide straight away".*

**EQ 1224/11**

**R.Allen to Foreign Office, 11 June 1963**

*Now that "hostilities" have started in the North "it seems to me more important than ever that we should, so far as possible, refrain from appearing to take sides as between the Iraq government and the Kurds. Provision of fuses or rockets at this juncture would surely look like intervention by us, especially after our insistence that there would be a long delay...the Kurds would certainly consider provision in the near future to be an unfriendly act." He recommends to go on stalling.*

**EQ 1224/13**

**Foreign Office to Baghdad, 11 June 1963**

*"We have no objection in principle to the supply of the 16 further Hunters and 3 Vampire trainers for which the Iraqis are currently negotiating with Hawkers... A decision on the supply of helicopters...there seems no objection to supply at the moment" Notes the need to bear in mind fighting in the North: "This applies in particular to rockets for Hunters (which we have informed the Iraqis we are ready in principle to supply) since these are clearly designed for use against the Kurds. We are probably now in a position to supply 2,000 rockets at once from stock, with the balance to be manufactured over the next 18 months. We must give the Iraqis some of their rocket requirements but there has already been a little criticism in the press of our decision to supply arms in the current situation, and it might be awkward if the Iraqis resorted to early and indiscriminate rocket attacks with our supplies. We are therefore inclined to think that it would be best to go fairly slowly on this item (eg, a first instalment of 500 rockets)".*

**EQ 1224/14**

**R.Allen to Foreign Office, 12 June 1963**

*"I still think therefore that we should refrain from supplying rockets or fuses at present" since it looks like UK is siding with Iraq against the Kurds. But he has no problem about supply of Hunters.*

**EQ1224/16**

**R.Allen to Foreign Office, 18 June 1963**

*Allen has spoken to the Commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Brigadier Hilmi, who said "the IAF needed these weapons [rockets and fuses] now in order to bring their war against the insurgents to a quick and successful conclusion. British training and aircraft were useless to the IAF without British weapons' backing". Hilmi wants Allen to press for the early release of these fuses.*

**EQ 1224/17**

**R.Allen to FO, 18 June 1963**

*It would be wrong to supply rockets even if would mean a cooling off in relations with the Iraqi government. He urged the government three times to negotiate a peaceful solution with the Kurds. "If they have chosen to go to war inadequately equipped, that is their fault".*

**FO 371/170436**

**EQ 1015/170**

**Washington embassy to Foreign Office, 2 May 1963**

*According to the US the Iraqi govt has no real intention of negotiating with the Kurds and were thinking of further military operations against them. "This would be a most unfortunate development. There was no particular reason to believe the Iraqi army would now be any more capable of dealing with the Kurds than it had been under Qasim. If military operations were undertaken and were unsuccessful, the present Iraq government might collapse and any successor government such as a military dictatorship, would probably be more difficult for us to deal with". The US therefore wants the Iraqis to negotiate with the Kurds.*

*File in May notes UK concerns that renewed fighting in Kurdish region could damage oil installations and interrupt the flow of oil, and also the fear of Soviet intervention. UK advising both sides to negotiate. Disputes between Kurds and Iraq partly over degree of Kurdish autonomy.*

**FO 371/170438**

**EQ 1015/205**

**Baghdad embassy to Foreign Office, 21 June 1963**

“The army are now apparently engaged in the clearing out and destruction of Kurdish villages in the Kirkuk neighbourhood”.

**EQ 1015/206**

**Washington embassy to Foreign Office, 12 June 1963**

“Iraqi intention to carry out terror campaign, drive back defendants and increase feeding problems [*sic*]”.

**EQ 1015/212**

**Brief for Cabinet, “Resumption of the Kurdish war in Iraq”, 11 June 1963**

*UK has 350 expats in the Kurdish region, British employees of IPC.* “The news of the fighting may provoke public criticism of our decision to supply Iraq with arms. It is also relevant that the Commander of the Iraqi Air Force, General Tikriti, proposes to visit London from June 17-19 on his way to America. We will, if necessary, have to explain that we are long standing suppliers of Iraq; also that deliveries in many cases will not take place for some months and our military assistance will therefore not have much bearing on the immediate fighting. There is, however, one sensitive item, rockets for Hunters, which are intended for use against the Kurds. In this case we are suggesting to HM Ambassador that we should delay deliveries”.

**EQ 1015/217**

**Foreign Office to various embassies, 14 June 1963**

“The Iraq [*sic*] government is now clearly making an all-out effort to settle the Kurdish problem once and for all”. *It has assembled two thirds of the Iraq army in the North.* “The situation contains a number of dangers. Unsuccessful hostilities could jeopardise the present Iraqi regime. Fighting will increase Russian opportunities for trouble-making in Kurdistan. ...There is also the danger of unrest spreading to Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iran and Syria. Finally, there is considerable risk of damage to the Iraq petroleum company’s oil installations around Kirkuk and of the reduction or interruption of oil production”.

“We are anxious to maintain our good relations with the Iraq [*sic*] as with other Arab governments but we do not want to be considered to be taking sides on what is an

internal Iraqi issue... Our recent agreement to Iraqi requests for considerable supplies of arms may be criticised now that hostilities have been re-opened. We have throughout thought it possible that any arms we supply might be used against the Kurds, but we have had to weigh this against other factors, particularly the opportunities of weaning the Iraqis away from their dependence on Russian military supplies."

**FO 371/170439**

**EQ 1015/236**

*Iraq regime claimed to have uncovered a Communist coup plot in June and put it down. UK files are dubious about whether there was any such plot.*

**Minute by P.Cradock, 10 July 1963**

"The Iraq regime is continuing its severe repression of Communists". *Recent announcement of execution of 39 people.*

*November coup. Hunters fired rockets into MoD building and Presidential palace. Described as an internal struggle within Baath leadership. Aref takes control, undermining and purging Baathists and National Guard.*

**EQ1015/238**

**R.Allen, Baghdad embassy, to R.Crawford, Foreign Office, 5 July 1963**

*On meeting with Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs. "He confirmed what I have always believed, namely that the decision to start the war again [against the Kurds] was due primarily to pressure by the army, who felt severely handicapped under Qasim and had thereby suffered a humiliation... Morale was now good in the armed forces in the North." Plan was to drive through Kurdish territory and "hunt down the guerrillas".*

**FO 371/170481**

**EQ 1192/63**

**P.Cradock, Foreign Office, to A.Campbell, UK Mission, United Nations, 12 July 1963**

*The government agreed in May to export the Saracens and Hunters. "We also gave agreement in principle in May to supply rockets for the Hunters. Since the fighting [Kurdistan] broke out on June 10 we have been strongly pressed by the Iraqis to supply very large quantities (20,000) for use against the Kurds. Here we have had to*



balance our interests as retaining Iraqi goodwill, which could affect our relations over a variety of fields, and our unwillingness to become too closely involved in the Kurdish issue. It was eventually decided to offer the Iraqis a small quantity (500) of high explosive rockets. These have not been delivered and are unlikely to reach Iraq before 6-8 weeks at the earliest”.

**EQ 1192/67**

**Foreign Office brief for Foreign Secretary, “Resumption of the Kurdish war in Iraq”, 19 June 1963**

*Iraq has assembled two thirds of its army in the North and “are employing ruthless tactics... Successful air strikes against the Kurds have been carried out”.*

**J.Robertson, Private Secretary, Cabinet Office to C.Wiggin, 23 July 1963**

*Notes a Cabinet meeting at which it was decided that arms supplies of all kinds to Iraq should only “trickle”, including rockets which were the only item immediately available.*

**FO 371/170461**

**EQ 1051/3**

**P.Thomas, Foreign Office to John Peyton MP, 18 April 1963**

“The Americans have benefited from the fact that they probably had contacts with opposition elements before the recent coup. However, in all our contacts with Iraqi ministers and officials to date we have found them very friendly. We, for our part, have made clear our wish to get on good terms and to be as helpful as we can”.

**G.Hiller, Foreign Office to R.Allen, Baghdad, 19 April 1963**

*Refers to “the fact that the Americans had been in touch with the revolutionaries before the recent coup.”*

**EQ 1051/2**

**R.Allen to G.Hiller, 25 April 1963**

*Refers to “our record of friendship for the new regime.”*

**EQ 1051/9**

**W.Morris, Foreign Office brief, 19 August 1963**

“[The Iraqi government] have succeeded in clearing most of the plains [*in Kurdistan*]... We regard the Kurdish question as an internal Iraqi matter in which we do not wish to be involved and we do not want the issue to upset our relations with other Arab countries. We are none the less perturbed by reports of Iraqi brutality and we do not want to appear to support the present Iraqi policy... We have however authorised a gradual supply of 2,000 rockets and of other ammunition to meet Iraqi requirements and are explaining to the Iraqis that delays and spread out deliveries are inevitable because of our own supply position”.

**EQ 1051/11**

**P.Dean, UN mission, New York, to Foreign Office, 2 October 1963**

*He met Iraqi Foreign Minister Shabib:* “I explained that any hesitation on our part over particular [arms] orders did not represent any objection in principle but merely the problem of getting the equipment off the supply lines. Shabib said that he understood our position and was grateful for our willingness to help over arms. He said that the worst fighting against the Kurds was now over and with luck the matter should be settled by the end of the year”.

**EQ 1015/13**

**R.Allen, Baghdad embassy, to R.Crawford, Foreign Office, 6 December 1963**

*Notes meeting with Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs. Allen assured him that UK policy was “strictly one of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Arab countries, including of course Iraq”. They discuss Iraq and the Foreign Minister rules out separate Kurdish government in the North. Allen says “of course I quite understood that there could be no question of a separate government; but was there any possibility of granting administrative autonomy to a limited extent? I referred to our own arrangements for Scotland and Wales”.*

**FO 371/170485**

**EQ1194/6**

**D.Goodchild, Foreign Office to Captain R.Hutton, War Office, 20 September 1963**

*The UK government has received a request from Iraq to loan three British NCOs to Iraq to mend the guns on Centurion tanks supplied by Britain and to train Iraqi officers in maintaining and repairing them. The War Office and the Foreign office have agreed.*

"There is one tricky political point raised by the continuation of Iraqi operations against the Kurds in the North of the country. We could not let our NCOs go anywhere near the fighting regions since this could be interpreted as open involvement on the Iraqi side; if tanks guns break down in the North, the tanks would simply have to be brought to Baghdad and repaired there". *He want a form of understanding with Iraq on this. There are currently no Centurions in the North currently.*

**EQ 1194/11**

**R.Allen, Baghdad embassy to Foreign Office, 4 December 1963**

*Recommends UK should go ahead to provide the three NCOs. "The main argument against it is that the presence of these NCOs in Baghdad is likely to become known sooner or later and may provide ammunition for anti-British propaganda which could be damaging if the present regime were to become unpopular. As against this, however, we have plenty of evidence to show that we have always provided military aid for the Iraqi armed forces whatever the regime... The two Centurion regiments form the backbone of their internal security force in Baghdad."*

**FO 371/170490**

**EQ 1224/21**

**Foreign Office to Baghdad embassy, 29 June 1963**

*The best course is to make an immediate offer of 500 rockets and "be prepared, subject to developments in Kurdistan, to arrange a phased supply of further small quantities over a period of about a year, depending on developments". It is also agreed to supply a further 16 Hunters.*

**R.Allen to Foreign Office, 3 July 1963**

*Reply to above. Allen told Hilmi of the decision to supply 500 rockets. "Hilmi was genuinely grateful for this response and for the trouble which had obviously been taken to provide the first batch of rockets... Hilmi thought that his commander [ie, Tikriti, Commander IAF] would be delighted at our gesture."*

**EQ1224/24**

**D.Goodchild, Foreign Office, to H.Moreland, War Office, 27 August 1963**

*The UK has already let Iraq have 500 rockets which they have now collected and UK is making available a further 1,000 rockets on 1 September and 500 on 1 October. A further 18,000 will arrive later.*

**EQ 1224/26**

**J.Robey, Baghdad embassy, to Foreign Office, 9 July 1963**

*Notes meeting of the Air Attache with Brigadier Tikriti (Commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces) who was pleased with the delivery of 500 rockets but "indicated that this batch was unlikely to last his existing Hunters and Venoms a month at current consumption rates". He wants more rockets and ammunition.*

*The UK also approved the sale of 280,000 rounds of ammunition for Saracens in early October, and to supply mortar bombs, 25 pounder shells, and sterling sub-machine guns.*

**FO 371/170482**

**EQ 1192/91**

**W.Morris, Foreign Office, minute, 8 October 1963**

*Notes further Iraqi requests for various equipment (rifles, mortars, pistols) as well as spares, 20,000 demolition slabs and trip wire flares. Some of these items are "urgently needed for the Kurdish war and the demolition slabs... in particular will probably be used not only to destroy captured Kurdish strong points but also for demolition of Kurdish villages.... We should be prepared to authorise a gradual supply."*

**R.Crawford, Foreign Office, minute, 9 October 1963**

*"In fulfilling each new list of Iraqi requirements, it becomes harder to see the flow of arms and ammunition as the sort of trickle which we originally hoped for or as the minimum flow desiderated [sic] by the Cabinet...I would, however, put the gloss on the Department's recommendation, that we should not take any initiative with the War Office to ask them to disgorge material from stock now (this affects the flares). By insisting on the Iraqis securing their requirements in the ordinary way it is to that extent easier for us to take the line that we are making no special effort to enable the Iraqi government to finish off the Kurds".*

**EQ 1192/98**

**Arabian Department, Foreign Office, Minute, 7 November 1963**

*Iraq is negotiating to purchase £25 million worth of equipment from UK, including 12 Westland helicopters, 21 Hunter fighters and trainers and 250 Saracen armoured cars.*

**FO 371/170492**

**EQ1224/70**

**W.Morris, Foreign Office, Minute, 13 September 1963**

*Refers to the Cabinet decision of 20 June that military exports to Iraq should "trickle" and "with the decision reached in discussion with the Secretary of State and the Lord Privy Seal on July 16 that the balance of interest still lay in a gradual supply of arms to the Iraqis over a period".*

**Eastern Department, Foreign Office, Minute, "Arms for Iraq", 13 September 1963**

*Refers to a new request from the Iraqis. "The rockets, the mortar bombs and the three helicopters are urgently required by the Iraqis for use against the Kurds. The other items might also be used against the Kurds if the war is protracted, as seems likely. The Iraqi army has made some progress against the Kurds but fighting will probably go on through the winter. We regard the Kurdish war as an internal matter in which we want as far as possible to avoid involvement. Iraq's methods have been brutal and might sustain a charge of attempting to destroy or reduce the Kurds as a racial minority... As against this our overwhelming interest lies in good relations with the Iraqi government." Therefore recommends going ahead. On the helicopters says that "the Iraqis may be told we have no objection to supply".*

**EQ1224/71**

**Earl Home, Foreign Secretary, to Prime Minister, 25 September 1963**

*Notes Iraq's arms requests: "No objection to these requests has been raised at official level in Whitehall". He proposes allowing a further 1,000 rockets, bringing total to 3,000, 20,000 rounds of Saracen ammunition per month bringing total to 280,000, more mortar bombs and up to 16 armed Wessex helicopters. Three of the helicopters might reach Iraq in December/January.*

**FO 371 / 170447**

**EQ 1019/4**

**E.Maynard, Baghdad embassy to D.Goodchild, Foreign Office, 22 June 1963**

*"The brutality of the methods used by the army is likely to mar Arab/Kurdish relations for some time to come. The army has succeeded in clearing the Kurdish villages in lowland areas around vulnerable points... The method adopted is to take*

the villages one by one, shelling them from a safe distance with tank guns and filed artillery, giving sometimes little or no warning to the inhabitants. After a safe interval the National Guard or Government-paid Kurds move in to loot...In some cases, eg in the Kurdish quarters of Kirkuk, bulldozers have been used to knock down houses. The result is that the men take to the hills, women and children are often left to fend for themselves and the village is left abandoned and, for the time being, quiet”.

## EQ1019/1

### Foreign Office paper, “The Kurdish problem in Iraq”, August 1963

“In its essentials... the problem will persist [beyond current fighting]. A lasting negotiated settlement will also be very difficult since in a fragmented state like Iraq any central government will be unwilling to make large-scale concessions to the Kurds for fear of encouraging other minorities in the country. The problem is also unlikely to change in scope. There is no prospect of an independent Kurdistan since this would mean dismembering several other states besides Iraq”.

*Section marked “United Kingdom interests and policy”:* “Our main interests are: (a) the stability of the area and the exclusion of Soviet influence; (b) the smooth flow of oil; (c) the promotion of our trade; (d) the protection of Kuwaiti independence. The existence of a strong friendly [sic] Iraqi government able to ensure order throughout the country, whether as a result of an agreement with the Kurds or military control, is the best means of securing (a), (b) and (c) and is not necessarily inimical to (d). A strong and united Iraq also acts to some extent as a counter-poise to Egypt in the Arab world, whether within or outside an Arab federation, and this too is in our interest [sic], at least insofar as it helps to ensure that the various oil-producing territories remain under divided political control. It is extremely unlikely that a permanent solution of the Kurdish problem can be achieved by force of arms...”

“It is therefore in our interest that there should be a negotiated settlement of the problem, though preferably not such a settlement as would seriously weaken the authority of the Central Government by its concessions to the Kurds or lead to unrest among Kurdish minorities in neighbouring states. In peacetime, friendly relations between the United Kingdom and both Arabs and Kurds should not be incompatible and we should cultivate both. The outbreak of fighting, however, has shown that questions arise which make it necessary to assess the relative importance of good relations with the Iraqis and with the Kurds. The first are much more important. The Kurds can do some damage to the IPC oil installations but they are probably unable to gain control for long of substantial oil producing areas...”

“If we favour the Kurds against the Iraqis we would alarm neighbouring countries with Kurdish minorities, except possibly Iran, injure United Kingdom-Arab relations and alienate the Iraq [sic] government which has considerable power to do us harm eg, by action against the oil companies and discrimination against United Kingdom

trade. We might also conceivably give an opportunity for the restoration of Soviet influence in Baghdad. When faced with the need to make a choice we should therefore recognise the overriding importance of good relations with the Iraqis and that it is in our interest [sic] that their authority should prevail throughout the country..."

"We should take account, however, of (i) the instability of the Iraqi political situation and the danger of identifying ourselves too closely with the policy of a particular Iraqi government; and (ii) United Kingdom public opinion, eg over the supply of arms for use against the Kurds. We should continue to meet Iraq requests including those for military supplies while refusing aid to the Kurds and any official contact with them; but for the present it may be necessary to confine supplies of arms directly relevant to the fighting, eg rockets, to the minimum necessary to retain Iraqi goodwill and to keep such supplies in review in the light of public reaction and the situation in Kurdistan".

**FO 371/ 170448**

**EQ 1019/21**

**E.Maynard, Baghdad embassy to D.Goodchild, 6 July 1963**

"Although we have received reports of some hundreds of Kurdish prisoners arriving in Baghdad and being despatched to gaols in the south it is fairly widely being said here that the Kurds tend to be shot rather than taken prisoner. We have had some indications from officials that this may be deliberate policy. During the Ambassador's interview with the Foreign Minister on May 15 the latter said that rather than patch up some sort of agreement which might not last it might be better to settle the Kurdish question 'once and for all'. The implication was that the government favoured the use of such force as might be necessary to cow the Kurds into permanent subjection. We have since heard reports of an intention drastically to reduce the Kurdish population in the North and to resettle the area with Arabs and of at least one Arab officer's disgust with the methods employed as inhuman and ill-advised in the long-term. There is no doubt at all of the Government's deliberate destruction of villages where these are accessible to mechanised forces, ie, the lowland areas, especially around Kirkuk and wherever there are accessible villages in the interior of Kurdistan...We have no information on the extent of damage caused by air bombardment of Kurdish villages but it is clear that this has been done by medium and heavy bombers as well as ground attack aircraft [Hunters??] and that no prior warning is given to the inhabitants...In general, although there are instances of terrorisation of fellow Kurds, the Kurds tend to be more humane towards Arabs, doubtless feeling that this is in their long term interests. The Government of Iraq on the other hand have resorted to the use of force without the normal civilised safeguards against undue loss of civilian life and perhaps even with some intention of reducing the size of the Kurdish minority in Iraq, or at least cowing it permanently".

*Reports continue through July and August, with assessments of the military situation in the North from the military attaché in Baghdad and others. Reports note "intensified fighting" at end September with fighting continuing into November, with officials predicting a stalemate with Kurds recently inflicting losses on Iraq. By the end of November, UK officials report that the Iraqi government had sent an emissary to Mullah Mustafa proposing peace talks. By early December, UK files report low army morale and Kurdish advances in many cities. By mid/late Dec, negotiations were being undertaken.*

**EQ 1019/28**

**E.Maynard to D.Goodchild, 10 August 1963**

"The Ministry of Defence is now engaged in planning for the retention of the Army in Kurdistan during the winter."

**FO 371 / 170449**

**EQ 1019/42**

**P.Cradock, Note, 26 August 1963**

"As far as the UK is concerned, our interests are best served by a strong and united Iraq."

**EQ 1019/45**

**W.Morris, Foreign Office, Note, "Genocide in Kurdistan", 16 September 1963**

*In July Mongolia requested the inclusion of genocide in Kurdistan on the UN General Assembly agenda. "There is considerable evidence to suggest that the Iraqis have been unnecessarily brutal to the civilian population in rebel held areas... [The Communist bloc may try to castigate the UK] for supplying arms to Iraq which are being used in the Kurdish war... The raising of the issue under a charge of genocide constitutes an attempt to circumvent Article 2(7) of the UN Charter which prevents the UN concerning itself with the domestic affairs of member states. If successful, this could create a precedent which would be most unwelcome to us in the context of any trouble in our dependent territories".*

**Draft FO brief, 12 September 1963, "The policy of genocide carried out by the Government of the Republic of Iraq against the Kurdish people: Reasons for opposing inscription"**

"Instructions for the [UK] delegation" *at the UN*: "It is obviously HMG's wish to get rid of this item as quickly as possible" *in the General Committee*.



**EQ 1019/54**

**W.Morris, Note, 26 September 1963**

*Notes R.Allen's views on the UN:* "If it [ie, genocide] did come up at the UN, our best line would be to abstain from voting rather than to air our views on the UN competence to discuss internal affairs; and indeed avoid saying anything at all if we possible can".

**FO 371/170493**

**EQ1224/81**

**Foreign Office brief, "Arms for Iraq", 12 October 1963**

*Since fighting in the Kurdish area broke out in June, Iraq has asked for supplies.* "In dealing with these requests we have had to balance our interest in retaining Iraqi good will with our unwillingness to be involved in Kurdish issues...Ministers have decided in favour of a gradual supply [of arms] and we have, therefore, authorised gradual provision of three thousand rockets and of other ammunition to meet Iraqi requirements".