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British Residency,

Bahrain.

12 November, 1968.

I have mentioned this to Mr Arthur. I think I had better talk to the PR rather than write at this point.

The Tunbs

AMT
27/11

(4/5)

Dear Sir

You will be tired of me sounding warnings about the Tunbs but I feel that I must do so once again. It concerns the possible outcome of the Shah's visit to Riyadh.

2. My basic point is that the attempt to work out a package deal for the Southern part of the Gulf, including the disposal of the islands, is inherently inconsistent with the separate negotiation of individual parts of the package. We are involved in both and may well find ourselves in a very false position. If King Faisal persuades the Shah to agree to a median line "which would leave the Tunbs and Sirri with Iran and Abu Musa with the Arabs" (as Willie Morris reports the Saudis hope he will, see his telegram No. 662 of 9 November), it seems that Shaikh Saqr will find that the ground has been cut from under his feet. Yet with our knowledge and encouragement he is negotiating direct with the Iranian Government, with the two aims of not alienating sovereignty over the Tunbs and of securing a material quid pro quo for Iranian use of the island. Whether he can get this or may have to settle for less we do not know, but our own position with him will be acutely embarrassing if he thinks we are parties to a deal which virtually deprives him of the chance to go on negotiating.

3. This is of course an old and familiar point which I have made since the beginning of our consideration of possible deals in the Gulf, see telegrams Nos 398 and 399 of 28 May. In paras 2 and 3 of the second of these telegrams I said that the only way in which I could see a prospect of limiting the risk to our own position would be for King Faisal, if persuaded by the Shah, to be the primary salesman of a deal with the Rulers. This seems to me all the more valid today when direct negotiations are in fact taking place between the Ruler of Ras al Khaimah and the Iranians - a fact which we did not have grounds for expecting six months ago. It is reinforced by the point made in para 3A of your telegram to me No. 1111 of 30 October, namely that the Iranians "will have assumed from our package proposals that a median line might in our view predetermine a settlement on islands". I read this with very considerable misgiving and I hope that we shall not say to the Iranians

/that

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that this is indeed our view. It is certainly theirs, but it is one which we have vigorously contested since the beginning of median line negotiations. If the Tunbs go to Iran, whether formally or defacto, the change will be seen by the Arab world as the alienation of Arab territory, and it is bound to raise a storm, even if King Faisal endorses it. I feel as strongly as I did in May that for the protection of our own position in the Gulf we should not be seen as having put it forward. If a deal including the islands emerges from the present talks in Riyadh, I hope that we shall leave it entirely to King Faisal to inform and sell it to the ruler of Ras al Khaimah.

*Yours ever
Stewart Crawford*

(Stewart Crawford)

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