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LETTER DATED 11 JULY 1988 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Enclosed is the statement made on 11 July 1988 by Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President for Press Relations, announcing the President's decision that the United States will offer compensation, on an ex gratia basis to the families of the victims who died in the Iranian airliner incident.

I request that you circulate the text of this letter and attachment as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vernon A. WALTERS

Annex

Statement by Marlin Fitzwater  
Assistant to the President for Press Relations

The President has reviewed United States policy in the Persian Gulf where our military forces are protecting vital interests of the free world. He has expressed his complete satisfaction with the policy and reiterated his belief that the actions of the USS Vincennes on 3 July in the case of the Iranian airliner were justifiable defensive actions. At the same time, he remains personally saddened at the tragic death of the innocent victims of this accident and has already expressed his deep regret to their families.

Prompted by the humanitarian traditions of our nation, the President has decided that the United States will offer compensation, on an ex gratia basis, to the families of the victims who died in the Iranian airliner incident. Details concerning amounts, timing and other matters remain to be worked out. It should be clearly understood that payment will go to the families, not governments, and will be subject to the normal U.S. legal requirements, including, if necessary, appropriate action by Congress. In the case of Iran, arrangements will be made through appropriate third parties. This offer of ex gratia compensation is consistent with international practice and is a humanitarian effort to ease the hardship of the families. It is offered on a voluntary basis, not on the basis of any legal liability or obligation.

The responsibility for this tragic incident, and for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of other innocent victims as a result of the Iran-Iraq war, lies with those who refuse to end the conflict. A particularly heavy burden of responsibility rests with the Government of Iran which has refused for almost a year to accept and implement Security Council resolution 598, while it continues unprovoked attacks on innocent neutral shipping and crews in the international waters of the Gulf. In fact, at the time of the Iran air incident, United States forces were militarily engaged with Iranian forces as a result of the latter's unprovoked attacks upon neutral ships and a United States Navy helicopter. The urgent necessity to end this conflict is reinforced by the dangers it poses to neighbouring countries and the deplorable precedent of the increasingly frequent use of chemical weapons by both sides, causing still more casualties.

Only an end to the war, an objective we desire, can halt the immense suffering in the region and put an end to innocent loss of life. Our goal is peace in the Gulf and on land. We urge Iran and Iraq to work with the Security Council for an urgent comprehensive settlement of the war pursuant to resolution 598. Meanwhile, United States forces will continue their mission in the area, keenly aware of the risks involved and ready to face them.

