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From: MED  
Date: 2 February 2001

To: Mr Sedwill  
PS

*[Signature]* s/u

IRAQ: SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: 5-7 FEBRUARY 2001

1. I attach a revised brief on Iraq, taking account of today's telegram from Washington (telno 117) offering further advice on the likely US position.

*[Signature]*

Iraq Section  
W81/D

NO. OF ATTACHMENTS: 1

NER 356/02/01

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07 FEB 2001		
INDEX	PA	REGISTRY Action Taken

*[Signature]*

Peter Westmacott is still  
not 100% happy with this  
+ will be ready  
for Friday morning.

*[Signature]* s/u

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SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: 5-7 FEBRUARY 2001

IRAQ

Objectives

- to reach broad UK/US agreement on a new joint approach and agree to early talks at official level to thrash out the details, before an inter-agency approach has been agreed in Washington.
- to underline the importance of reaching P5 agreement on Iraq and broadening regional support for UK/US policy;

Background

1. International support for our approach is fading fast. Divisions in the P5 and the collapse of the MEPP have made key regional allies more uncomfortable with our current policy. We are increasingly isolated in the EU. We are held responsible for the suffering in Iraq, while memories of Saddam's brutality fade. The UN Secretary-General is to begin a dialogue with the Iraqis in late February. The US are much less sensitive about erosion of international support. But the new Administration is conducting a full policy review, with Iraq high on the agenda. It is an ideal opportunity to press our ideas, but we need to get in early in the inter-agency process and be prepared to push hard.
2. Colin Powell wants to find a more effective way of containing Saddam, which would gain the support of the front-line Arab States and the Security Council. He is open to greater flexibility over sanctions and the NFZs. But on SCR 1284, he is concerned that concessions could result in a Potemkin UNMOVIC which would quickly give Saddam a clean bill of health, leaving us in a worse position than where we are now. This view underestimates Dr Blix's determination to work closely in accordance with the SCRs; we might encourage early US contact with him. Others in the Administration are likely to argue that weapons inspectors on the ground will only allow Saddam to take the initiative and provoke crises. Our position is that an effective inspection regime on the ground is the best way to contain Iraq's WMD ambitions. Alternatives (military strikes, border controls) run a poor second. We expect the new DoD team (including Rumsfeld and his deputy Wolfowitz) to be hardline on Iraq. Condi Rice has said that we should keep regime change options open. The bottom line for the Administration is to appear tougher not "soft" on Saddam.
3. Until Saddam goes we need to work for sustainable containment, focussing on WMD, through implementation of SCR 1284. This means a mixture of stick and carrot, increasing the pressure on Saddam by:

- stepping up efforts to reduce smuggling through all Iraq's neighbours, in particular with a strong US pitch to both (the previous Administration was reluctant to get tough for bilateral and wider regional reasons).
- offering a vision of Iraq without Saddam, including through support for the (admittedly ineffective) opposition;
- making a real effort to rebuild support for our approach by reducing our holds on Iraqi contracts (US holds now value \$2.85 billion and are seriously undermining the credibility of our humanitarian concerns) and examining the scope for lower profile enforcement of the NFZs;
- securing wider international support for more rigorous enforcement (i.e. tighter border controls) of a more narrowly targeted range of sanctions.

4. In parallel, we should work with the US and P5 partners to elaborate a package of post-suspension financial and import controls (even though it is not required to be done under SCR 1284 until UNMOVIC starts work in Iraq) to entice Iraq into cooperation. This will not be easy unless there is flexibility on all sides: UK/US and French/Russian positions are far apart: Powell and others in the US are convinced that retaining tight control on Iraq's oil revenues is the strongest weapon against Saddam. Whilst the French and others want to yield control to Baghdad to at least some extent, we envisage oil revenues being channelled through a UN account - the debate in the Security Council will be about the level of control. But the prize of P5 unity and the wider international and regional support this would engender is worth the effort.

5. This overall approach would:

- reduce UK/US diplomatic isolation and put us in a better, more sustainable position;
- focus the debate on Iraq's WMD and away from the humanitarian situation;
- increase the diplomatic pressure on Iraq, in particular from those keen to normalise relations with Baghdad;
- revitalise the sanctions regime;

6. A move to this approach is not dependent on Iraqi cooperation or acquiescence. If Iraq rejects the package we shall still be in a better position than we are now. If Iraq allows a UNMOVIC in on our terms, admittedly unlikely, it would be a major success.

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7. This approach will require a great deal of work on the detail. We need early UK/US talks at official level to discuss the issues in depth.

**NFZs**

8. Our position, recently agreed across Whitehall at official level, is that we should retain the NFZs for the time being. The southern NFZ is necessary to prevent a humanitarian crisis and important for the defence of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. (The Attorney General however has doubts about the legality of the southern NFZ.) The MOD are to consider options for reducing the profile of NFZs and the risk to UK/US pilots. The new US team is not wedded to the status quo but understands the need for a militarily coherent approach, and would not want any change of tack to be interpreted as "going soft". Powell has expressed interest in looking at alternative ways of meeting our objectives (e.g the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)).

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