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United Kingdom Mission
to the United Nations
New York

From Sir Jeremy Greenstock KCMG

29 October 2001

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FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

IRAQ: CABINET OFFICE MEETING, 30 OCTOBER

1. I understand you may be chairing a meeting on Iraq on 30 October. I know that MED is preparing a paper, which we think is along the right lines (and on which we have commented). But I thought it worth summarising and updating the strategic perspective as seen from New York.
2. The UK draft resolution adapting the sanctions regime looks unachievable this autumn, largely because of Russian obduracy and US unwillingness to exert sufficient pressure to move them. Yet there remains an urgent need for us to sort out a coherent strategy with the Americans, and at a level which binds in the whole Administration and not just the State Department. Our conversations with them recently, including those during the Secretary of State's recent visit in Washington, have not managed this. The WMD danger is too great to ignore. A vacuum not just in the Security Council, but also in our collective policy, is looming. Most dangerously, the volume of talk from Wolfowitz (DOD) and others (including publicly) about the military option looks from here to risk real damage to our wider interests in the Middle East and our campaign against terrorism.
3. In New York, there is widespread scepticism of the US/UK approach both inside the Council and, in a more pronounced form, in the broader membership (particularly amongst the Arabs). The policy is seen not only as a failure, but also as the foremost example of the double standards practised by the US (and, by extension, the UK) in the Middle East. This corrodes support directly for sanctions (where breaches are widely accepted) but also insidiously for our broader objectives on Afghanistan and terrorism. In the longer run, the failure of the Council to secure Iraqi compliance with the resolutions undermines its credibility more generally.
4. We therefore need to think hard about a clear long-term strategy to present to the Americans to fill this vacuum (and to prevent the militarists doing so). The MED paper rightly identifies the focus on the comprehensive strategy and 1284. This might form part of a wider discussion between us and the Americans covering the following main elements:
 - engagement with the Russians to draw them into a more pointed discussion of how to deal with WMD, in particular with Iraq. Are they serious about controlling it, and Saddam more generally? This should acknowledge that Baghdad's accumulation of money through illegal

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exports is in itself a proliferation risk. The WMD line of entry to the overall problem would carry resonance within the Council;

- through this engagement, exploring the possibility of restoring P5 unity on the resolutions (which can of course only happen if the Russians are serious). If this looks possible, we should prepare our thoughts on clarification of 1284 (the MED paper usefully covers this aspect, though we will need very thorough preparation to convince the Americans we have answers on all the likely problems, and even more preparation with them if we do indeed get into P5 negotiation);
- working out with Washington whether UNMOVIC has any genuine political value (to us) on the ground or not. The Americans do not want a repeat UNSCOM problem, with Saddam calling the shots. But Blix will be a far better manager of inspections than Butler, and an intensive capability would be an enormous asset. They need to see that inspectors on the ground are worth paying a price for;
- perhaps most crucially, convincing the US that we will not support heavy military action against Iraq in the current circumstances. If the Americans do not buy into the strategy outlined above, then together we will have to think of another one. We cannot do nothing and allow war against Iraq to become the only option by default.

5. The objectives of such a strategy should be a united P5 approach to tackle Iraqi WMD, perhaps involving a negotiation to clarify but not renegotiate 1284. With the Americans, we should set clear limits, already defined in SCRs 687 and (in particular) 1284, on any negotiation in order to avoid the Russians demanding endless concessions to secure Iraqi cooperation. We also need reinvigorated action to tackle illegal Iraqi revenue (perhaps involving some understanding with the Russians on their own commercial interests). I remain surprised at the lack of US and UK activity to take on the Syrians over their pipeline.

6. Much of this deals with the US angle, and I am sure Sir C Meyer will have views. The most immediate need is to have a dedicated discussion with them at a senior level, in sufficient detail to thrash out answers on the complex questions involved.

Yours ever
Jeremy
Jeremy Greenstock

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