

RESTRICTED  
IRAQ: POLICY  
From: CAIRO

TO TELELETER FCO  
TELELETER  
OF 210952Z FEBRUARY 02  
INFO TELELETER AMMAN, ANKARA, JERUSALEM, KUWAIT, PARIS, RIYADH  
INFO TELELETER TEHRAN, TEL AVIV, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON

FROM JOHN SAWERS, HMA, CAIRO  
TO SIR MICHAEL JAY, PUS, FCO  
CC: ALAN GOULTY, DIRECTOR MENA, FCO  
CC: SIMON McDONALD, PS/SofS  
CC: PETER RICKETTS, POLITICAL DIRECTOR, FCO  
CC: GRAHAM FRY, DUS, FCO  
CC: SIR DAVID MANNING, NO 10  
CC: JONATHAN POWELL, CHIEF OF STAFF, NO 10  
CC: AMBASSADORS IN WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, PARIS  
CC: AMBASSADORS IN ANKARA, TEHRAN, AMMAN, TEL AVIV  
CC: AMBASSADORS IN RIYADH, KUWAIT  
CC: CONSUL GENERAL JERUSALEM

FCO PLEASE PASS TO NO 10

1. I have reported Egyptian views on Iraq (my telno 45). I have hesitated to offer my own, in the knowledge that contacts between London and Washington will already be intensive, and rightly held close. But I sense a danger of us becoming too predictable. I do not advocate a US march on Baghdad. But I do think we need to box more cleverly, not least to retain leverage in Washington.

2. First, Containment has worked for ten years. But the price has been high - the Iraqi economy is in tatters, Iraq's WMD activities are still without doubt going ahead, and Saddam is still in power. His regime will remain an obstacle to every single Western objective in the Middle East. We need to say clearly and consistently that our goal is Regime Change - for the sake of stability in the Middle East, for the Iraqi people, and for the goal of controlling the spread of WMD.

3. We have had such goals before. We succeeded in the Soviet Union, in apartheid South Africa, and in Belgrade. I assume it remains our goal in places like Burma, Iran, Libya, Zimbabwe and Liberia. Whether or not we actually express it is purely a matter of tactics. So the lawyers and peaceniks should not prevent us from saying what we really want in Iraq. And by associating ourselves with Bush's heartfelt objective of seeing Saddam removed, we will be given more house room in Washington to ask the awkward questions about how.

4. And there are many such questions. What is the plan? How long would it take for a direct confrontation to succeed? How do we retain the support of our regional friends meanwhile? What would we do if Sharon tried to join in; or exploit the crisis for his own ends? How would we protect the economies of our Middle Eastern allies? If we were to build up the Kurds and the Shia as proxies, what assurances would we have to give them that we would not let them down yet again? How would we keep the Iranians from meddling? How do we preserve Iraq's territorial integrity (which I do think is a serious UK and US interest, as well as a Turkish and Arab one)? How would we provide for stability after Saddam and his cronies were killed?

5. All these are much more important questions than legality, the Arab street and other hardy Foreign Office perennials. On a tactical point, I recall Colin Powell when he stood down as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 1993 saying that one of the blessings of retirement was that he would never have to listen to

*Jonathan*

*I have asked Ho to turn him off. Not helpful to have him writing its way around the world as a restricted tel/letter. If John/other Homs want to offer views, they should be in personal letters to Michael Jay*

*22/2*

*Down*

*I was gob smacked by Ps. John Sawers a sloppy down*

*J2*

# DECLASSIFIED

another British legal opinion. Presenting Washington with one now will both irritate and weaken him. We can look for the legal basis once we have decided what to do, as we did in Kosovo.

6. The Arab street is also an overdone argument. No regime fell in 1991, nor has one since.

7. And what should we be doing while Washington plans and we try to influence them? Conventional advice will be to plough on in New York, get the Goods Review List agreed, and work to implement the SCRs by sending back the inspectors. We should think long and hard on that last point. There is not a shred of evidence that Saddam is willing to open up his WMD plants to the UN. We would be sending people - our people, as most of the inspectors are Brits, Americans, Australians and New Zealanders - back on a fool's errand and offering them as hostages. We could be precipitating the very crisis we would rather avoid, on terms favourable to Saddam who will pray in aid all the old Third World arguments, and we would offer an opportunity on a plate to the hawks in Washington. And if it is the UK in the lead, as we usually are, we will suffer a heavier backlash if we end up being twitted. We need to have an agreed strategy with Washington before we head down a road which might look sensible, legal, UN friendly etc, but only leads us into the jam we are trying to avoid.

8. Visiting Americans say privately that there is still a debate to be had in Washington. Powell is not as lonely a voice as he might seem. We know that Bush, at the end of the day, will be both intelligent and responsible. If we can help the Americans come up with a persuasive plan to oust the world's worst tyrant, then we should do so. And if the best military and intelligence brains in London and Washington fail to produce a convincing plan, then we stick to containment.

Signed: JOHN SAWERS

Sent by CAIRO on 21-02-2002 09:52  
Received by No10 on 21-02-2002 22:07

# DECLASSIFIED