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S 371/02

From the Senior Policy Adviser

9 December 2002

Dear Peter

IRAQ: MILITARY PLANNING

This letter is extremely sensitive. It must not be copied further, and must be shown only to those with a real need to know.

The Prime Minister was grateful for your letter of 5 December. The Prime Minister agrees that we should plan on the basis of a possible decision to commit forces as early as 15 February. He is prepared to authorise the necessary preparatory steps including those relating to land forces, as outlined in your letter, to align the readiness of UK forces with that of the US military.

There should be no change in media handling until a media strategy has been drawn up and agreed with No 10.

The Prime Minister would like a meeting with the Defence Secretary, to discuss how we would handle a possible "ugly start", and what our options would be for UK land forces if Turkey refused transit. We will be in touch shortly to fix this up.

I am copying this to Simon McDonald (FCO), Mark Bowman (HMT) and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

MATTHEW RYCROFT

Peter Watkins
MOD

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