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From: NPD - Other Staff
Sent: 19 February 2002 12:12
To:

Tim Dowse;

Subject: FW: INFO: PP PARIS/FCOLN 123: : US FOREIGN POLICY: FRANCE AND THE
AXIS OF EVIL

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DTGM: 191024Z FEB
Message To: FCOLN
MessageFrom: PARIS

From: Tuesday, February 19, 2002 12:15:59 PM
Sent: NPD - All Staff
To: FW: INFO: PP PARIS/FCOLN 123: : US FOREIGN POLICY: FRANCE AND THE AXIS OF EVIL
Subject: Auto forwarded by a Rule

-----Original Message-----

From: Swift Incoming Telegrams (Machine 1)
Sent: 19 February 2002 12:04
To: NPD
Subject: INFO: PP PARIS/FCOLN 123: : US FOREIGN POLICY: FRANCE AND THE AXIS OF EVIL

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MDDPAN 1382 PCLNAN 1449
RESTRICTED
PP FCOLN SOSFA
FM PARIS TO FCOLN
191024Z FEB
GRS 1546

RESTRICTED
FM PARIS
TO PRIORITY FCO
ELNO 123
OF 191024Z FEBRUARY 02
INFO PRIORITY CABINET OFFICE, EU POSTS, MIDDLE EAST POSTS, MODUK
INFO PRIORITY NATO POSTS, SECURITY COUNCIL POSTS, SOSFA
INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON

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Trace: WMD

NP0081

NO 10 FOR MANNING

SUBJECT: : US FOREIGN POLICY: FRANCE AND THE AXIS OF EVIL

SUMMARY

1. The French are particularly concerned about what the axis of evil implies for US policy. Their approach remains different. They are ready to recognise that their differences with the Americans are more about means than ends. But they will want to work with us to keep American action within the international system. We need to work hard now, with the Americans, with the French, and with other EU partners, to avoid a damaging split over Iraq.

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DETAIL

2. Washington telno 196 explained the thinking behind President Bush's "axis of evil" and identified the risk of growing US/European mutual disenchantment. Following Vedrine's critical reaction to the speech, which Jospin subsequently echoed, the weekend press says that the French Ambassador in Washington was called in to the State Department by Beth Jones last week to discuss these differences. But the press here take comfort from the fact that France is not alone, citing Fischer and Patten to show that their concerns are shared by Germans and British.
3. The main French concerns, put simplistically, are (a) that the Americans will be increasingly tempted towards unilateral action without consulting allies or the UN; (b) that they see military action as more or less the sole response to terrorism and proliferation, and (c) that the axis of evil speech confuses the two problems.
4. We would expect the French to be the leading European critics of such a turn in American policy. They have worried since the end of the Cold War that American power was becoming disproportionate (Vedrine's fear of the hyperpower). Hence their policy of multipolarity and their wish to develop EU foreign policy and defence. They think that American assertiveness after 11 September, including the increase in US defence expenditure, is taking the world in the opposite direction. Because of their prickly relationship with the US they are particularly uncomfortable with this. Privately they admit that the failure of the Europeans to spend on defence is itself a significant part of the problem, but this has not so far led them to spend more themselves, a point on which we should not be shy about taxing them.
5. This does not mean that the French oppose US policy on terrorism or Afghanistan. Overall they have been impressed by the way the Americans handled the crisis. Their own support has been strong - stronger than most would have expected at the beginning. They also basically share the American assessment of the dangers of WMD proliferation.
6. Where they differ is over how to respond. The French believe that, as well as clamping down hard (but in accordance with international law) on unacceptable actions, we also need to address their political, economic, cultural and military causes. They believe that ascribing them simply to a national or individual propensity for wrongdoing is inadequate. There are reasons beyond mere wickedness why bad regimes come to power and survive; simply keeping a lid on the ambitions of dangerous regimes by military repression, or removing them by military force, may in the long run even make things worse.
7. So in most cases the French favour a policy of engagement with states of concern rather than sanctions/isolation/reprisal. Even if North Korea has in fact been something of an exception to this, they see a risk of renewed tensions between European and American policy on Iran.
- 87 But Iraq is the real problem. They have long been at odds with us and the Americans in their basic analysis: arguing that a policy of punitive sanctions and containment of Saddam is in the long-term likely to create even greater incentives for the regime to proliferate and more antagonism in the population, and so store up new dangers, particularly in the absence of real MEPP progress. They felt that American Iraq policy was moving in their direction under the influence of Colin Powell before 11 September. Now, although work continues on the Goods Review List (a French idea),

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...y suspect that the gap will widen again if regime change takes over in Washington. They are not necessarily totally opposed to an American operation to remove Saddam, which they increasingly see as inevitable, provided that it is supported in the UN and in the region; is carefully thought through in military terms; and forms part of a realistic project for creating a better and more stable future for the country and the region. So far they do not think these conditions have been met. The lack of American willingness so far to follow through on nation building in Afghanistan has not encouraged them. Nor does the present parlous state of the MEPP, where they see the US as giving too much uncritical support to Sharon.

9. Beyond that, they are not convinced that naming a number of key states of concern, and dealing with them by military means or diplomatic isolation, will solve the underlying problems of WMD proliferation or terrorism. The bin Laden experience suggests to them that these problems are no longer linked only to individual states and governments, but are developing through shadowy non-state networks - including in countries like Saudi Arabia - which will not go away even if Afghanistan and Iraq are made examples of, and may well gain more recruits over time.

10. These French views are strongly and widely held. The dangers of a situation where the Americans take military action against Iraq with our support, while France and most of the rest of the Europeans stand aside in a more or less critical pose, are clear. Leaving aside the consequences in the region, it could do great damage to our wider European policy both in the rest of the EU and domestically. So we have a particular motive to bring US and Europeans as close as we can in the months we seem to have available before any US action.

11. Despite Vedrine's comments, we have seen several signs here that the French recognise that just criticising American policy, even if they do not agree with it, is not going to help much. Whatever the anti-American streak of many French politicians and diplomats, their instinct remains to back the Americans in upholding international stability when push comes to shove. What they want above all is to be consulted and involved, and to have some input into analysis and policy before they are faced with the choice of following US decisions or not. Of course they do not go about this remotely in the right way.

12. This is where we need to help. We are likely to be in the front line of any split. We have a particular incentive to act, and to do so quickly. If we wait until the Americans have a fully worked out plan, attitudes may well have hardened too far on both sides. At the wish of teaching grandmothers, this suggests to me the following broad lines of early, high-level action:

(i) persuade the Americans, using the influence we have earned, to give much greater attention to explaining their thinking about Iraq, privately to allies and to the extent possible publicly. Their views may not be simplistic but they easily come across as such. The Americans need to share intelligence product as much as they can to illustrate the real, present WMD dangers of the Iraqi regime; to explain why they believe they can remove the regime without setting the region on fire; and once they have a plan, to explain why they think it can work to the extent that they are prepared to share it. Their instinct will of course be to share only with us, if with anyone, but this puts us in a particularly difficult position, increasing the appearance of poodlism if we follow without being able to explain adequately ourselves. We saw in the early stages of the Afghan crisis how bad the Americans could be at appearing to have a coherent plan, and at keeping allies in the loop. Doubts were stilled by good PR work by us, and above all by quick success. But we and they should learn the

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sons.

(ii) persuade the French and other Europeans to eschew megaphone diplomacy and to make a real effort to engage with the Americans themselves, to understand where they are coming from, to express reservations where necessary, but also to offer ideas and constructive analysis if at all possible. Realistically, the results may be limited, particularly if the Americans themselves remain resistant to serious dialogue. We will inevitably therefore have to do some heavy lifting ourselves to try to ensure European analysis and policy stay as united as possible. We need to confront the Europeans with the consequences of inaction, be prepared to share whatever information/intelligence we can, and help them buy into policy rather than just feel they are being asked to follow because the Americans are now all-powerful.

13. Our chances of success with the Americans would be much greater if we could persuade other Europeans to look, and be, serious about defence capabilities. Our chances with the Europeans would be much greater if we could persuade the Americans to put their full weight behind breaking the current disastrous MEPP cycle, and look as if they were doing so.

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ECPOL		0	
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MR BRADSHAW			0
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DUS WIDER WORLD			1
IMD/BT//GROUP CH EXEC			0
DIR AMERICAS		0	
DIR DNR	0		
DIR INTNAT SEC		0	
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DIR PUBLIC SER		0	
DIR RESOURCES			0

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