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From: Richard Stagg  
Date: 13 September 2002

cc: Private Secretary  
PS/PUS  
Peter Ricketts  
Stephen Wright  
Graham Fry  
Simon Fraser  
Heads: MED, News, CIC, IMU  
Special Advisers

Reference: //2002

To: Edward Chaplin  
Director, MENA

**SUBJECT: IRAQ: WINNING THE WAR OF WORDS**

1. I have mentioned on a number of occasions my concern about the need to have greater clarity about our long-term vision of the Middle East post-Saddam, if we are to convince people that military conflict is the best available approach.
2. I know that there is some work being done on this. I believe it is quite pressing. We will make little or no headway with Arab opinion if our apparent goal is to install a pro-US puppet regime in Baghdad. We need an outcome which is not a victory for the US; but a victory for the region - by delivering benefits across the board in terms of stability and prosperity. A sense that we have some longer-term strategic vision will, it seems to me, be critical in minimising hostility in the region to military action.
3. And, once the actual conflict begins, we will be under even greater pressure at this end to explain what we plan to put in Saddam Hussein's place.
4. This has wider implications. What we envisage happening after Saddam, will presumably affect the way in which we fight the war. If our goal is to demonstrate a commitment to the long-term, security and viability and prosperity of Iraq, this will argue against carpet-bombing of infrastructure. Indeed I presume that the entire military campaign will need to be calibrated in the light of how far we hope to win the long-term support of the Iraqi people for what we have done. Destroying 30 years of investment in infrastructure will make the task harder.

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5. I am not suggesting that we should be in a position now to say which individuals or parties will rule Iraq after Saddam, nor on what basis. But I think it would be helpful to have considerably greater clarity about:

- (a) how we will go about establishing a future government in Iraq;
- (b) how we will manage problems flowing from a more democratic system (eg the north voting overwhelmingly for Kurdish independence parties);
- (c) what sort of international presence we expect to remain in Iraq after a conflict (is there any chance of giving a major role to the UN?);
- (d) what does this all mean for neighbouring countries (many of which have governments more savoury, but not much more democratic, than Iraq)?
- (e) who will control, and benefit from, Iraq's oil wealth;
- (f) what economic assistance will be available (beyond the lifting of sanctions)?
- (g) Read-across to the MEPP.

6. Would it be worth having a meeting on this?

[Signed]

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