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PERMANENT SECRETARY

D/PUS/2/45 (446)

17 September 2002

Secretary of State

Copy to:

DS

Policy Director

DGCC

IRAQ: MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

Mindful of the difficulties (and frustrations) we have experienced in the past in establishing the right machinery and processes to run crucial politico/military campaigns, I saw David Manning yesterday to discuss the arrangements that might be presented to the Prime Minister, designed to help successful delivery of an Iraq Campaign.

2. I reminded David of the importance of a small 'core' Ministerial team, meeting very regularly to execute daily business (as distinct from less frequent policy meetings and Cabinet itself). I outlined the linkage needed with the wider COBR and DOP machinery that would pull in Government Departments and agencies as a whole. (I also counselled against excessive briefings of the Prime Minister by the intelligence agencies, when it was evident that their input could be transmitted in written form and his time could be better spent with those Ministers (ie you and the Foreign Secretary) in the small groups needed to decide executive action or give policy direction).

3. David said that he had little influence over such matters as distinct from Jonathan. However, he took the point, especially about the importance of acting through key Ministers in small groups. The position at present was that the Prime Minister had decided over the weekend on the following:

a. No Ministerial meetings at this stage;

b. a preference, when they become necessary, for the "late Afghan" model to apply - ie PM; Defence Secretary; Foreign Secretary; CDS; 'C'; Scarlett; Attorney General and Alistair Campbell as appropriate;

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- c. meanwhile for Restricted COBR meetings to begin on a twice weekly basis under Manning's chairmanship;
- d. for a wider DOP Committee of officials to begin work, under Bowen's chairmanship, which would be the vehicle for bringing in OGDs – DFID, Customs etc.
4. This seems satisfactory for the time being, although we shall need to watch to ensure that (b) does not begin without you being present and that (c) provides the framework we need to link effectively with the contingency planning in the MOD (and, perhaps, to begin to consider tricky issues of wider relevance, eg the effect on energy prices and oil aftermath management). Ideally, I should have preferred Bowen to run a Restricted officials forum, given the other pressures on Manning's time, the need to begin setting a regular rhythm, and some of the wider issues to be confronted. But I do not think we can do better for the present.
5. One further area to watch will be information management and media handling. I would not like this simply to begin in the hands of the Centre or the FCO. We have too much at stake in the handling and presentation of preparing military force options over the coming months. I think it would be best if Martin Howard were to get ready to run a media release group once the other machinery under Manning and Bowen starts work.


KEVIN TEBBIT

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