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SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 6/17/15H

23 September 2002

DG Op Pol

Copy to:  
PS/Minister(AF)  
PSO/CDS  
PS/PUS  
MA/DCDS(C)  
Policy Director  
DGCC  
Sec(O)1  
PJHQ – Civ Sec

IRAQ: MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER: 23 SEPTEMBER

1. The Secretary of State was grateful for Simon Cholerton's minute (D/Sec(O)/2/37/7) of 23 September with some additional bull points for his meeting with the Prime Minister this afternoon.
2. As discussed, the Prime Minister is content for us to proceed broadly as set out in my letter of 20 September. The Prime Minister remains very cautious about the viability of Package 3, not least because of its implications for our ability to meet other contingencies and the significant cost premium entailed. In the light of this, Mr Hoon believes that it is all the more necessary heavily to caveat this possibility in contacts with the US. We should emphasise that it is at the limits of what we could offer and that – because of other potential demands on our Armed Forces including FRESCO – we cannot be sure that we could deliver it. The US must therefore examine carefully how they would plan the campaign in the absence of such a contribution.
3. It was agreed at the Secretary of State's short meeting this afternoon that, in process terms, the best course was for DCDS(C) to write to CJO (copied to SBMA CENTCOM and Brigadier Cooper in Washington) setting out the two packages and the caveats attached to them. This letter would be marked "UK/US Eyes" so that it could be shown to the Americans. I should be grateful if it could be cleared in final draft with this office before despatch.

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*but there is nothing less!*

*live action to see draft before we go to 1st Op.*

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*FC/2*

*24/9*

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4. The Prime Minister was content for us to re-allocate units from FRESCO. His statement tomorrow will contain reference to the need for "preparedness" in case diplomacy fails. While we will continue to press No.10 for some slightly more forward leaning language, Mr Hoon is content that the proposed phase provides the necessary prior public acknowledgement. I should be grateful for early advice on the handling plan (modalities, timings etc) for informing the units concerned on 25 September.

[ORIGINAL SIGNED]

P D WATKINS

PS/Secretary of State

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