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FROM: P F Ricketts
Political Director

DATE: 30 July 2002

cc: PS
Mr Wright
Mr Gray, MED

Mr Chaplin

IRAQ

1. I have mentioned to you the possibility that the Foreign Secretary will make a short notice and private visit to talk to Powell later in August. I discussed with Simon McDonald what he would need by way of briefing. Simon thought that the main requirement would be a carefully targetted set of points for him to cover with Powell, together with up-dating on the latest state of US military planning.

2. Things will evolve over the next couple of weeks and it is too soon to write the brief now. But as a starter, I suggest that the Foreign Secretary should aim to cover the following key sets of issues.

Preparing public opinion

3. UN Inspectors. Jeremy Greenstock reports that the US are likely to be opposed to a UNSC ultimatum (as they were over Iraq in 1998). But it is important Powell understands the value in terms of European public opinion of showing that the Security Council has done everything it can to get the weapons inspectors in. The UN/Iraq talks are at present running into the sand. Is there any step the US could accept to show we had gone the extra mile? If a UNSC ultimatum is put, would there be value in a US/UK version - as over Afghanistan? (We should attach our ideas.)

4. Other UNSC action. Another helpful measure in terms of international public opinion would be some reconfirmation by the Security Council that Iraq remained in violation of its obligations. This need not be a Resolution, but could be e.g. a Presidential statement. Would the US be interested in working with us to achieve that (it would mean squaring the Russians, French and Chinese in the first place)?

5. The public dossier on Iraqi WMD. The problems remain as before. How far have the US got in preparing a public paper?

6. Legal justification. Even though US and UK views on the legal base are different, a coordinated presentation of the justification for any action would be a further help with public opinion (at least in the UK).

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Coalition Building

7. As Powell accepts, it will be crucial for US international standing that they make the effort to present their case and persuade friends and allies in Europe and the region. Even if they do not need many allies in the military coalition, the US has an interest in maintaining the broad political coalition against terrorism - and will need to share the burden of nation-building in Iraq.

8. The EU will be difficult and could be divided if it comes to military action. UK will need to step up efforts to explain to EU partners the threat and the case for not ignoring it (starting at the Gymnich weekend). US should mount an intelligence assessment road-show around Europe to set out the clearest case possible.

9. Turkey is a special case. Would have to give active support for military operation, even if only use of airfields. Quite possibly a much more direct role. But the timing is exceptionally difficult: no Government until after 3 November. The Cyprus talks quite likely to fail, leading to a major train wreck with the EU at Copenhagen. The Turks are bound to use their strategic importance on Iraq as leverage. The UK cannot deliver what the Turks will want from the EU, especially if the Cyprus talks collapse. Risk of wedge-driving between US and UK. The US and Ralston will have to work the Turkey case hard: it cannot be left to the Brits. We must also watch their need for support over ISAF.

10. The region. President Bush will have heard direct from King Abdullah. Is the US calculation that the Bush speech and the Quartet process will get them through an Iraq war with the Arab/Israel problem managed? If so, is that likely? More likely that Iraq and Palestinian extremists would stir up trouble in the Occupied Territories, adding to the pressure on vulnerable Arab regimes. We will need strategies to support e.g. Jordan or Egypt. How helpful do the US judge Saudi Arabia would be towards coalition military operations?

Feasibility of the military plan

11. Powell will have his own expert views on this. Does he believe that the military planners have come up with a strategy offering a high probability of achieving (a) regime change and (b) neutralisation of Iraqi WMD (not the same thing)?

12. Is there a realistic prospect of success before momentum builds up to dangerous levels on the Arab street? Has the risk of Iraq retaliating, or pre-empting with WMD against deployed allied forces or Israel been fully factored in?

Prospects for post-war stability

13. Are the US doing serious work on how to hold Iraq together after Saddam's regime had been smashed? Are the US military prepared to stay in the numbers necessary to provide stability at a time when

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e.g. Kurds or Shia groups may be trying to increase their autonomy? Where will we find the Karzai or Kostunica figure? Would we be looking for a UN-led reconstruction and nation-building effort? (If so, another reason to work with the UN in the run-up to a show-down.)

Timescales

14. How strongly committed is the President to acting over the next few months? Given the unsatisfactory nature of the public case on WMD, is there any prospect of using the continuing US military build-up to extract agreement from Saddam to get the weapons inspectors in? They would almost certainly be prevented from working effectively: but it would take some months to establish that. It would greatly help the public justification if Saddam again defied the international community's requirement that he cooperate with the Inspectors.



Peter Ricketts

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