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From: William Nye
Date: 5 July 2002
Extn:
Room:

MARK ~~BOWMAN~~

cc: Sir Andrew Turnbull

IRAQ

MOD's letter of 2 July to David Manning reports on the Pentagon's concept for an invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein and eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction:

- using 250,000 troops
- costing around \$70 billion

2. The letter notes that this is only Pentagon planning. There is no overall political – diplomatic campaign strategy yet. But we can assume President Bush will expect the other components to fall into place if he decides in principle to go ahead.

3. The issues for the UK concern a) whether the US has a viable political proposition; and b) the scale of UK military participation. No 10, MOD, FCO and Cabinet Office are doing some work on the former. MOD are doing some work on the latter.

4. I reported on 7 June on MOD's preference for a large (in UK terms) contribution to ground forces – an armoured division, or around 25-30,000 troops in total. MOD estimate a large contribution would cost around £800 – 1100 million to prepare for action; the actual deployment and campaign would cost several £100 millions further, though MOD have made no estimate of this.

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5. No 10, MOD and FCO officials are likely to take as read that the UK should participate if the US decides to go ahead, and on a large scale. Actually, we have some choices:

- to participate on a large scale;
- or on a medium scale;
- or only with one principal combat arm (e.g. Army ground troops, but not RAF fast jets, or vice versa);
- or to provide only specialist support (Special Forces, bases, air-to-air refuelling, reconnaissance aircraft, and possibly a few token submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles) – which is essentially what we did in Operation Enduring Freedom, the attack on the Taliban.

6. Given the US requirement for 250,000 troops in total, even a large British contribution of 10% would not be that material to the overall strength of the campaign forces. The scale of contribution would be driven largely by our desire to influence US thinking. The question is how much of the \$70 billion estimated total cost it will be worth the UK paying to secure that influence. Participating on a large scale could cost us say £2 billion or more this financial year. Participation only with specialist forces would cost very much less.

7. It would be worth your sending a short letter saying that different options for participation should be carefully costed, so that we can assess the cost of securing influence on different scales. I attach a draft.



William Nye

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DRAFT LETTER FROM MARK BOWMAN TO

Peter Watkins
Private Secretary
Ministry of Defence

IRAQ

The Chancellor has seen your letter of 2 July to Sir David Manning and the Defence Secretary's earlier minute to the Prime Minister of 31 May. He has commented that it will be essential for the Ministry of Defence to prepare, and for key departments to consider, full estimates of the potential costs of different options for the UK's participation in any operation against Iraq. This should include both the large-scale and medium-scale options mentioned in the Defence Secretary's minute, but also smaller options based on the use of specialised enablers, bases etc, for example as provided in autumn 2001 in Operation Enduring Freedom.

We will need to consider very carefully how much we wish to devote – in terms of the risk to our troops, the opportunity cost of withdrawing from other operations, and the financial cost – to secure a privileged but still only partial degree of influence over US policy and operations.

I am copying this letter to Sir David Manning (No 10), Simon McDonald (FCO), and to _____ and Tom McKane (Cabinet Office).

Mark Bowman

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