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FROM SIR JEREMY GREENSTOCK, KCMG

19 July 2002

Peter Ricketts
Political Director

AB
29/02
Please Copy

Dear Peter

Relevant to the
29 July meeting
Peter Ricketts

Private Secretary
Mr Wright
Mr Gray MOD
Mr Rattine UNO
Mr McKenna General Office
Mr Webb MAd.

IRAQ AT THE UN

1. Thank you for your letter of 19 July posing some questions on prospects for Iraq at the UN.
2. It might help if I start by setting out the broad dynamics here in New York:

- the UK and US take the toughest line on Iraq, both on the return of weapons inspectors, and on maintaining rigorous sanctions. We hardly ever get vocal support from other Council members, even on lighter issues such as sanctions machinery;
- the Russians and Chinese are opposed to unilateral military action and regularly insist on the use of the UN route. At the same time they weaken that route, e.g. by seeking to water down sanctions. They question our claims on Iraqi holdings of WMD and push for more carrots to be offered to the Iraqis. The French have traditionally been closer to the Russians and Chinese than to our position. There has been movement in Paris over the past year, reflected in their Council interventions here. But they are still some distance from seeing things our way;

- the non-permanent Members, while covering a spectrum of views, will in the final analysis go along with the emerging

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majority. Most favour continued political dialogue through the UN and oppose unilateral military action. Most are sceptical of our WMD claims.

3. Turning to your questions:

At what point do you think the Americans will begin to say publicly that the effort to get UN inspectors back into Iraq is dead?

4. We reported in telno 1303 that the US already plan to say they see no value in talks at any level. This scepticism will increasingly become public knowledge, particularly after the 23 July Security Council lunch.

Will we/other members of the Council be able to prolong the effort beyond that with any credibility?

5. Almost all Security Council members want UN/Iraq talks to continue. Because of this, the Secretary General is likely to conclude from next week's Security Council lunch that, at the least, he should keep the way open for further technical contacts.

6. But with Annan currently saying there should be no further talks at his level until the Iraqi's show flexibility, we could not credibly argue for further political talks ourselves. This would pitch us directly against the Americans. The US (like, I suspect, ourselves) will also resist calls from others to resume political talks. So other Council members might have credibility in trying to prolong, but we (UK/US) would not. That would nevertheless leave me with some room for playing with one side of the argument or the other, according to your requirements.

7. If and when there is Iraqi movement, which will presumably only be under the pressure of US military preparations, the dynamics of the Council would mean that efforts to restart political talks would quickly resume.

Are there any prospects for getting the Council to declare some sort of ultimatum that unless Saddam lets the Inspectors in by X, the Council will conclude Iraq has no intention of complying with its obligations (or some other formula well short of an authorisation)?

8. First, it is not even clear that the US would allow such

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an ultimatum to be put forward. They have rejected such an approach in the past, notably over Iraq in 1998 and Kosovo in 1999.

9. Second, Russia and China would definitely, as their policies stand at present, reject an ultimatum. They know full well that it could be used to justify military action which they do not support. Lavrov in particular is quick to seize on any hint of a statement, article or resolution we might use to this end.

10. That said, I do not entirely discount bringing the Council round if we played our cards cleverly. Russia would be key. We would have to first square Moscow (?Putin) on the prospect of military action and, through this, on an ultimatum or other statement. The Americans would also have to work on the Chinese, though they would be more malleable once we had convinced Russia. It bears repeating that the prospects for getting Russia, China (and others) on board would be dramatically strengthened if we could catch the Iraqis with their pants down in some convincing way. The main obstacle to this thinking might actually be the Americans, who will not wish to be caught even asking the question. ✓

11. One or two final thoughts. There is a lot to be said for considering additional UN routes to put pressure on Iraq to comply with its SCR obligations and/or close sanctions loopholes. For example, we could revisit the idea of a travel ban for senior Iraqi officials or propose new measures to screen Iraqi borders. Such proposals, which are likely to fail, would help us demonstrate that we have tried to use the UN route. And in the event that such proposals do succeed, we benefit from increased pressure on the Iraqi regime. We would also buy time.

12. Next, we have to do more to convince Security Council colleagues and others that Saddam represents a clear and present danger. More WMD briefings at capitals is one way forward. I know we have been through this countless times, but we never seem to be able to hit the point of real conviction.

13. Finally, I should emphasise that one of the most difficult questions we are asked here concerns the legality of military action. Clearly we can avoid such questions when military action is theoretical. But taking action against Iraq when our claims to legality are rejected by a large

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percentage of UN members is going to damage our multilateral image, our CT credentials and our own electability in the UN system quite severely. We would be grateful to be kept in touch with legal thinking in London as decision day approaches. ||

Yours ever

Jeremy

Jeremy Greenstock

cc: PS
Mr Wright
Mr Pattison, UND
Dr Tanfield, MED

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