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*Pls ensure a copy of  
this is on file  
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#### IRAQ OBJECTIVES

During my visit to Washington this week I spoke about Iraq to Doug Feith, the Under Secretary for Policy at DoD, and briefly to Peter Rodman, the Assistant Secretary of International Security Affairs. Discussion was based on draft objectives (which had been updated to reflect comments from the Foreign Secretary) with which the Defence Secretary concurred.

Both jibbed over one key point: they want the elimination of WMD by Iraq to be a firm objective. I went over the argument that a government in Iraq was unlikely to stay in office if it could not provide a counter-weight to an Iran which had WMD and delivery capability. They acknowledged that, but I

I said we would reflect but, on that basis, would be prepared to have a look at what elimination might mean militarily before continuing to oppose it.

They understood – and even seemed to accept – the Foreign Secretary's point that regime change should not be an objective in its own right but a point on a path to a stable Iraq. Interestingly Feith claimed that no one in Washington now thought that replacement of Saddam by another military strong man now made sense: the US would end up being responsible for his actions even if he went wrong on them.

Rather they were looking more to a Government which represented a wide range of tribal groups, including Kurds and Shias.

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they acknowledged that democracy would be unlikely and seemed to have in mind something more on the Afghanistan Bonn model. He would want to reflect the sense of a non-tyrannical regime in the objectives. They clearly envisage remaining in Iraq for some time, but took my point that permanent basing would create an adverse reaction in the region.

I explained our timelines as 7 to 9 months for a major contribution of division minus plus air wing etc, shorter for a smaller package. If they wanted UK participation, this would have to be factored in.

On timing debate still continued in Washington: but there was a distinct feel that momentum had flagged since our last substantive conversations in February. Rodman knew about General Franks' thoughts about phasing up and down before a move, but did not seem to have bought into it.

To emphasize the sensitivity of the issues I was accompanied only by Brigadier Cooper but gave Christopher Meyer's team the gist of these exchanges. While US resolve continues unabated (reflected at the lunch the Embassy gave for Senate Staffers on the Hill) the sense was more *sine die* than poised.

I am sending a copy to Tony Pigott, (SIS) and David Manning for his visit. Please could I leave you to show it to Edward Chaplin.

SIMON WEBB

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