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Action Precedence: IMMEDIATE  
Info Precedence: IMMEDIATE  
DTG: 012247ZAPR02  
From: WASHINGTON  
SIC: A3A

Subject: ACTION :

To: FCO

Cc: MODUK

Info: SOSFA

SUBJECT :

FM WASHINGTON  
TO DESKBY 020800Z FCO  
TELNO 451  
OF 012247Z APRIL 02  
INFO DESKBY 020800Z CABINET OFFICE  
INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK, AMMAN  
INFO IMMEDIATE RIYADH, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, SOSFA, JERUSALEM  
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS, DTI, KABUL

SIC A3A

CABINET OFFICE FOR MANNING, CAMPBELL AND POWELL, NO.10

SUBJECT: NOSEC: PMS VISIT TO TEXAS: BUSH AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM

SUMMARY

1. BUSH HAS DEFINED HIMSELF AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM, AND IS RIDING HIGH. BUT FROM HERE ON THIS MEANS POLITICAL RISKS AS WELL AS BENEFITS. NEAR THE TOP OF HIS MIND: THE ROADBLOCKS THAT ISRAEL/ PALESTINE PUT IN THE WAY OF GOING AFTER IRAQ.

DETAIL

2. 11 SEPTEMBER TRANSFORMED THE BUSH PRESIDENCY. THE FIFTY-PER-CENT PRESIDENT OF EARLY 2001 ENJOYS APPROVAL RATINGS WHICH HAVE SETTLED INTO THE UPPER-SEVENTIES FROM AUTUMN HIGHS IN THE UPPER-EIGHTIES. BUSH HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEFINED HIMSELF AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM. HE IS COMMITTED TO THE WAR, BOTH PERSONALLY AND POLITICALLY, AND HE WILL NOT BE CHANGING THE SUBJECT ANY TIME SOON.

3. THE STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH SIGNALLED A DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF THE CAMPAIGN. WHEN POLLED, MOST AMERICANS AGREE: THE JOB IS NOT OVER IN AFGHANISTAN: THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE IN IRAQ. NO-ONE IN CONGRESS IS SERIOUSLY QUESTIONING THE ADDITIONAL 62 BILLION IN MILITARY SPENDING REQUESTED FOR THIS YEAR AND NEXT. THE DEMOCRATS ARE BOXED IN, UNABLE TO COMPETE WITH THE PRESIDENT ON THE WAR, AND FAILING TO GET TRACTION FROM EITHER A REVIVING ECONOMY OR A BUDGET DEFICIT WHOSE CAUSES THEY DARE NOT OPPOSE. WHETHER THE REPUBLICANS CAN CASH IN BUSH'S STANDING IN THE

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DISTRICT-BY-DISTRICT STREET-FIGHT FOR CONGRESSIONAL CONTROL IN NOVEMBER IS UNCERTAIN. BUT AS A WAR-TIME LEADER, BUSH FACES FEW CURRENT DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS.

4. BUSH MUST, HOWEVER, NOW LIVE WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEFINING HIMSELF AS LEADER OF THE WAR ON TERROR. HE NEEDS TO SHOW IF NOT VICTORY, AT LEAST MOMENTUM, AND HE HAS RAISED EXPECTATIONS THAT THIS MEANS TAKING THE WAR TO IRAQ. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE OVERWHELMING TIDE OF OPINION, INSIDE THE ADMINISTRATION AND OUT, WAS THAT THE ONLY DECISION STILL TO BE TAKEN ON IRAQ WAS HOW TO DO IT. NOW, THE QUESTION ON EVERYONES LIPS IS HOW FAR IRAQ HAS BEEN PUSHED BACK BY THE PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: BY THE OUTCOME OF CHENEYS TOUR: AND BY A LONGER PROGNOSIS FOR OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN.

5. THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF BUSH INSIDERS WHO TELL US THAT THE DIE IS CAST FOR A REGIME-CHANGE OPERATION OF SOME SORT THIS AUTUMN. BUT THERE IS NOW A SENSE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION ARE FOR THE FIRST TIME REALLY STARING THE HARD QUESTIONS IN THE FACE: HOW MUCH INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED: WHAT SMART OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO TOPPLE SADDAM: ABOVE ALL, WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS. THERE IS A DOUBT AMONG SOME - NO BIGGER THAN A FIST-SIZED CLOUD ON THE HORIZON - THAT IRAQ MIGHT BE TOO RISKY POLITICALLY.

6. THERE IS NO BIGGER OBSTACLE THAN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLAGRATION. CRITICISM HAS BEGUN TO BUILD THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ALLOWED THE CURRENT SITUATION TO DEVELOP THROUGH ITS HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE.

AND AS CHENEY FOUND RECENTLY, IT IS ONLY WASHINGTON IDEOLOGUES WHO THINK THAT IRAQ IS A FEASIBLE OPTION WHILE PALESTINE BURNS.

7. IN RESPONSE, BUSH HAS STRUGGLED TO FIND A CONSISTENT TONE AND FIRM SET OF POLICIES. IT IS HARD TO RECONCILE US SUPPORT FOR SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1402 WITH BUSH'S AND POWELL'S STATEMENTS SINCE. THE PRESS ARE STARTING TO PICK AT THE ADMINISTRATION, AND BUSH IN PARTICULAR, FOR INCONSISTENCY AND HALF-HEARTEDNESS. THE WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN WAS GIVEN A HARD TIME TODAY. THE SITUATION ONCE AGAIN FINDS POWELL RANGED AGAINST CHENEY AND THE DOD, WITH BUSH'S GUT SYMPATHIES LYING WITH THE HAWKS. THIS STAND-OFF IS COMPOUNDED BY THE INABILITY, OR UNWILLINGNESS, OF THE WHITE HOUSE TO IMPOSE A VIEW.

8. WE HAVE SEEN A SIMILAR DYSFUNCTION OVER AFGHANISTAN. ON A RANGE OF ISSUES - ISAF, TRAINING OF THE ARMY, WIDER STABILITY AND SECURITY OPERATIONS - WHAT SEEMS TO BE A CLEAR DECISION BY RICE OR THE NSC HAS BEEN BLOCKED OR SUBVERTED, USUALLY BY RUMSFELD'S OFFICE. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS TAKEN ITS KEY DECISIONS ON THE WAR IN A VERY SMALL CIRCLE OF KEY OFFICIALS AROUND THE PRESIDENT. WHERE RUMSFELD

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(AND GENERAL FRANKS) HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY ENGAGED, LITTLE ACTION HAS RESULTED. MANY IN THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNISE THAT, ON THE GROUND, THERE IS A REAL DANGER OF LOSING AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE OF A US FEAR OF GETTING SUCKED INTO NATION-BUILDING. BUT RUMSFELD HAS, IN EFFECT, BLOCKED ALL BUT A MINIMALIST APPROACH.

9. WE SHOULD USE VIGOROUSLY THE ARRIVAL OF 45 CDO, WHICH THE US MILITARY WELCOME AS A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR WAR-FIGHTING CAPABILITY, TO GIVE US LEVERAGE TO RETURN TO THIS QUESTION AND TO PUSH FOR GREATER US ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL STABILITY EFFORTS FOR THE LONG TERM. WE HAVE PROPORTIONATELY FAR MORE GROUND FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN THAN THE AMERICANS. IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, THE US WILL TRY TO PASS TO US LEAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR AFGHAN STABILITY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. KEEPING US ON AS ISAF LEAD NATION UNTIL THE END OF JUNE IS EXACTLY WHAT THE AMERICANS WANTED FROM THE START.

10. AT CRAWFORD, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL FIND THE PRESIDENT FULLY ENGAGED AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM. BUT WHILE THE EARLY MONTHS AFTER AMERICA WAS ATTACKED PLAYED TO BUSH'S TALENTS FOR INSTINCTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MORAL CERTAINTY, SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM POSES NEW AND MORE COMPLEX TESTS. BUSH AND HIS TEAM NOW NEED TO COME TO TERMS WITH THREE KEY DILEMMAS, EACH OF WHICH DIRECTLY IMPACTS CORE BRITISH INTERESTS:

- HOW FAR CAN THE US LET ISRAEL GO IN THE NAME OF FIGHTING TERROR?
- WHAT SCOPE HAS BUSH LEFT HIMSELF TO POSTPONE DECISIVE ACTION ON IRAQ (OR TO RE-DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES TO GIVE THE UN ROUTE A REAL CHANCE TO WORK)?
- WHAT IS AMERICA'S STAKE IN THE NEW AFGHANISTAN?

11. I AM WRITING SEPARATELY ON BUSH AND STEEL (MY LETTER BY FAX TO WALL OF TODAY'S DATE). IF BRITISH STEEL PRODUCERS ARE TO STAND ANY CHANCE OF SECURING EXEMPTIONS FROM THE NEW US TARIFFS, THE PM MUST RAISE THE ISSUE WITH BUSH.

MEYER

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