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SECRETARY OF STATE

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4 April 2002

Policy Director

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PS/Minister(AF)

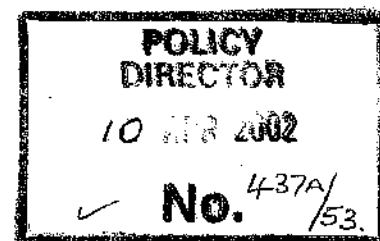
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Special Advisers



"BUSH AND THE WAR ON TERRORISM"

1. The Secretary of State read with interest Washington telno 451 about the next steps in the war on terrorism, particularly in relation to Iraq (paragraph 5) and Afghanistan (paragraph 9).
2. Reflecting upon this telegram and especially Sir C Meyer's observation in paragraph 5 that "there is now a sense that the Administration are for the first time really staring the hard questions in the face", the Secretary of State thought it would be useful to think through where the UK's national interests lie in relation to the possible contingencies and options for UK involvement which may arise. For example:
 - If "the die is cast for a regime change operation of some sort", change to what? Should we support an operation simply to replace Saddam with another – but less repellent – hard man from the Tikriti or the Army? Or should we support a more ambitious objective of opening the way for a more representative regime? What would be the implications of each in terms of both the initial military effort required to achieve the objective and the continuing commitment to sustain it?
 - Do the UK's interest lie in providing a substantial number (say 25,000-30,000) of ground troops for one of the heavier options which are apparently under consideration – bearing in mind that this would constitute only around 10% of the total force – or in providing a range of niche capabilities (eg SF for discrete operations; TLAM-equipped

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SSNs; air-to-air refuelling; reconnaissance, etc)? In terms of our profile vis-à-vis our traditional friends and partners in the region, might the latter be more palatable?

- If (as floated in paragraph 9 of the telegram) the US might look to us to provide continuing stability in Afghanistan while they refocus on Iraq, do our interests lie in resisting or embracing such a prospect? If we were to take on such a role in Afghanistan, we would presumably need to limit our engagement in any operation in Iraq. In terms of wider geo-political factors, would this be a preferable outcome?
3. The Secretary of State would be grateful if you could pull together a short "think piece" on these (and any other relevant) questions which would serve as the basis for a discussion. Clearly, this discussion will also need to be informed by the further indications of US thinking which the Prime Minister gleans from his meetings with President Bush over the coming weekend. It would be helpful to have your first thoughts – bullet point or note form would be fine – by close of play **Friday 12 April**. These should also include advice on how we might subsequently take this work forward with other interested Departments.
4. For obvious reasons, this exercise should be kept on a very close hold.

Signed on Original
P D WATKINS
PS/Secretary of State

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