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Pr.167

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DATE: 25 April 2002

cc: PS/PUS  
Legal Adviser  
Mr Wright  
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Private Secretary

### IRAQ: CONTINGENCY PLANNING

1. I mentioned to the Foreign Secretary that the MOD had established a small group of senior officials and military planners to think about the issues that would be involved in any military operation in Iraq, as the basis for initial contingency planning in the MOD. The Cabinet Office, the Agencies and the JIC are also involved.
2. This is a sensitive exercise. Participation is being tightly restricted and paperwork will be kept to the minimum. But I think it is important that the FCO is involved from the ground floor with MOD thinking. The first meeting covered mainly the political context, including the implications of the Arab/Israel crisis, attitudes in the Arab states, the risks of Iraq disintegrating and the consequences of that. All this was on familiar lines.
3. We also discussed how the objective or "end state" of a military operation should be defined. As we found in the run-up to the Afghanistan operation, defining the objective of an operation is crucial since this defines the scope of the operations and hence the scale of military effort required. The MOD had tried their hand at a definition of the "end state" which was discussed at length, and I undertook to produce a further version.

I have now done so. Before feeding it in to the Whitehall group, it would be helpful to know whether the Foreign Secretary thinks we are on the right lines. At this stage, it is only to inform MOD contingency planning: at the right point, these issues would have to be negotiated carefully and at a high level with the Americans, who will have their own priorities. My proposal is as follows:

  - "A stable and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, cooperating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to global security or to its neighbours, and abiding by its international obligations on control of its WMD."
5. Most of the elements are self-explanatory. The three issues debated at the Whitehall meeting were:
  - should there be specific reference to regime change, e.g. "no longer governed by its current leadership"? My own view is that regime change would be a by-product of a military operation, not its objective (indeed, I believe such an objective would be illegal);

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- should the "end state" be stated more explicitly as the removal of Iraqi WMD or (more achievable) the removal of the threat posed by Iraqi WMD? There is a serious issue here of the credibility of any objective we declare for a campaign, since any likely future Iraqi regime would presumably feel the same national security imperatives for pursuing WMD programmes as the current regime, given potential threats from Iran. My formula above concentrates on Iraq abiding by its UNSCR undertakings. But as an alternative I think it would be credible to aim at an "end state" in which the threat posed by Iraqi WMD was removed (i.e. behaviour change if not regime change);

- should there be anything more explicit about a future regime abiding by international norms on the treatment of its own population? I have got "law-abiding" which is designed to capture that. There is a risk in overloading a definition of the "end state" with desirable outcomes which cannot be achieved by military means.

6. The meeting also commissioned further work on a range of intelligence issues, including vulnerabilities of the Iraqi regime and possible fault-lines between different parts of the military and security apparatus; and what military/terrorist options the regime might pursue during a build-up to military operations and once operations were under way. The JIC will work on these. The military will work on the likely scale of effort required and options if bases in Arab states were scarce.

7. I propose that our team for future meetings in this sequence should be either myself or Stephen Wright, accompanied by Edward Chaplin, who should remain the point man on Iraq issues.



Peter Ricketts

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