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D/DCDS(C)/05/04/05

10 May 02

**APS/Secretary of State**

Copy to:

PS/PUS	ACDS(Pol)
PSO/CDS	DG Op Pol
PS/VCDS	Iraq SPG Leader
Policy Director	Sec(O)1
CDI	DOMA AD(ME)
ACDS(Ops)	DTIO IO AD

**IRAQ**

**Issue**

1. Iraq planning work.

**Recommendation**

2. That Secretary of State notes:
  - (a) that we expect US thinking on Iraq to be put to President Bush at the end of this month;
  - (b) that drawing on discussions in the cross-Whitehall group, we have now set in hand (on a close hold basis) a more formal military strategic estimate aimed at identifying the first order military issues and possible options for coalition action against Iraq;
  - (c) that our developing contingency planning on possible UK force contributions will be aligned with the conclusions of the military strategic estimate.

**Timing**

3. Routine.

**Background**

4. I have now chaired two meetings of the cross-Whitehall senior group on Iraq. The group has proved very useful both in brainstorming issues and sharing information, particularly on US thinking.

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5. Our best guess is that action will be recommended for the turn of the year. Until this has been put to the President, we do not believe we will be exposed to US planning, but consider it likely that opportunities will emerge shortly afterwards. Secretary of State's meeting Rumsfeld on 6 June might well provide the first such opportunity. In any case we need to be ready to discuss Iraq with the Americans as soon as they share planning with us.

6. Any thinking we do about joining the US in military operations against the Iraqi regime needs to be informed by our thinking in two key areas: the impact of potential courses of action open to a coalition and the capability the UK might contribute to such a coalition. Much work has already been commissioned on the latter and, in particular, we have been considering the measures we might need to take in order to provide capability within practical time scales. I propose we bring this work together under a single submission to Secretary of State on Contingency Planning. This work will consider what would be needed to generate the capability we could reasonably aim to provide within the 3-4 month period and the 6-8 month period, setting out the key decision and deployment points. This I suggest would lead to a note to the Prime Minister setting out these and financial implications of taking contingency action now. Characterising this work (correctly) as contingency planning and considering generic force packages offers the possibility of wider debate and scrutiny in the Department than would be available if we were to consider specific courses of action, for operational security reasons.

7. I see consideration of coalition options, however, as much more sensitive and as requiring cross-Whitehall contributions. Although the work would focus on military courses of action it needs to be supported with thinking on what "end state" HMG is seeking to achieve and about the legal basis on which action would be taken forward. We are already engaging the FCO on the end state which is currently suggested as, *"a stable and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, and abiding by its international obligations on control of its WMD"*.

8. I have now put in hand work with a small close hold strategic planning group. The group will produce a military strategic estimate in order to identify the key military issues and possible options for coalition action. This work will of course be informed by the work of the wider intelligence community.

9. I would wish to discuss this work with Secretary of State towards the end of next week and provide interim reports in advance of Secretary of State's planned meeting with Rumsfeld on 6 June.

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