



SECRETARY OF STATE

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26 June 2002

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Dear David,

IRAQ

Thank you for your letter of 25 June.

As you note, we have now received word from the US that they are ready to engage with us at military-to-military level on US planning (the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs spoke to CDS briefly on Friday evening).

This follows a presentation to President Bush last week on military options.

Although details remain sketchy, we understand that the US end-state for planning purposes will include: "the removal of the Hussein regime"; "the neutralisation of WMD within Iraq"; "the elimination of a safe haven for terrorists"; and "an acceptable new Government". These goals broadly align with the objective agreed by the Foreign and Defence Secretaries (attached at Annex A to the Defence Secretary's minute of 31 May), although Mr Hoon understands that Mr Straw, rightly, sees removal of Saddam as a way point – if necessary and justified – to the final outcome rather than an objective in its own right. CENTCOM staffs have been tasked to brief General Tommy Franks by 1 August, for a submission to the President shortly thereafter. It will be important for the Prime Minister to be able to give the President his view at that point.

Against this background, the Defence Secretary has agreed that the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments), Lieutenant General Sir Anthony Pigott, should lead a small team to Washington and Tampa immediately. It seems clear that the US now intend to move rapidly to detailed military planning, including coalition force contributions. That said, it does not appear that firm timelines have been set. Flexibility in terms of when to take action may very well be a key element of the plan itself. Clearly, as we begin to engage with the US, it will become increasingly difficult to keep our options completely open.

Sir David Manning KCMG
No 10 Downing Street~~SECRET UK EYES ONLY PERSONAL~~

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In order to take decisions on contributing British Forces, Mr Hoon believes that Ministers will want to be clear on four issues:

- a. whether the Prime Minister's conditions are likely to be met;
- b. the viability of the proposed military action;
- c. the policy and legal framework in which military action is justified;
- d. overall, whether the prospective outcome looks worth the risks, costs and losses.

The MOD team will seek to establish the US position on these issues; Mr Hoon will report further on their return. A key issue for us will then be whether we would secure adequate influence for a large-scale contribution. That will determine the need to commit resources, on which Mr Hoon will provide specific advice (as requested in your letter of 25 June) shortly.

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO), Mark Bowman (HMT), and Andrew Allberry and Tom McKane (Cabinet Office).

Yours

Peter

P D WATKINS
Private Secretary

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