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News Department
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PS/Secretary of State

IRAQ MEDIA STRATEGY

1. The process of preparing media and public opinion for possible action on Iraq is under way. I attach a media strategy prepared by Mark Matthews - agreed with Middle East Command and No 10 Press Office - designed to co-ordinate and pace our efforts for maximum impact.
2. The Prime Minister's interviews in Australia and the Foreign Secretary's piece in The Times have established a solid base from which to work. The media has taken the point and is eager for detail. There is high interest in evidence being compiled for the dossier with the UK will share with the US.
3. We should exploit this interest by feeding newspapers and broadcasters with information on WMD, diversion of imports for

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military use, and human rights abuse: all of it presented as evidence from the government's forthcoming dossier. By doing so, we can build momentum. The outlets for this information should cross the spectrum, so that we encourage support from sympathetic newspapers and carry the argument to those likely to criticise our policy. It is as important to force the reality of Saddam's Iraq on papers like The Guardian, as it is to give papers like The Sun the chance to popularise our case. And we should be stirring debate about the nature of the regime on the Radio Four news programmes, who are too easily inclined to discount the threat Saddam poses. Journalists who take this line should be forced by the weight of facts to justify the neglect of the problem which they advocate.

4. I suggest we produce a list of ten facts about Saddam for The Sun, based on our assessment of Saddam's attempts to equip himself with weaponry and abuse the sanctions regime. And we should give some quality information, for example to The Sunday Telegraph, who have expressed an interest.
5. Exercises like this should be part of a big effort to convey more clearly than we have before a sense that we are proposing a peaceful means of dealing with the problem through the UN, while Saddam is deliberately making a peaceful solution impossible. We have to stop his propagandists portraying him as the victim, rather than the villain. If action becomes necessary, it must be clear to all but a minority in media and public opinion that we have exhausted all other means, and that Saddam is at fault.
6. There will be a role for the Coalition Information Centre to play as Mark suggests in his media strategy. There is a case for injecting Iraq expertise there, (or into News Department, now pending deployment into the CIC) even if a fully fledged CIC operation should await confirmation of military action. We will have more impact if we are pooling information and co-ordinating activity between capitals. For instance, more could have been made last week of the diversion of oil-for-food vehicles for military purposes had we been working to plan in concert with Washington: perhaps with press conferences in London and Washington, trailed in newspapers and on bulletins. That is the kind of material we should now be working up.

John Williams
Head of News Department

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IRAQ: POSSIBLE MILITARY ACTION: MEDIA STRATEGY

Objectives

1. To convince people of the real threat to their safety and security from Iraq's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons programmes;
2. To demonstrate that Iraq is in breach of its international obligations to co-operate with the UN and allow UN weapons inspectors into Iraq;
3. To prepare public opinion in Britain and abroad (especially the Muslim world and Europe) for possible military action;
4. To rebut allegations about our policy, e.g. that it is to toe the US line or keep the Muslim world weak.

Key Messages

- Iraq poses a unique threat to the security of the Gulf region and the rest of the world;
- Saddam Hussein is a unique dictator: he is the only one to have used weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against his own people and neighbours;
- He is preparing to do so again in pursuit of regional domination;
- He will use his weapons against the West too if he thinks he can get away with it;
- He is in breach of his international obligations: refusing to co-operate with the UN's efforts to help the Iraqi people and refusing to allow independent and impartial inspections of his weapons;
- Our quarrel is with Saddam Hussein, not the Iraqi people;
- Saddam Hussein has no respect for human life, or Islam;
- He is a brutal, secular tyrant;
- We may have to take military action to stop him.

Potential Pitfalls

That public opinion, especially in the Arab and Muslim worlds, will be overwhelmingly opposed to any military action unless we start preparing for it now. (Nevertheless, if our preparations go too far, we risk raising expectations that military action is a foregone conclusion before a final decision has been taken.)

That suggestions we are preparing for military action will confirm the worst fears of Arabs and Muslims that:

- the war against terrorism is directed at Muslim states;
- our priority is attacking Arab regimes rather than resolving the Arab/Israel dispute;
- we are guilty of double standards

These criticisms are inevitable, but may be alleviated to a limited extent by:

- emphasising that Iraq is in breach of international obligations;
- stressing Saddam Hussein's lack of respect for Islam (e.g. his murder of clerics, denial of religious freedom, use of rape as a means of torture etc.);
- taking opportunities to highlight our engagement on the Arab/Israel dispute (unless our stance is likely to attract Arab/Muslim criticism);
- emphasising the unique nature of Saddam Hussein's regime – unlike any other state, it has used WMD offensively against its own people.

That we are perceived to be toeing the US line, rather than acting on our own genuine concerns about Iraq. We should seek to avoid this by emphasising the real threat from Iraq's weapons.

That European concerns undermine support for military action in the UK. We should try to avoid this by undertaking information campaigns in European countries.

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Media Activities

Article by the Secretary of State setting out our position now – done.

Further Ministerial statements, interviews and articles deploying the above key messages and reminding the world about the nature of Saddam Hussein and his weapons programmes.

Work with No 10 and others on a dossier of releasable evidence about Saddam's weapons programmes.

Arrange for third parties – individuals and organisations – to speak out in support of our policy.

Swift rebuttal of allegations about our policy.

Following a decision in principle to take military action:

Establish a Coalition-Information-Centre-style unit, drawing and building on existing resources in the Islamic Media unit and the Coalition Information Centre. This should be led by an FCO Iraq specialist with press and public affairs experience and include the FCO's, US State Dept's, and UK and US best Iraq experts. It should generate material for use by News Dept, the No 10 Press Office and the Islamic Media Unit on Iraq's:

- weapons programmes;
- regional ambitions;
- attempts to manipulate its neighbours;
- desire to challenge the West;
- breaches of its international obligations;
- human rights abuses;
- lack of respect for Islam;
- corruption and decadence.

Build up to at least one briefing and four broadcast interviews (including

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Arab, Muslim and European media) per week on these themes.

Build up to at least four stories planted (including in Arab, Muslim and European media) per week on these themes.

Launch a "contract with the Iraqi people" – a restatement of our commitment to helping the Iraqi people before, during and after any military action. This could be signed by a range of world leaders and widely broadcast, including on Radio Free Iraq.

Engage with the Iraqi opposition in London, seeking their help with the information campaign, especially the messages for the Iraqi people.

All high-level visits to the Muslim world and Europe should have a major media component on Iraq.

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