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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

Dear David

Iraq

On his arrival at the Waldorf Astoria, Colin Powell telephoned the Foreign Secretary and invited him to supper. Two things were clear from the discussion: first, that the inter-agency process is not working;

Second, that the British position has been misrepresented: the US do not believe that we attach importance to intrusive inspections; they think that we could join them in taking military action without first trying to insert inspectors.

Powell was accompanied by Negroponte, Burns, Boucher and Kelly. Jeremy Greenstock, Peter Ricketts and I were with the Foreign Secretary. Powell started by saying that he wanted to give a sense of where things stood. He described preparations for the President's UNGA speech (UKMis telno 1615). Although the President would not refer to a resolution, Powell would - if grabbed by a journalist - immediately confirm that a resolution was the aim. It would have four main elements:

- first, a statement that Iraq was in "material breach";
- what we wanted them to do next. Within 15 days they would have to provide all information required under 687, a declaration of everything they were holding. There was a debate in the Administration about how to respond to Iraqi compliance at this stage. If they removed the material breach, inspectors would have to go in to destroy what Iraq had declared; there be no further scope for military action. But most in the Administration did not think that Iraq would respond satisfactorily, so
- "all necessary means". Powell acknowledged that intrusive inspections were an alternative at this stage ("any place, any time, anybody, with no

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notice and no special deals for palaces"). Powell said that all necessary means could either be in a first or second resolution. Either way:

- the first resolution would deal with Iraq's violation of everything apart from WMD (so oppression of the Shia, violation of the OFF programme etc). Powell said that the President would linger on this kind of thing in his speech.

It was possible that the US would want to move from material breach to all necessary means without interim steps, ie without inspectors. Powell said that there was some confusion about how the Prime Minister had left things at Camp David, ie some argued that the Prime Minister did not attach priority to inspectors. The Foreign Secretary put Powell straight. He gave Powell the full flavour of your record. He stressed that the Prime Minister's whole focus was on inspectors; regime change might be an incidental consequence of our policy but it was not the aim. Powell said that he had heard that Condi Rice had presented you with the variation where we asked Iraq to present their holdings. He implied with success.

The Foreign Secretary said that this was the first he had heard of the declaration of holdings option. Was it a device to avoid getting inspectors in? The world knew that Saddam was bad but not everybody was convinced by the threat he posed. The only way to prove it was to get inspectors in. He worried about the motives of those suggesting the declaration alternative. Saddam Hussein was intelligent and well advised. He could be coached into providing a difficult answer.

Jeremy Greenstock asked whether the US was genuine about the UN approach or was this a brief effort before the early use of military force? The status of inspectors was the key difference between these two approaches. If the US was genuine about the UN route then they should be pushing inspectors down the throats of the Iraqis. Powell said that the President was not doing this as a fig leaf for war. In any case, the US could not act unilaterally, it needed too much help in the region.

Negroponte said that going for inspectors was more consistent with recent history at the UN. Greenstock added that the focus on inspectors would help with the Russians who would be suspicious of this new option. Ricketts said that there was also a lot to be said for involving the French early on.

Powell said that the US needed more than 1284. If the UN approach worked and regime change "dropped away" the US would need a really tough

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inspection regime ("Blix plus plus"), not a weak UNSCOM. Greenstock said that we might be able to help over sensitive sites and timelines.

The Foreign Secretary gave an account of your telephone conversations today with Rice, which Powell summed up as the UK saying that the US can't say "we don't like the answer [to our declaration demand], we're going to war". The Foreign Secretary stressed the importance to the Prime Minister of getting inspectors back. Powell said that the Prime Minister may need to make that clear to the President - on Thursday because tomorrow was very busy.

I am copying this letter to Mark Sedwill and Sir Christopher Meyer.

Yours cws
Simon

(Simon McDonald)
Principal Private Secretary

Sir David Manning KCMG
10 Downing Street

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