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Pr.29

FROM: P F Ricketts  
Political Director

DATE: 23 January 2003

CC: PUS  
Mr Ehrman  
Mr Chaplin

~~Private~~ Secretary

**IRAQ: DISCUSSION WITH THE PRIME MINISTER**

1. I undertook to put down for the Secretary of State to look at on the plane coming home the outline of a strategy which the Prime Minister could put to Bush at Camp David. This is attached. It reflects comments from copy addressees, and also a quick discussion with Sir Jeremy Greenstock after he had seen the Prime Minister this morning.



Peter Ricketts

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## IRAQ: PLANNED PRESENTATION FOR PRESIDENT BUSH

- Our strategy is working. But it needs more time.
- This is not stringing things out: it is patience with a purpose. We can achieve the disarmament of Iraqi WMD and the departure of Saddam Hussein with wide international support, but we are not there yet.
- Three strategic advantages of letting time work for us:
  - (i) the military build-up is already producing signs of fracturing in the regime. We will lose nothing by letting this pressure build. We might be able to achieve our objectives without firing a shot. If not, the military will be ready to take swift and effective action;
  - (ii) inspections are beginning to produce results. US/UK intelligence is now flowing: we need to give the inspectors our best material. The Iraqis are rattled. They are showing signs of non-cooperation (U2s, helicopters). More time will increase the evidence of systematic failure by Saddam to comply. Before long likely to produce compelling evidence of Iraqi deceit (either a find of WMD or Inspectors obviously blocked from finding it);
  - (iii) the mounting pressure is finally galvanising the moderate Arabs to work with us to get Saddam out using the leverage

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of a second resolution. We need to build up a plan on the basis of Prince Saud's ideas covering who would have to go, and how we would handle a transition to a new group of leaders who would meet Iraq's obligations under our supervision.

- The basis for this approach would need to be a second resolution, which would transform the politics in the UK, Europe and the wider world. Might even produce implosion in Iraq. However, in present circumstances we would not have the nine votes we need to get this through the Council.
- We can reverse this position if the Inspectors are given the intelligence, and the time to exploit it. The French/Germans will no doubt claim that they had achieved something: let them. They may then be more helpful later: more time in any case improves our prospects for taking action with support from the Arab world - especially if we can make progress on the MEPP - so building on the benefits of your decision to go the UN route in September.
- All these trends point to a crunch-time around end March.
- The alternative of going early would mean that the US had to go it alone. UK politics makes it essential in practice to have a second resolution. Don't see how we could get one in the next few weeks, absent a dramatic new fact.
- We're with you 100% on the goal: full disarmament, by force and

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regime change if necessary. But we have to contrive the circumstances in which we can carry a broad coalition and domestic opinion with us. Going without the UN carries a big price: resentment in the Muslim world/damage to our fundamental interests in the region, including increased terrorism/the risk of being stuck for years with the burden of rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq. Working with the UN will produce a huge prize: for Iraq, rebuilt with international support which allows us to exit, for the region and for other would-be proliferators who will get a powerful message. That prize is worth taking more time over.

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