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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CAMP DAVID, 31 JANUARY: IRAQ

(2003)

OBJECTIVES

To convince President Bush that:

- our strategy, though working, needs more time;
- the military campaign will be very shocking in many parts of the world, especially in its opening phase (five times the bombing of the Gulf war);
- a second UN Security Council Resolution (i) would greatly strengthen the US's position, (ii) is politically essential for the UK, and almost certainly legally essential as well;
- we should support Saudi ideas for disarmament and regime change with UN blessing;
- the US needs to pay much more attention, quickly, to planning on "day after" issues; and that the UN needs to be central to it.

KEY MESSAGES

Strategy

- 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:
 - the military build up is already producing some 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;
 - 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 co-operation (U2s, interviews). Blix brought this out very clearly in New York on Monday, shifting the terms of the debate against Iraq. More time will increase the evidence of systematic failure by Saddam to

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comply. Before long likely to produce compelling evidence of Iraqi deceit (either a find of WMD or Inspectors obviously blocked from finding it);

- the mounting pressure is finally galvanising the moderate Arabs to work with us to get Saddam out using the leverage 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;
- meanwhile we can ramp up further pressure on Saddam, eg by arguing that UNMOVIC should destroy the prohibited al-Samoud missiles.

Second resolution

- Basis for this approach would need to be a second resolution. Would transform the politics in UK, Europe and wider world. Might even produce implosion in Iraq.
- Will not be easy to get this through the Security Council but we got one last time. Many countries will be tempted to abstain. Will take an effort to get the nine positive votes needed.
- But we can might succeed if Blix makes more reports like that of 28 January. This means giving the inspectors the intelligence and opportunity to exploit it. Even if they do not discover WMD they will expose further Iraqi non-cooperation.
- If we give UNMOVIC more time, French/Germans will no doubt claim they have achieved something: let them. They may then be more helpful later: more time in any case improves our prospects of Arab support – especially if we can make progress on MEPP – so building on benefits of your decision to go the UN route in September.
- Moderate Arabs may be pressing for swift military action when the time comes. But they also need a second resolution and wider international support for force, as well as being seen to give Saddam Hussein one last chance to climb down.
- We have been working up various options, which we will share with USUN.

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Timing

- All these trends point to a crunch time around end March.
- Earlier would mean US had to go it alone. UK politics and legal concerns make it in practice essential 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 regime change if necessary. But we have to contrive circumstances in which we can carry a broad coalition and domestic opinion with us:
 - going without UN carries a big price: resentment in Muslim world/damage to our fundamental interests in region, including increased terrorism/risk of being stuck for years with burden of rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq.
 - working with UN will produce a huge prize: for Iraq, rebuild with international support which allows us to exit; for region and for other would be proliferators who will get a powerful message; and for domestic opinion which would be more convinced by the legal case. That prize is worth taking more time over.

Saudi plan for urging Saddam to go into exile

- See some merit in Saudis' idea for Arab League pressure on Saddam to go. Prince Saud (Saudi Foreign Minister) told me on 29 January that they are they are also about to produce further ideas for, essentially, some form of medium term (five year) UN trusteeship for Iraq. This could be worth close examination. Even if it doesn't work, it would be worth trying.

'Day-after' issues

- Our officials are in touch on 'day-after' issues. They need agreement from us on overall framework to carry out detailed operational planning.
- Coalition needs an overall 'winning concept'. Should embrace both military action and 'day-after' administration in Iraq. Would be pointless and damaging to win war and lose peace.
- Would be irresponsible to abandon Iraq quickly after toppling Saddam. Risk of civil war would be real. And Iraq's neighbours would get dragged in, creating instability in the whole region.

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- We must leave Iraq and region better off after our intervention. As well as disposing of Iraq's WMD and its oppressive security forces, that means presiding over wide political and economic reforms. Will take time to introduce and take root, and will go beyond a military occupation. So international community is in for a long haul.
- All the evidence from the region suggests that coalition forces will not be seen as liberators for long, if at all. Our motives are regarded with huge suspicion. The Iraqis, including those in exile, (and the Arabs more generally) want us gone quickly. Our occupation and administration of Iraq will become more unpopular and its lawfulness more debatable, the longer it continues.
- Blunt fact is that in those circumstances any reforms are unlikely to stick. Iraqis will need a legitimate international presence holding the ring while they themselves set up new, Iraqi, structures. Can't foist these on them. Iraqi opposition groups can be involved but should not be parachuted into power.
- So we should plan to keep period of government by military coalition as short as possible, and introduce quickly an international administration with UN blessing.
- Our joint irritation at some aspects of the UN should not blind us to the significant advantages it can bring us in Iraq after the conflict.
- Iraqis more likely to accept a UN-mandated transitional administration than a coalition or US one. Same goes for Arab world. UN will facilitate the participation of Iraqis in the transitional administration. So our reforms stand a significantly better chance of succeeding in a UN context.
- By reducing hostility to the coalition, UN route reduces risk that our actions serve as a recruiting sergeant for Islamist terrorist organisations.
- Makes sense for UN to be in charge of oil revenues to avoid accusations that aim of military action was to get control of oil.
- UN provides best forum for co-ordinating humanitarian agencies and organisations, refugees, reconstruction, public information etc.
- UN will make it easier for other countries to support, practically and politically, reforms we want.

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- By making burden sharing easier, UN provides the best prospect of a clean exit strategy.
- UN has the stamina to stay in Iraq for a long time, which will be needed for our ambitious reforms to stick.
- UN's record on transitional administrations is not perfect. But getting better with experience. Australians speak very highly of its contribution in East Timor.
- Understand US concern to keep control of military and security issues. Agree UN should not take this on – at least, not at first. UN can be very flexible over structures. Should be perfectly possible for coalition to do military/security and UN to do civilian administration - as in Kosovo.
- So no need to put coalition forces under UN control. Can get best of both worlds: UN legitimisation and freedom of action within a UNSC mandate. But it will be important to tie down, at outset, relative responsibilities of coalition and of UN.
- UNSG must appoint right Special Representative. We should keep in close touch with Annan about this.
- Restoring oil production will be an immediate challenge. Oil sector will need some technology and a lot of capital. We must encourage an open investment regime and a level playing field for foreign companies.
- Our media and Parliament have not yet focussed on day-after questions. But it would be very difficult to sustain a UK contribution to day-after if our occupation of Iraq were opposed, in Iraq and in region. Don't want a repeat of 1920s.

NATO/Iraq (if raised)

- Agree your objective of a NATO role. But - frustrating though it is - there is very little chance of getting formal NAC decisions at present. Worth waiting until Allies are closer to consensus in the Security Council on the way ahead. We'll need to review NATO handling then. Will work with you to ensure a good outcome.
- If Turkey invokes Article 4, we will of course support fully. And will work with you to ensure that NATO honours its obligations.

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BACKGROUND

US opinion polls

1. The latest opinion poll in the US confirm that Americans continue to support the general idea of military action to remove Saddam from power: 68% in favour and 25% against. But beneath the headline support, there is evidence of public caution and anxiety. Only 26% support was without allies (down from 33% in September). Of a number of war scenarios presented by the poll, war gets majority support only if inspections uncover actual WMD. 53% of Americans think Bush has not yet made the case for war. We see no evidence of domestic pressure on Bush to go for early military action.

Legal position

2. There are concerns that a second resolution authorising the use of force is needed before force may lawfully be employed against Iraq to enforce the WMD obligations in the SCRs. If a draft resolution fails because of a veto (or indeed because it does not receive nine positive votes), the fact that the veto is judged "unreasonable" is immaterial from a legal point of view.

'Day-after' issues

3. The task will be to persuade Bush that winning the peace will be more difficult than winning the war and requires working with the UN. The NSC/Pentagon instinct will be for the US to run the country with willing allies, co-opting right-minded Iraqis including those in exile. But US unilateralism will be strongly opposed in Iraq and in the region. US-introduced reforms will be tainted and will not stick. Trying to internationalise the transition without using the UN would be unlikely to succeed, as the US whip hand would be only too visible.

4. Within the Administration, hostility to the UN is sometimes encapsulated by opposition to "sacrificing US lives to liberate Iraq only to hand it over to Kofi Annan". But this should not be allowed to prejudice the coalition against the crucial advantages it brings. Putting the UN in the centre of reforming Iraq, after the coalition topples Saddam, is as important as following the UN route to disarm Iraq.

5. The way to present the case is to focus on the practical advantages of involving the UN. But there is also the question of international legitimacy. We shall need UNSC authorisation for practical purposes eg any change to the sanctions regime and to the Oil for Food arrangements, as well as for the far-reaching reforms we plan to introduce to Iraq. The lawfulness of an

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occupation, post-conflict, will also be related to the lawfulness of the military action itself.

6. US planning overall on day-after lags well behind military planning. They are putting a huge effort into humanitarian relief and immediate post-conflict reconstruction, which the military expect to control, making use of NGOs and UN agencies as far as possible. On the economy, the US believes that the Oil for Food regime would have to be maintained at first. They envisage generous debt rescheduling. But there is no US government position on how to take forward economic reform, nor on the sensitive issue of how to manage the oil sector. US thinking on what comes between the coalition military administration on the first day-after and handing power back to a new Iraqi government is bogged down in inter-agency disputes.

7. So the Prime Minister's visit is well timed to influence US planning. Indeed, it is vital that the US and we agree on the day-after political framework as US and UK commanders will find themselves responsible for day-after issues from the beginning of the conflict, as coalition troops begin to occupy Iraq.

8. The US have invested a lot of energy in cultivating the Iraqi exile opposition. But the opposition have not worked together well because of personality clashes and an obsession with religious and ethnic identities. There is also tension between opposition groups who have supporters in Iraq itself (e.g. the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (whose leaders the Prime Minister met in December) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq); and those who have support among the Washington establishment but little if any in Iraq itself (e.g. Ahmed Chalabi and the Monarchist Sherif Ali bin Hussein).

9. When Iraqis are being encouraged to join representative structures, we should concentrate on finding leaders from within the country: technocrats, tribal and religious leaders etc. Iraqi exiles can join the debate on Iraq's future but will have to test their credibility with the Iraqi people, not be parachuted in by the US/UK. Equally important will be efforts to encourage Iraqis to organise politically on the basis of redeveloping Iraq rather than emphasising and exacerbating ethnic and sectarian tensions.

10. Officials are engaged in trilateral (US/UK/Australian) talks on day-after. The Australians are keen advocates of the UN route too. Without agreement, which can only come from President Bush and the Prime Minister, on the overall framework for day-after, operational planning will continue to be handicapped.

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NATO/Iraq

11. At the 22 January NAC, Turkey called for immediate formal contingency planning for NATO military action on the basis of earlier US proposals. These included; deployment to Turkey of surveillance and early warning aircraft, theatre missile defences and chemical/biological defences; force protection at key US installations; and 'back-filling' for Allied forces in the Balkans. Fifteen Allies were in favour, four opposed. Germany and France were the principal opponents, arguing essentially that with UN efforts at a delicate stage, the timing was not right. Belgium and Luxembourg provided limited support. The issue was raised again informally on 28 January. But positions did not change. No further discussions are scheduled. We do not expect significant movement until there is consensus in the UNSC.

12. Turkey has not/not formally cited Article 4 of NATO's Washington Treaty which provides for Alliance consultations if an Ally's "territorial integrity, political independence or security" is threatened. Article 4 was invoked, at Turkish behest, during the Gulf conflict in 1991. We believe NATO's obligations to Turkey are clear and we accept the 1991 precedent. The US is in close touch with us and with the Turks on the timing of any Turkish request under Article 4.

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ANNEX 1

VIEWS OF KEY GOVERNMENTS

EU governments (in rough order of helpfulness)

Spanish views are nearly identical to those of HMG. Depending on the circumstances, they would not rule out military action without a second resolution. They are anxious to keep in step with us in the Security Council. Public opinion is strongly opposed to military action (last poll showed 75% against).

Italian views are also very close to ours, including on action without a second resolution. A possible military role is apparently still under active consideration. Public opinion is strongly against military action.

Denmark took a robust line as EU Presidency last year. The Danish Prime Minister says he does not see a second resolution as a legal requirement, but regards it as politically desirable to have one. He is happy for UNMOVIC to have more time but regards Saddam's non-cooperation as unacceptable. The Danes are considering how to respond to a US request for military assistance. Public opinion opposes military action (87% against without second resolution).

The Netherlands position is similar to ours. But the Dutch Labour Party, now in coalition talks with the Prime Minister, Balkenende, favours the UN route and the government position has softened in recent weeks, moving further away from the US. Their main concerns are over tougher US rhetoric, and the need for proof that Iraq is a threat. There is a Dutch general at Tampa (Centcom). The Dutch stand ready to backfill, e.g. in Afghanistan, rather than make a front-line military contribution. They place great importance on the UN being quickly at the centre of day-after work.

The views of the Portuguese Prime Minister, Durao Barroso, and his coalition partner (and Defence Minister) are close to ours and the US's. But they are constrained by cohabitation and domestic opinion. President Sampaio, who is Supreme Commander of the armed forces and chairs the National Defence Council, is against action. The opposition, doing well in popularity polls, is in the vanguard against military action. Recent surveys show 61% oppose.

Ireland, a strong supporter of the UN, though of any alliance, could contemplate military action only on the basis of a UNSCR. There is significant public opposition, but the Government is defending its commitment to allow the US use of Shannon airport.

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Luxembourg is not vocal. It supports disarming Iraq, but through the Security Council; and hankers for an EU approach. Public opinion is strongly against military action.

Austria is prepared to give Iraq one last chance, but is realistic about the likelihood of military action and wants to get on with contingency planning.

Sweden strongly supports UNMOVIC, who it says should be given time to do their job. The Swedes are nervous that contingency planning may indicate military action is inevitable.

The Finnish Foreign Minister, Tuomioja, is close to the Germans. But the Prime Minister, Lipponen, who leads, could contemplate action with UN backing (not necessarily a second resolution). In an open EU split, Finland would side with France/Germany. Public opinion thinks UNMOVIC should have more time, and is firmly against action without a second resolution. The Finns have said that they will contribute to post-action reconstruction.

Greece, as EU Presidency obliged to find the EU centre of gravity, It may yet launch a last minute peace mission; would like to constrain EU Member States on the Security Council; is opposed to action without a second resolution; and is not convinced that even if Iraq were found in further material breach military action would be the right consequence.

The French President, Chirac, is strongly opposed to military action "unless Saddam does something unacceptable". He does not believe the present level of Iraqi non-cooperation should be a casus belli. He is very worried about the destabilisation of Iraq and the region; and believes Iraq poses less of a WMD threat than North Korea, and that the US is motivated by oil and domestic politics. A recent opinion poll suggests that 79% think France should use its Security Council veto against a second resolution.

The German Chancellor, Schroeder, has ruled out support for a second resolution authorising force. Public opinion is strongly opposed to war. Germany is even hesitant about AWACS backfilling within NATO in Turkey.

The Belgian government's position reflects strong public antipathy to military action even with a UN resolution. Belgium wants more time for UNMOVIC, and wants an EU initiative, including direct contacts with Iraq.

EU candidates

Turkey wants a peaceful solution (hence its recent, unproductive, regional Summit) but will balance this against their strategic alliance with the US.

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Turkey wants a second UN resolution, not least because this would help secure parliamentary approval for US military deployments in Turkey.

The Central Europeans are generally keen to support the US. UN cover has not generally featured prominently in debate and decision-making. Hungarian support is already evident from its public offer of airbases (including to train Iraqi oppositionists), airspace. Poland is another firm ally, and would provide assistance for military action. Latvia and Estonia have already granted the US airspace. Lithuania accepts that the Iraqi WMD threat must be dealt with but has made no public commitment. Of the countries where UN cover is an issue, the Czech agreement to make their NBC Protection Unit in Kuwait available is conditional on a UN mandate; the Slovaks have expressed a preference for UN backing; and Slovenia hopes military action can be deferred until after March, the possible date for their NATO referendum.

Cyprus has been helpful to UNMOVIC and over use of the SBAs. But it attaches importance to UN legitimacy and is deeply concerned about the effect on tourism. Malta attaches importance to UN cover.

Other G8

The Russian position continues to evolve as US pressure on Iraq increases. The Russians favour more weapons inspections, which they consider going well, partly, they claim, thanks to their own efforts to persuade Baghdad to co-operate. They oppose unilateral military action. But recent statements by Putin suggest Russia would try to avoid using its Security Council veto (but is unlikely to support a second resolution) and that Russia could support "tougher decisions" if Iraq obstructs UNMOVIC.

The Canadian Prime Minister, Chretien, has made clear that while he supports SCR 1441, Canada could not be involved in any military action without UN backing or support US/UK national action. His own party is 80/20 against action without a second resolution.

Japan has consistently stressed the need for an international approach. If it came to military action, it would feel able to help (within the constitutional limits) only under a second resolution.

Middle East governments

The Kuwaitis see war as inevitable, welcome the prospect of Saddam's demise, and have been fully supportive on all military requests. But they are worried about their own isolation in the Arab world, and would welcome anything to

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decrease this (such as a second resolution; Arab initiatives to persuade Saddam to step down; MEPP progress).

Even the non-Kuwaiti governments privately keenest to see action taken quickly (notably the Saudis, Jordanians and the Egyptians) envisage that this would have to be on the basis of a second Security Council resolution. Mubarak made this clear to the Prime Minister in Egypt at the New Year. And the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud, has made clear that his proposal for a last-minute Arab effort to get Saddam to stand down is based on the assumption that there would be a second resolution after which the Arabs would have a ten-day grace period in which to act.

When these pro-Western (and dependent on the US) leaders talk about getting military action over and done with, they are reflecting the pressure which endless speculation about military action against Iraq puts them under. They also regularly make the slightly separate point that any military campaign should be short.

These governments' enthusiasm for or acquiescence in military action will be correspondingly weakened if there is no resolution; and they could even be tipped into public criticism, though we doubt whether this would in the end lead them to withhold authorisation for operational activities.

Other Arab governments, less convinced of the need for action against Saddam and more apprehensive of the local consequences for them, are correspondingly more insistent that if action must be taken, it should be firmly based on a second resolution, after all other options have been exhausted – the only way they can begin to justify such drastic action to their own public opinion. If a resolution is not adopted, their opposition to an operation will be all the more vocal.

Israel alone will be disappointed if military action does not take place.

Others

Australia is our staunchest ally, determined to stick with the US and UK come what may - Australian military units departed for the region last week. Nevertheless Prime Minister Howe emphasised to the Prime Minister on 28 January that it would be enormously helpful to have a second resolution; if it would help achieve this, he would favour allowing UNMOVIC a few more weeks, but not months.

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China maintains resolutions should be fully implemented and Iraq, but has a strong preference for political and diplomatic means. It is uneasy at the military build-up in the Gulf and at the likely humanitarian cost of military action. It thinks the inspections effective and proceeding smoothly with Iraqi co-operation, and has called for UNMOVIC to have more time. Though unlikely to support a second resolution it would not necessarily veto one.

Middle East Department
FCO
30 January 2003

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