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To: NYMIX - eTelegrams
From: COMCEN Gateway 2
Subject: OUTTELS:DD:CONF:PERSONAL IRAQ NEXT STEPS:NYMIS/FCOLN-15185031
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Personal for Private Secretary, Ricketts, Manning (No.10) (Resident Clerk please pass) and for Ambassadors

SUBJECT: PERSONAL IRAQ NEXT STEPS

Summary

1. The votes are not there for Plan A. Best area for Plan B options is some kind of loaded ultimatum. Obviously, US flexibility will be limited - I talk to Negroponte. I shall see Blix privately on 17 February. He has some ideas.

Detail

2. We can proceed with putting down a draft resolution next week. Our current US/UK version will not get nine votes, but it will signal the beginning of the end-game and Council minds will have to concentrate within a harder context. Even so, sheer argument is unlikely to deliver the cover which the UK needs.
3. You may wish to re-examine the ultimatum options. A mere postponement of the date to, say, 14 March will not on its own be enough. If the judgement is left to Blix, e.g., to say whether or not Iraq has cooperated "immediately, actively and unconditionally", he may not be capable of taking the heat or Council members may try to alter the teams in their favour. In any case, we would have an American problem. Negroponte told me on 15 Feb that Bush would not agree to anything which changed the agreed terms of 1441 (especially op 2), or altered their current legal foundation for action, or ensnared the Council in endless argument about interpretation.
4. Negroponte said that he had talked to Powell today: their present thinking on a second resolution was to put own text down

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in mid-week and set a date (probably end-Feb) by which it would have to be voted upon. That would set the scene for the hard reality debate we wanted. I said that London would probably not be in a position to discuss details of our end-game strategy until Tuesday, i.e. after return from Brussels. Negroponte thought that this would be all right. He/Powell were disinclined to use the 18 Feb Open Debate to announce a US/UK draft, or indeed speak at all. Better to use informals on 19 Feb. I said that sounded wise. He thought the French disinclined to speak also.

5. My view remains - and I told Negroponte this in general terms - that we have to have something more. Ideally, we should not move to the use of force without a find, a smoking gun. We should maximise the possibilities for that. We should expose the French reinforcement proposals as clearly inadequate for the disarmament of Iraq; indeed, no proposition other than war has yet been made which will realistically achieve that - something I said in terms to an EU HOMS meeting this morning.

6. There should therefore be other elements in the ultimatum which either test the French idea to destruction (e.g. by a Saddam refusal to take the fence) or give the inspectors a real chance to deliver a judgement which will convince six more Council members. Here Blix could play a role. He showed you a piece of paper on 14 February with ideas for an ultimatum: you then mentioned it to Powell (my telno 269). There should be room to move him to a firmer approach which raises the chances of the inspectors achieving more. He does not want the UN system to fail any more than we do.

7. I had a word with him on the telephone this morning (after my telecon to Manning) to give him the gist of the above, and I fixed to see him at 1900Z 17 February. He responded well. He is interested in further discussion about more vigorous inspections within a time period, though downbeat about the amount of time genuinely available from the US. One of his ideas, ordering the destruction of the rocket motors, he said he would implement anyway this coming week, "perhaps Wednesday or Thursday". Another, a much more insistent, inclusive and simultaneous approach to interviews, he is prepared to work on and ask for help on. I said I thought the Council would agree to increased powers/resources for that if necessary. A further menu item, the requirement for Saddam to leave by a certain date, he thought impractical (so do I, as an element in a Council decision). Requiring definite answers on the principal unresolved questions is still worth exploring (not because it will get us clean-cut progress, but because it may be easier to secure a Blix judgement on a specific area than on the general criterion of cooperation). He also mentioned the NFZs to you: difficult territory, but air exclusion zones could be looked at.

8. Our catchment area for these sorts of ideas might be the original US draft for 1441, within which several of the items above fall. So does reinforced protection/manpower behind the inspectors. Blix mentioned specifically to me this morning arrangements to halt traffic and search for hidden things on wheels. If we and the US are true to our pronouncements of force as a last resort, bringing the Americans back to their mid-September approach as a last gasp before pressing the plunger at least has a certain logical force.

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9. It might be sensible for someone senior in London to give Washington a view on when we might be ready to discuss the end-game in more detail. Putting down the Plan A text and subsequently switching tracks might add to the awkwardness.

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