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AW  
MWT

LOOSE MINUTE

DG Op Pol/ 4/6/1 (40/03)

7 March 2003

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

PS/Min(AF)

PS/PUS

PSO/CDS

PS/VCDs

DCDS(C)

ACDS(Ops)

Head of Sec(I)

DAO

CRITICAL DECISION CHECKLIST

Issue

1. What lead-time does MOD need before 'A day (defined as the overt start of the military (air) campaign)? What are the actions needed in this period?

Recommendation

2. That the Secretary of State:
  - a. notes the attached summary and that you,
  - b. notify No 10 using the note attached.

Timing

3. Urgent

Detail

4. Preparations for military action have been bedevilled for many months by a lack of certainty about a military start-date. This uncertainty has derived both from practical considerations (eg whether Turkey was in or out) and from political issues (eg when will the UN process culminate or collapse?). These uncertainties remain. Nevertheless there is a palpable sense of imminence in US rhetoric and actions. We therefore, need a clear sense of what actions have to be taken before forces could be committed to action.

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5. The key events are set out on the attached note.

Ian Lee

IAN LEE  
DG Op Pol

Enclosure: Draft & Table

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**ANNEX**

**NOTE ON CRITICAL DECISIONS**

The lead-times below assume the prior, or concurrent resolution of the following:

- a. Overall legal authority for use of military force (Attorney General);
- b. Parliamentary approval;
- c. Confirmation by CDS/Chiefs of Staff that the military plan is viable and risks acceptable (in hand);
- d. Agreement of host nations (eg Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar) to conduct of offensive operations from their territory (FCO);
- e. Provision of resources for immediate humanitarian assistance (in hand);
- f. Targeting policy and delegation (in hand);
- g. Declaration/notification to, inter alia, regional states; UNMOVIC/IAEA; Iraq (FCO);
- h. Agreement with US on Phase IV assumptions (IPU in hand);
- i. Finalisation of military campaign objectives (Cabinet Office, in hand).

The timing of many of these is variable but should be in place before military action starts (which should be assumed as A-2).

From a MOD point of view the following lead-times for action are required (measured against A day).

- Special Forces –
- Final briefing and preparations by operational commanders – 3 days
- Host Nation agreement to offensive operations - [4 days TBC].

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