

To:
From: MOSCX - eTelegrams
Subject: FW: I:PP:CONF:IRAQ: POLITICAL PROCESS:FCOLN/IRAQR
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-----Original Message-----

From: COMCEN Gateway 1b
Sent: 16 September 2003 23:08
To: MOSCX - eTelegrams
Subject: I:PP:CONF:IRAQ: POLITICAL PROCESS:FCOLN/IRAQR 71:Id=0087627

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LNMXCN 1199 MAMIAN 0282

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TO PRIORITY UKREP IRAQ

TELNO 71

OF 161842Z SEPTEMBER 03

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IRAQREP TELNO 165

FROM POLITICAL DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: IRAQ: POLITICAL PROCESS

SUMMARY

1. We, too, want to stick to the agreed political process, but we are concerned about possible delays over the Constitution.

DETAIL

2. Thank you for your telegram, which helpfully clarifies to us your thinking on the political process. There were one or two points I wanted to respond to.

3. I welcome your confirmation that the political process we mapped out last July remains, in your and Bremer's view, achievable. Sticking to that approach would be our best bet. Part of our thinking has always been that we have limited time to achieve a transition to a sovereign Iraqi government and that we would risk losing strategic consent if there were no clear timescale and for no end in sight to the occupation. Fulfilling Bremer's Seven Steps by the middle of 2004 would be ideal. If you assess that we will

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comfortably have longer than that, please let us know. My own instinct when I left seven weeks ago was that a target of the middle of the year should be our aim, but that would allow some slippage into the autumn. Since then of course we have had the major terrorist attacks which will have contributed to sectarian tensions and possibly made the transition even more complex.

4. Our main concern here is that the constitutional process seems to be in danger of drifting to the right, with talk by the Preparatory Commission of a transitional constitution and elections to the Constitutional Conference. Our priority, on the political front, should be to keep it to the envisaged schedule, i.e. convening a Constitutional Conference in the next month, getting it to conclude its work in the spring and have a referendum and then elections shortly thereafter.

5. The question of a different political approach would arise if you and we assessed that that was no longer deliverable or, for whatever reason, we no longer have that length of time available to us. This is a more important factor than the French arguments calling for sovereignty to be handed to the Iraqis (whatever that means in practice) soon. The French recognise that real powers have to be transferred gradually once the Iraqi institutions are capable of exercising them. And at the P5 Geneva meeting, Hans Corell helpfully advised that the transfer of executive powers was the only issue that really mattered.

6. We are looking at fallback options, including the possibility of the sort of two stage transition that you were advocating earlier this year from New York - the present arrangement with the Coalition in control switching to an Interim Government, along the lines of Afghanistan or East Timor. There will need to be some process to trigger such a change: and you are quite right to point out that the legitimacy of the IGC and the Ministers would be much more open to question if they became fully empowered without some legitimising process. I think, however, that it is important early on to nail two issues. First, US (and British) forces would probably be needed for some time after executive powers are transferred to ensure security. New arrangements would have to be devised to provide for that. This is scarcely something new: the Americans had the same responsibility in Germany long after executive powers had been transferred to the Germans. Similarly, US taxpayers' money committed to Iraq would have to remain under US direction. This would be no different from large US spending programmes in other countries which, while subject to an agreement with the host government, remain under US control.

7. We agree with your conclusion that we should explore this alternative route. But we will do so circumspectly, and only activate it if the existing plan has to be reviewed. We are not at the point where we and the Americans seriously differ; but we are more open than them to considering alternatives, should that be necessary.

8. I am conscious that, for both of us, where you stand on all this depends to some extent on where you sit. But we will be much influenced by your own analysis and advice, because you are best placed to assess the capacity of Iraqi institutions to take on more authority, and also because Bremer will have a critical voice in the US debate. For now, we must focus on the constitutional process. We are doing some work here on the constitutional issues and the line

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that we should take, privately, with key Iraqi players. We will want your input to this work as it develops.

STRAW

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