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S 374 /02

From the Private Secretary

11 December 2002

Dear Peter,

### IRAQ: MILITARY PREPARATIONS

This letter is extremely sensitive. It must not be copied further, and must be shown only to those with a real need to know.

The Prime Minister met the Defence Secretary and CDS to discuss the issues raised in your letter of 5 December about military planning. C, Jonathan Powell, David Manning, Alastair Campbell, Sally Morgan and I were also present.

The Defence Secretary and CDS updated the Prime Minister on US and UK military planning, including on the need to align the readiness of US and UK forces.

David Manning and C briefed the Prime Minister on their recent visits to Washington and on UK attempts to secure credible evidence that the Iraqi WMD declaration was false. The Prime Minister said that we needed to analyse the Iraqi declaration, ask pointed questions about issues which the declaration failed to deal with (including those left over from the last UNSCOM report in 1999), encourage Blix to ask these questions of the Iraqis too, and continue to work on securing credible evidence that Saddam was pursuing WMD programmes. The Prime Minister agreed to speak to Bush and possibly Blix in the next few days.

The Prime Minister was content that military preparations from January would become increasingly visible. These should be presented as sensible contingency preparations against the possibility that Iraq would not comply with UNSCR 1441.

I am copying this to Simon McDonald (FCO), Mark Bowman (HMT), Ian Fletcher, John Scarlett and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office) and PS/C.

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*Tom*

*Matthew*

**MATTHEW RYCROFT**

Peter Watkins

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