

RESTRICTED
RUSSIA/IRAQ
From: MOSCOW

TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 087
OF 171208Z MARCH 03
INFO IMMEDIATE CABINET OFFICE, CANBERRA, EU POSTS
INFO IMMEDIATE MIDDLE EAST POSTS, MODUK, NATO POSTS
INFO IMMEDIATE SECURITY COUNCIL POSTS ST PETERSBURG
INFO IMMEDIATE TOKYO, UKMIS GENEVA, YEKATERINBURG

FCO telno 136 to Abidjan
SUMMARY

1. Russians remain firmly opposed to our resolution. Putin speaks out against war.

DETAIL

2. The Russians know that the time for diplomacy is running out. Russia made its position on our resolution clear in the declaration issued jointly with France and Germany on 15 March ("in the present circumstances nothing justifies abandoning the inspection process and resorting to the use of force"). Fedotov (Deputy Foreign Minister) was quoted on 17 March as saying our resolution stood "no chance" of being adopted.

3. Addressing the Muslim clerics of Chechnya before their visit to Baghdad on 17 March Putin said that "a possible war in Iraq is a mistake fraught with the gravest consequences, which may result in casualties and destabilise the international situation in general". Separately, the MFA announced today they had asked Russian nationals to leave Iraq. The Russian Embassy in Baghdad had been reduced to an essential staff of 25, who would remain in the country.

4. As discussed with the Emergency Unit, we do not propose to seek to lobby the MFA again along the lines of TUR.

5. (Contact for this telegram: on Firecrest or

LYNE

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