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11-MAR-2003 15:15 FROM FCO LCC

TO

P.02/05

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From:  
Sent: 11 March 2003 14:51  
To: Peter Ricketts;  
Subject: Iraq: Line to Take With Russians  
Importance: High

We've been in touch with HMA Moscow who advises the following for forthcoming phone calls with the Russians. You will be best placed on how much of the sales pitch it is possible/realistic to make i.e. where we currently stand with the US and the Mexicans/Chileans.

1. The Russian public bottom line is that they will not vote for a Resolution which authorises the use of force in circumstances where they consider this not to be justified.
2. The private bottom line is that they expect the Americans to go ahead anyway and don't want to be implicated.

HMA Moscow recommends that our sales pitch therefore needs to be that:

- Our latest proposal represents a genuine last chance for Saddam. We hope he will take it. If he does, we ?AND THE AMERICANS? are agreed that force need not be used, so long as he continues to comply.
- If he spurns it, it will be clear to all that he does not intend to disarm; and that the UNSC therefore has to assume its responsibilities.
- The proposal has taken into account what the Russians have been saying [viz. their Ambassador in Washington] and also the concerns of other UNSC members, including Chile & Mexico, plus what Blix said in the clusters paper...

If possible:

- We have (with some difficulty) persuaded the Americans to come on board. [Powell/ Bush ready to confirm this?] But there is no chance of pulling them any further. This is the outer limit, and the one chance we all have of preserving SC unity and avoiding all the downside of a sharp and hurtful division on a major international issue.
- Having formulated a position which does not require the Russians to authorise the automatic use of force [? correct wording?], we hope that they will now join us and other SC members in a united message to Saddam that he must use this last chance.

FURTHER STEPS:

To give this the best chance of working with the Russians, HMA Moscow's ideal follow-up would be:

- Messages from Chile & Mexico that they are backing our new proposal and will vote for it. If that is not possible then clear public signs that Chile and Mexico are on board could have an impact.
- Confirmation from the US that they are genuinely prepared to give it their blessing.

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- Supporting noises from Berlusconi and Aznar to Putin, warning that Russia should not hazard all that is stake in her relations with Europe and the USA over this. (This would offer the UK, Italy and Spain as European counterweights to the French/German contacts with Russia).

I also attach HMA's e-mail analysis from yesterday of the Russian position.

Tim Barrow



FW

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