



SECRETARY OF STATE

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cc PS
Iraq Disarmament

5 March 2003

MO 6/17/15C

Dear Kara,

RJ 7/3

A VISION FOR IRAQ AND THE IRAQI PEOPLE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest draft of this paper.

The Defence Secretary agrees strongly that this could have a significant impact on various audiences. Indeed, from a military perspective there is an argument for publishing it as soon as possible, in order to influence the perceptions of those in the Iraqi regime and armed forces who will have decisions to make about their conduct in response to coalition military action. Mr Hoon accepts, however, that the timing of publication must be informed by the demands of the current UNSCR negotiations, where we must avoid exacerbating the difficulties caused by the impression that US military action is inevitable.

On the content of the text, we would prefer the second paragraph to read: "we will do all that we can to minimise civilian casualties or damage to civilian infrastructure, by targeting only legitimate military objectives." On the second page, we would strongly advise deletion of the reference to ensuring that a military campaign "is as swift as possible". Apart from creating a potential rod for our own backs later, this might also encourage Saddam to believe that he could derail a coalition campaign by pursuing the sorts of delaying and disruptive options that we would rather he did not pursue.

On the second page, the Defence Secretary agrees with the Cabinet Office comments that it would be useful in terms of credibility to be able to set out our vision in the more specific text that they propose, recognising that this may add to the challenge of reaching agreement with the US.

Kara Owen
PS/Foreign Secretary

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I am copying this to Matthew Rycroft (No 10), Mark Bowman (HMT), Anna Bewes (DfID), Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office), Sir Jeremy Greenstock (New York) and Tony Brenton (Washington).

Yours,

M J Williams

M J WILLIAMS
Private Secretary

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