

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

IRAQ: DEFENCE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON - 11-12

From: WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 189

OF 110017Z FEBRUARY 03

INFO IMMEDIATE , CABINET OFFICE, CANBERRA, EU POSTS

INFO IMMEDIATE MIDDLE EAST POSTS, MODUK, NEW DELHI, OTTAWA

INFO IMMEDIATE SECURITY COUNCIL POSTS, SOSFA, TOKYO, UKDEL NATO

INFO IMMEDIATE UKMILREP CENTCOM,

SIC: CAO/A2P/A2N/A2M/A2C/A2D/LDQ/INX/19R/19Y/E3A

MIFT

FEBRUARY

Summary

1. Washington is getting ready for war.

Detail

2. The Secretary of State for Defence will be in Washington on 11-12 February for talks with Rumsfeld, Armitage and Rice. Iraq will dominate. Other topics (DPRK, Afghanistan) are covered in MIFT.

Mood in Washington

3. For the Administration and the Hill the time has come to go to war. Powell's presentation to the UNSC has boosted public support for war, including support for action without UN approval, provided that some Allies join in. In Congress, it has silenced most of those who were asking for more evidence. The cautious multilateralists of both parties now accept that the case has been made. Previously dubious big names like Schwarzkopf and Albright are all climbing on board. All the prospective Democratic candidates for the 2004 presidential race have come out in support. They are acutely aware that the Democratic dissent in 1991 left a now indelible stain.

4. The Administration would go to war without a further UNSCR, but knows that others need one. For the time being, Bush is following the UN route and has said publicly that he would support a second resolution. But he will not tolerate another two months' negotiation. Everything points towards early action, possibly by mid-to-late March. The military will be fully in place, and, the White House believes, political support, both domestically and within the region, will wane, the longer Bush is seen to prevaricate.

Inspectors' Report to UNSC

5. This week will see a moment of truth (perhaps the first of many). The Administration considers that Blix and El Baradei have come away from Baghdad with next to nothing. Blix himself has said that the documents handed over did not constitute new evidence. And Iraqi agreement to private interviews and U2 overflights are issues of process, not substance, which should

never have been open to negotiation in the first place. The Administration knows full well that some in the UNSC will seize upon the faintest glimmer of hope of Iraqi co-operation as a

File per

Iraq

DECLASSIFIED

reason to delay decisions. The US bottom line remains full Iraqi co-operation as set out in 1441. Rice will go to New York on 11 February to remind Blix and El Baradei of this before they report again on 14 February.

6. Powell, Rumsfeld and Rice have been quick to pour cold water on the reported Franco-German (and now Russian) idea to triple the number of inspectors, possibly backed by UN peacekeepers. Inspections are predicated on Iraqi co-operation. Blix has said publicly that he is similarly sceptical: "the principal problem is not the number of inspectors but rather the active co-operation of the Iraqi side, as we have said many times."

Allies

7. Although militarily capable of doing so, the US does not want to go it alone. On the Sunday talk shows, Powell and Rice highlighted the support of eighteen European allies and of Turkey and Jordan. Turkish support also matters militarily. This now seems to be falling into place.

8. There are larger issues at stake. Rumsfeld's performance at the Munich Wehrkunde, and Fischer's outburst in response, hit the front pages of the US broadsheets. Rumsfeld's observation about old and new Europe is looking more perceptive by the day. France and Germany are seen as ⁱⁿ Europe. The shenanigans in NATO over precautionary planning for the defence of Turkey has fuelled press speculation about the future relevance of the Alliance (along with that of less sacred cows such as the UN and CFSP). There may be long-term consequences. The possible redeployment to Poland of US forces stationed in Germany may be one. US, especially DoD, attitudes towards an operational NATO (including US commitment to the NATO Response Force and a NATO-friendly ESDP) may be another. Whatever happens in Iraq there is going to be an awful lot of broken transatlantic china to sweep up afterwards.

Aftermath Management

9. These tussles within the international system will only deepen US scepticism about a role for the UN in managing the aftermath in Iraq. We have argued for this, and should persist in doing so. The Administration has produced a flood of concept papers on the various aspects of aftermath management, and the Pentagon is creating a vast team to deal with this issue. But as yet there is no agreed plan and very little clarity about how they are going to establish the necessary legal conditions and international support for a sustained effort. Mr Hoon will wish to press Rumsfeld quite hard on this if we are to be involved.

MEYER

Sent by WASHINGTON on 11-02-2003 17:17
Received by No10 on 11-02-2003 02:16