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To: EMERGENCY UNIT
From: Swift Incoming Telegrams (Machine 1)
Subject: INFO: DD NYMIS/FCOLN 452: PERSONAL : IRAQ: DEVELOPMENTS
ON 16 MARCH
Sent: 17 March 2003 02:59:16 GMT

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SUBJECT: PERSONAL : IRAQ: DEVELOPMENTS ON 16 MARCH

SUMMARY

1. I speak to Council colleagues to get across the core message from the Azores. Not much traction from any of them, the U6 having been turned off by the Americans on 14 March. I agree with Negroponte (and later with the Spanish) that we will tell the press during the morning of 17 March that we have concluded that there is no prospect of putting our resolution to the vote, casting heavy blame on the French. Elements for draft press statement in MIFT. Instructions requested deskby 171200Z.

DETAIL

2. Following the conclusion of the Azores summit we spoke individually to all Council colleagues. I said that there was now a short time left to consider whether the Council could agree at last on an ultimatum to Saddam which, if he did not fulfil it, would result in serious consequences. If their respective Governments were in a position to engage in such a discussion, I would need to hear it as early as possible on 17 March. When asked (as the majority did), I said that I had no (no) instructions as to whether to put the text currently in blue to a vote during the course of 17 March. Pakistan recalled our commitment to try to give 24 hours notice of a vote.

3. La Sabliere (France) did not like this message. He claimed that France had moved significantly during the last two days, as Chirac's interview to be broadcast later that evening would show. Lavrov (Russia) had a similar message. He doubted if our approach would fly. Wang (China) was slightly more forthcoming, and indicated that he would seek fresh instructions from Beijing.

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4. From the U6 I got only a slightly more positive message. All of them indicated that the U6 were no longer in business as far as their own proposals were concerned (

). The Cameroonians said that they thought the ideas in our non-paper might still have some traction, particularly if folded into a resolution. (They also said that they believed that the French were moving - doubtless having been given that message by La Sabliere.) The Guineans had little to offer, but undertook to report if there was movement in Conakry. Akram (Pakistan) was keener to look for movement from the co-sponsors than to indicate there might be any in the U6: the six had all been "slapped down" by the Americans on 14 March. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) said that his instructions were not to contemplate anything that entailed automaticity. The Chileans undertook to report, as did Pleuger (Germany).

5. I also saw Negroponte (USUN) and later Menendez (DPR Spain) to discuss how to handle 17 March. I explained that I had been in contact with other Council colleagues. On the question of whether we would withdraw the resolution I was underlining that I would have no firm instructions before the morning of 17 March. Negroponte was keen that the co-sponsors (with me speaking) should make any announcement on ending our effort on the resolution at the UN microphone rather than in the Council (where we would have to listen to 12 interventions in response). We agreed the best time for an announcement would be late morning (say 1600Z or 1630Z). We agreed the key elements should be that (a) the Azores summit had called for a last effort to see if the Council could unite around an ultimatum; (b) having contacted every member it was clear that Council consensus was not possible within the terms of 1441, given the determination of one country in particular to block any ultimatum; (c) we would therefore not be pursuing a vote; (d) the Azores communiques had made clear the positions of our governments on the way forward. I agreed to work up a draft (suggested text in MIFT).

6. We discussed the French/German/Russian idea of a Ministerial to discuss the work programme. Negroponte said that Powell was insistent that it should not take place on 18 March. I said that you could also not make that day, and were not currently inclined to come in any case. I noted that Traore (Guinea, President) was keen not to have Guinea's Ministerial-level 18 March Africa workshop dislodged and that we should use this and other arguments to delay the meeting. We agreed that the idea of discussing the work programme would look increasingly irrelevant after our announcement. Negroponte said he also recognised that we would face General Assembly (eg Uniting for Peace) challenges. The US was prepared to pull out all the stops and noted how the U6 had rapidly become the U0 thanks to US pressure. I underlined that we would probably lose a GA motion but would need to be able to point to a respectable minority in our favour. Thomson noted that by 19 March we might be able to point to the prospect of a new resolution on Oil for Food (OFF) which would help us to argue that the Council remained "seized" (making a Uniting for Peace resolution more difficult).

7. Later I updated Annan and Blix saying I would be receiving final instructions, eg on whether to stop pursuing the resolution, on the morning of 17 March.

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COMMENT

8. Grateful for instructions and comments on the draft statement in MIFT deskby 171200Z. (I have assumed you will want to be fairly strong on the French.) I will be seeing Negroponte first thing in the morning to finalise tactics and the statement. Unless you object, I would intend to give Blix and Annan advance warning that I will be making an announcement (I can raise the issue of evacuating staff) while also giving Security Council members some notice that I will be going to the microphone.

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