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To: Amanda Tanfield
From:
Subject: FW: INFO: DD NYMIS/FCOLN 271: PERSONAL IRAQ: MEETINGS
WITH BLIX AND NEGROPONTE
Sent: 18 February 2003 09:06:19 GMT

-----Original Message-----

From: Swift Incoming Telegrams (Machine 1)
Sent: 18 February 2003 00:28
To: MENAD
Subject: INFO: DD NYMIS/FCOLN 271: PERSONAL IRAQ: MEETINGS WITH BLIX AND
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PART 1 OF 2

SUBJECT: PERSONAL IRAQ: MEETINGS WITH BLIX AND NEGROPONTE

SUMMARY

1. Blix hands over informal paper fleshing out ideas for an ultimatum (please protect). Inspections should cease if the Council agrees that key outstanding questions have not been resolved or key tasks (e.g. destroying rockets and ensuring private interviews) not completed. UNMOVIC would take the key outstanding questions from their "clusters" document.
2. Negroponte shows interest in an ultimatum with concrete tests, but advises against language renegotiating 1441, suggests we keep the tests out of the resolution, and suggests we avoid putting the whole judgement of compliance on Blix's shoulders.

DETAIL

3. Blix and I met on 17 February. I was accompanied by
Blix presented me with a paper on an ultimatum

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(by fax to Ricketts and Chaplin - please protect carefully). Blix said he would show the paper to us and John Wolf only. The paper suggests that:

- UNMOVIC/IAEA should submit by, say 1 March, a list of unresolved disarmament issues, indicating which, in their view, are key;
- Iraq should destroy, under UNMOVIC/IAEA supervision, all missiles and other items identified as prohibited;
- Iraq should present any remaining proscribed items for elimination. Doing so would not constitute a material breach (comment: presumably to get round the problem identified by El-Baradei that Iraq may fear material breach if it does surrender its weapons and material breach if it does not);
- Iraq should ensure that interviewees are made available for private interviews as required by UNMOVIC/IAEA, inside or outside Iraq;
- Iraq should facilitate the establishment of an effective system of road-checks;
- UNMOVIC and IAEA should report by a certain date on whether the disarmament issues have been resolved and whether Iraq has fulfilled the other obligations above;
- if the Council concludes on the basis of these reports that Iraq has not fulfilled its obligations, inspections should cease and the Council should consider other measures.

4. I said the paper contained useful elements. The UK remained committed to disarmament by peaceful means and to a second resolution, but we had to have disarmament. We wanted to force the issue in the next four weeks (we might have less time if the Americans balked). It was sensible to think about an ultimatum. We wanted to set parameters that were fair, both in terms of allowing a peaceful solution and to Blix himself. But they also had to be credible, delivering clear evidence of a change of heart by Iraq if the process was not to come to an end.

5. Blix said he felt that Villepin would not be against a deadline and subsequent military action if co-operation was not forthcoming. He had also found Anna Lindt quite tough. He showed us briefly the clusters document with a list of questions for each of the 13 clusters. He had told his staff that this must include questions on remaining hardware (to ensure the Iraqis explained what had happened to it or presented it for destruction). Speaking frankly, he could not judge at this stage how good the document was, but it was something on which his experts had worked extensively. I said that we would need half a dozen up front questions for any ultimatum. Blix said that the key questions probably boiled down to anthrax, VX, and missiles (though John Wolf would probably say all outstanding questions were key). Blix had been thinking in terms of laying out all the questions. We wondered whether one possibility might be laying out all the questions - to illustrate how much Iraq had to do - but drawing out some early benchmarks.

6. I said that the US was further forward than us on dates. So

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anything we did would have to assume additional flexibility. The US were wary of ultimatums as they did not want to detract from 1441 or establish a process that the Iraqis could manipulate. The French and Germans would probably want to string out inspections through a long list of requirements against which they could say some progress was being made. We could not accept this. The middle ground were convinced Iraq was cheating but needed a fact from the inspectors. This suggested a resolution with benchmarks, a timeline, and serious consequences if they were not met. I took issue with the part of Blix's paper saying 11 weeks was a short period to conclude disarmament could not be achieved. It was not a short time to see whether Iraq would genuinely co-operate on substance.

7. Blix said that Powell had told him that 15 April would be too long for any deadline. That was fine, but everything depended on how long would be needed to get agreement. Blix noted it was amazing that, in all their inspections, UNMOVIC had found no WMD except the (empty) chemical warheads. We underlined the sophistication of the Iraqi deception regime - we were confident in our intelligence while some information, e.g. on BW production, was corroborated by a variety of sources. Blix said that the US claimed they had given UNMOVIC their best sites - they had found nothing in any of them. If they had come close there would have at least been a denial of access.

8. I said that, given the Iraqi deception mechanism, the key thing was co-operation. Blix's paper was very helpful in defining what co-operation benchmarks could look like. We would also need to distil some up front questions. The Iraqis would have to use these to show that continued inspections were worthwhile.

9. We also went through a number of detailed points:

- Missiles: Blix said that this should be one element of an ultimatum, but on its own was not enough. His worry was that if Iraq felt war was imminent it would be reluctant to destroy its weaponry. It was not clear how UNMOVIC would formulate their policy on destroying engines;

- Interviews: We both agreed on the need to strengthen interviews. Perricos said that UNMOVIC had been trying to procure a secure tent, but this was being held by US export control regulations. We mentioned the possibility of a secure room from the UK - Blix and Perricos were put off by the lead time and uncertainty over security (e.g. from devices planted on an individual). Perricos said that the Iraqis were acting as if the pressure was off on private interviews - there had been none since Blix's visit to Baghdad. We went over interviews outside Iraq. We said we knew a few people who might like to talk to UNMOVIC. Perricos said he was thinking of asking a group to leave Iraq. Blix said he was worried about ensuring the safety of people and their extended families - we could not take them all from Iraq. I said we might well have to push this anyway - was there some way we could make clear, e.g. in the resolution, that we would monitor what happened to individuals and their families?

- Sampling: Perricos said that the Iraqis wanted UNMOVIC to take samples at sites where unilateral destruction of e.g. anthrax had allegedly taken place and quantitatively assess the amounts

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destroyed. By any sensible technical means, this would be impossible and time-consuming. While they would be able to ascertain strains of anthrax, it was not clear they could determine when they were dumped;

- Tougher inspections: I asked whether there was any scope for ratchetting up inspections, e.g. military squads, increased protection, etc. Blix said there would be problems with having more inspectors but there might be a case for some experts for stopping mobile facilities. Perricos said this would not need particular specialists but might need more people (comment: UNMOVIC thinking is relatively underfined - it is hard to see a rapid improvement in capability).

10. I subsequently met Negroponte. We went over the content of your calls on Powell to 16 February and I gave him the gist of our discussion with Blix. Wolf is seeing Blix at 1230 local on 18 February, and will come for a talk with me beforehand.

11. Negroponte showed interest in an ultimatum process with concrete tests for the Iraqis, above and beyond destruction of the rocket engines. He foresaw problems with Washington in a number of areas, and advised us:

- not to propose language in a second resolution which renegotiated 1441 or changed the legal basis for the use of force;

- to avoid trying to tie the President's hands too tightly;

- that it was probably better to have the tests for the Iraqis in a statement outside a delayed force resolution (inside left too much scope for weasel negotiation);

- to make the first or primary test for Iraq big and clear and central to WMD (interviews should be there somewhere, but not necessarily the principal next test - better to focus on BW or CW holdings/evidence of destruction);

- to use the Inspectors as the instrument to deliver the fact about co-operation, but not to put the whole judgement on Blix's shoulders;

12. I said we would start trying to draft material for a resolution and its accompanying texts, as a model to work further on. Blix's refinement of his clusters of questions would be an important steer on the main test areas, but we might have to anticipate what he and the Commissioners decided to bring to the Council.

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To: Amanda Tanfield
From:
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PART 2 OF 2

SUBJECT: PERSONAL IRAQ: MEETINGS WITH BLIX AND NEGROPONTE

13. Negroponte said little about timing. He just did not know what real flexibility there might be in the President's mind, even if Iraq showed signs of a genuine change. But he did not argue with a putative mid-March deadline. He thought that Powell was in favour of the ultimatum idea in principle, but had not yet got his mind into the detail of whether it might be practicable.

Desk Officer for Iraq: and on
Firecrest

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