



SECRETARY OF STATE

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Dear Matthew

Satford 14x

POSSIBLE IRAQI USE OF WMD

The Defence Secretary has seen the International Development Secretary's letter of 30 October to the Prime Minister and shares her concerns over the consequences of Iraqi use of WMD in the event of military action to enforce the UNSCR.

As the International Development Secretary acknowledges, UK military contingency planning is taking into account the potential use of WMD by Iraq. In addition, although we have not reached that stage, the target clearance process takes into account, as fully as we can, potential collateral damage, including the possible release of WMD material. This is in line with our obligations under international law.

On the wider issue of the humanitarian disaster that Saddam might precipitate in response to coalition action, the International Development Secretary correctly points out that our limited knowledge of the weapons he might use does not allow us to predict with certainty the nature of the post-conflict environment. While it is true that we are making sure British military personnel are properly protected against the WMD threat, it is simply not possible (nor is it the MOD's role) to extend this protection to the civilian population of any country with whom we may be engaged in conflict. We can, however, offer the reassurance that we are working closely, through the Cabinet Office, with Departments across Whitehall, including DFID, on post-conflict strategy and are offering as much information as we can make available to assist planning.

As the International Development Secretary's letter makes very clear, the threat posed by Iraqi WMD both to the Iraqi people and Iraq's neighbours is severe. Saddam has proved that he is quite prepared to use WMD against his own people which is why we are right to press through the UN for Iraqi disarmament. From Saddam's record, we know that he only responds to his UN obligations when they are underpinned by the threat of force.

Matthew Rycroft Esq
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Mr Hoon is clear that any decision to use force, should the UN process fail, will be a grave one. While the Government will need to take into account the potential use of WMD by Iraqi in response to any action we might take, it will equally need to take into account the potential consequences of not acting and allowing Iraqi WMD programme to continue.

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO), Mark Bowman (HMT), Anna Bewes (DfID) and [] 'C's office).



P D WATKINS
Private Secretary

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