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From the Assistant Private Secretary

3 March 2003

Dear Kara,

**IRAQ: PRIME MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT OF
CHILE, 2 MARCH**

The Prime Minister spoke to Ricardo Lagos, President of Chile, on 2 March. The call was at Lagos' request.

Lagos said that he had spoken to envoys from President Bush. He wondered if there was room for clarification of what the Security Council was trying to achieve. He was worried that talk of regime change was overshadowing the issue of disarmament in the media. He wondered if the Security Council could set bench-marks on disarmament. For example, he understood that UNMOVIC had only interviewed seven of a pool of over 300 scientists involved in the WMD programme. Setting bench-marks in this area looked better than going to war over a few missiles.

Lagos said that he was calling on other P5 states to assume responsibility for what was going on. It was not acceptable for them to say, "We'll abstain, it's not our war". He had told Chirac personally that this was not good enough: if Chirac did not agree with the UNSCR, then he should simply veto rather than shift the responsibility on to others. Chirac had sent an emissary to try to win him over. But Lagos himself thought it would be possible to work out a compromise in the Security Council during the week. He wanted to talk the bench-marks idea through with David Manning (due to arrive in Chile that afternoon).

The Prime Minister recommended that the Chileans look again at the 1999 UNSCOM report. It made clear the scale of outstanding material and the extent of Iraqi deceit. We needed to look at the unaccounted for WMD and the need for real cooperation over eg interviews with scientists. The missiles were a side issue: Saddam had admitted their existence thinking that they were not in breach

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of sanctions, and had had little choice but to destroy them when UNMOVIC decided that they were.

But he took Lagos' point about the need to be precise and specific about what the Security Council wanted. Otherwise people interpreted the destruction of the missiles as real progress and said we should therefore leave the inspectors in longer.

Lagos agreed. The real issue was CBW, not missiles. This should be put fair and square to the international community. The Prime Minister was right about the need for full cooperation by Saddam. So far he was only cooperating because of the pressure on him.

But Lagos still wanted the rest of the P5 to participate and assume their responsibilities. But "it's not that I'm not going to vote". The French seemed to be divided on the veto: Alain Juppe had come out against it. There was an internal discourse going on over the veto in the French political system. But the French were not producing any alternative ideas, they were just playing for time. Chirac had told Lagos that he was against any dead-line at all, not just that suggested by the Canadians.

The Prime Minister said that he was in no doubt that Saddam had CBW and was concealing it. But he accepted the need to think about how to present the case. He would be in touch with Lagos during the week.

I am copying this letter to Peter Watkins (MOD), John Scarlett and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office), PS/C, Sir Nigel Sheinwald (UKRep Brussels), Greg Faulkner (Santiago), Denise Holt (Mexico City), Peter Torry (Madrid), Sir Paul Lever (Berlin), Sir John Holmes (Paris), Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington), Sir Jeremy Greenstock (UKMis New York) and Sir Emyr Jones Parry (UKDel NATO).

*Signed : Nicholas Cannon
03/03/2003*

NICHOLAS CANNON

Kara Owen, FCO

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