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**PRIME MINISTER**  
**FM**

**From: Matthew Rycroft**  
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### **IRAQ: A STRATEGY**

Our best guess is that, as things stand, we have a reasonable chance of securing ten positive votes (in approximate order of likelihood: US, UK, Spain, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Angola, Cameroon, Guinea, Chile, Mexico). But we are also faced with an increasingly likely French veto.

To increase the chances of securing nine or ten votes, we should take on board Chilean/Mexican concerns. There are a number of options, as in Jeremy's telegram. The most promising is a combination of an ultimatum and benchmarks:

- (a) We should add ultimatum language into our draft resolution, immediately before "The Security Council decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by resolution 1441". There is a range of possible options. At the tough end, we could just say "Unless the Security Council decides otherwise by [March 17]". Or "Unless the Security Council decides by [March 17] that Iraq has unconditionally disarmed in accordance with Security Council Resolution 687" (this is the US proposal, but it will be seen by the E10 as impossible for Iraq to disarm unconditionally in a few days). At the softer end of the spectrum, we could try something like "Unless the Security Council decides by [March 17] that Iraq has taken an irreversible

decision to come into compliance" or "Unless the Security Council decides by [March 17] that Iraq has taken steps towards..." These options would of course be better for Chile/Mexico but less acceptable to the US. There are mixed signs as to whether the US would accept any of these approaches. But our instinct is to press on hard, and to try to persuade the Chileans/Mexicans themselves to table this amendment, after Blix's 7 March report.

- (b) In parallel with this, but outside the resolution, we should set out what we mean by full compliance by picking out benchmarks based on Blix's clusters document. He plans to publish it on 7 March. In particular if we end up with ultimatum language at the soft end of the spectrum, we shall need to say what we mean by "irreversible decision" or "steps towards". Nick is sending you a further note on Blix's clusters document.

There is no guarantee that these moves would help prevent a French veto. But they should help ensure a Russian abstention and increase France's isolation. We shall have to decide, at the last minute, whether the costs of a French veto outweigh the advantages of a vote showing majority Security Council support. At present, our view is that we must test the French veto threat to destruction and put our resolution to a vote, even if the French do veto. Certainly we should give no hint to the French of looking at options short of putting our text to a vote.

It is possible that a find by the inspectors would be what it takes to move Chirac away from a veto. If there were to be a find (see separate note), it would be well worth your talking to Chirac to see if it will do the trick.

There remains a risk of a Russian draft resolution, based on the France/Germany/Russia memorandum (the 1284 timelines; 120 days; etc). But our resolution would be voted on first, because it was "put into blue" first. We hope that Bush will warn Putin of the dangers of putting forward a Russian text to rival our own.

On timing of the vote on our resolution, it is our strong preference, shared by the US, to go for a vote as soon after 7 March as we are confident that we have nine positive votes. With the ultimatum in (a) above, we would then have a week or so before the start of military action to work on public opinion, rather than attempting to do this before the vote.

On 7 March, we need to turn Blix's clusters document to our advantage. We need to stress that it is not exhaustive, yet still it offers a damning indictment of Iraq's failure to cooperate. It comprises sections on 29 different weapons/agents under four headings (missiles, munitions, CW, BW), for each of which Blix includes outstanding questions for Iraq to answer. (I am sending you the complete list of these questions.) At 167 pages, it shows not only what Iraq would have to do in the future to give full cooperation, but also what Iraq should have done over the last 12 years. This is further compelling evidence, if any were needed, of Iraq's failure to cooperate fully.



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