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To: NAD
From: Swift Incoming Telegrams (Machine 1)
Subject: LEAD: OO WASHI/FCOLN 196: KEYDOC: NOSEC: US FOREIGN
POLICY: THE AXIS OF EVIL
Sent: 12 February 2002 01:48:02 GMT

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NCC CENTCOM FOR POLAD
CABINET OFFICE FOR MANNING, POWELL AND CAMPBELL AT NO 10

SUBJECT: KEYDOC: NOSEC: US FOREIGN POLICY: THE AXIS OF EVIL

SUMMARY

1. The 'axis of evil' is a warning to regimes which Bush sees as especially dangerous. It is not simplistic; it increases expectations of military action against Iraq; and it has added to transatlantic strains. These will have to be addressed, if the coalition is to move into the next, more complex, phase in good order

DETAIL

2. When I heard Bush say "axis of evil" at the State of the Union, I was immediately transported to Moscow in 1983, when Reagan's "evil empire" came crackling over the BBC World Service.

3. The link to Reagan, as to Roosevelt and Churchill, was deliberate, the phrase conceived by a right-wing speech-writer of Canadian birth, with a deep nostalgia for the British-American alliance in the 2nd World War.

4. The phrase appeals to Bush's deepest instincts. It serves multiple purposes:

- it invokes Reagan's military build-up, seen here as crucial in the collapse of communism, and justifies the huge increase in defence spending which Bush has just proposed.

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- it creates the unifying force of an enemy that will rally the political class and people behind the president, to Bush's political benefit, of course. The Republicans in particular have missed the Soviet Union;

- it responds to Bush's manichean sense of good and evil, widely shared by middle America, which has been the foundation of his approach to the war against terrorism;

- it responds also to what is seen as the main threat to the US and its allies.

5. The "axis" caught the foreign policy establishment, including most of State, on the hop.

Rice told you that the passage had been carefully drafted. Powell emphasised to you the President's personal attachment to it. Whether, as the rumour has it, he objected to lumping Iran, Iraq and North Korea together, Powell has since vigorously supported the "axis" and instructed his officials to do likewise.

6. This is the latest version of the Bush doctrine. It rotates on an axis, which links terrorist networks, states which harbour them, and rogue states with WMD. In its first version, which the Prime Minister heard in person on 20 September when Bush addressed the joint session of Congress, the doctrine encompassed only the first two categories. But, intelligence and the anthrax scare have generated the view that WMD in the hands of rogue states is the clear and present danger.

7. Bush is criticised for enunciating the doctrine without thinking through the policy implications. This misses the point. The purpose in naming the three members of the "axis" was to intimidate them, to put them on notice that they were marked regimes: to "change the terms of the debate". This was not a notion pulled out of thin air at the last minute. Rice's January 2000 Foreign Affairs article, which I have cited before, brackets the three as rogue proliferators.

8. It is simplistic to dismiss the new doctrine as simplistic. It is certainly open to question whether putting the three in the same club is logical or helpful. But underneath the "axis" is a serious analysis. This should come as no surprise. Reagan's "evil empire" provoked similar snorts of European disdain. But those of us who dealt with arms control and the Soviet Union in the 80s will remember the expertise and sophistication of American negotiators. Nor should we forget that it was an administration, including Cheney, Powell and Rice, that in 1989 saw better than London or Paris the inevitability of German unification.

9. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that 11 September was a shattering blow, creating a sense of threat and vulnerability, never before experienced by Americans. This has its consequences: an outpouring of gratitude to Britain, which more than others appeared instantly to grasp the enormity of what had happened; incomprehension and anger at those who seemed more concerned for the rights of the Guantanamo detainees than for the need to extract information which could forestall a further atrocity; a single-minded determination to do what it takes to defeat the

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nexus of terrorism and rogue WMD, if necessary by preemptive action, with or without allies. Bush sees this last as his life's mission.

10. I do not believe that the "axis" presages military action, as opposed to more aggressive counter-proliferation measures, against Iran or North Korea. With the sense of military momentum from Afghanistan and Cheney's trip to the Middle East in March, the phrase has raised expectations about action against Iraq. This does not involve any new policy considerations. We have known for a long time that Bush is looking for a way of getting rid of Saddam. I expect debate to be joined soon by Principals, probably this month.

11. Iran is more controversial inside the administration. The Karine-A affair, links to Hizbollah, and evidence of Iranian mischief in Afghanistan have dealt a severe setback to those pressing for dialogue with the Iranians. They have argued that Iranian reform will more likely benefit from things like WTO membership; that the US needs Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan; that it is daft to be at daggers drawn with Iran and Iraq at the same time; that US business is losing to European competitors. But the President's words have given strong comfort to those who believe that Khatami is a busted flush, that the Iranian people are basically pro-American, and that a firm US position will encourage them to throw the Ayatollahs out. They have also been confirmed in their views by Iran's snubbing of British efforts to get alongside the so-called moderates.

12. It has been tough sometimes working with the Americans since 11 September. It will be tougher still in 2002. We have left behind the relative simplicities of the first stage of fighting Al Qaeda. Now we are faced with the complexities of post-Taleban Afghanistan; where next to pursue terrorism of 'global reach'; what to do about the "axis".

13. The backdrop is growing US/European mutual disenchantment. This puts the UK in an awkward spot. Vedrine's and Patten's criticisms have been widely aired here. The Europeans are seen as burying their heads in the sand, refusing to face up to an international threat which only the US, and maybe the UK, have the guts and the capability to tackle. Americans who attended the Wehrkunde conference were struck by the gulf between the US and Europe. So was I at the simultaneous Davos Forum in New York.

14. Looking at this solely as an issue of unilateralism v. multilateralism does not capture the complexity of American attitudes (which I have described several times in the last few years, most recently in my letter to you of 5 November). For all their brave talk, the Americans know perfectly well that they are better off with capable allies than not. Much of the recent strain generated on the US side has flowed from Bush's sub-contracting of the war to Rumsfeld and Franks. Neither has much time for militarily insignificant allies. Rumsfeld has a talent for being abrasive on the European ear. But we should not demonise him. His public bedside manner may leave much to be desired; but his gut reflexes are very much in sync with those of Bush, Cheney and Rice.

15. War-fighting considerations are an insufficient guide to

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handling the next phase in combating terrorism, or to stopping anarchy return to Afghanistan. The US distinction between war-fighting and security assistance is increasingly untenable. The US mantra - the mission defines the coalition, not the coalition the mission - is similarly defective. The task for the next few months is to demonstrate to the Americans that it is possible and desirable to reconcile the pursuit of the mission with the concerns of the main coalition partners. This may call for some very plain-speaking, in private. But we are just about the only foreigners to whom the administration consistently listens.

16. So, the visit to London next month of the Vice-President and that of the Prime Minister to the US in April assume even greater importance than usual.

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UND//DIR GLOBAL ISS	0	
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DIR PC	0	
DIR PUBLIC SER	0	
DIR RESOURCES	0	
KEYDOC	0	
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AD(S)//HD	0	
AFGHAN UNIT//HD	0	
HD ANALYSTS	0	
DICD	0	
NEAPD//HD	0	
NEWS D//HD	0	
PLANNERS//HD	0	
PROTOCOL D//PALACE	0	
PS	5	
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PS PUS	1	
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