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PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell  
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## IRAQ: CONVERSATION WITH CONDI RICE

Condi phoned me this morning at 1145 hrs. We spoke for twenty minutes. I thanked her for excellent discussions at Camp David.

Condi said that she wanted to tell me about the way in which the debate in Washington was progressing on a further UNSCR, and to ask me for my reaction. She said Bush was keen to find a way to ensure that the onus was put back on Saddam. We did not want the "Inspectors searching around forever" in a game of cat and mouse. Bush was uneasy about finding himself in the position of asking the Security Council to give Saddam a last chance when Saddam had been given so many last chances already. I said this was unavoidable: we would inevitably be in the business of giving Saddam "another last chance". This had its difficulties. But it had the overriding benefit of ensuring that we could attract widespread international support by making it clear that we wanted to go the UN route. And this "last chance" came with the widespread expectation that, this time, we meant business.

Condi said that the Administration was exploring the possibility of tabling a Resolution in two parts. The first would stipulate that Saddam must make a declaration within fifteen to thirty days explaining why there had been a discrepancy between his claims and those of the UNSCOM Inspectors when the latter were expelled in 1998. He would be required to account for the materials that UNSCOM had been unable to identify, and to promise that UNMOVIC would have access to any that were remaining. This would challenge him to provide physical evidence relating to his WMD programmes, as well as test his commitment of re-engaging seriously with the international community. Anything less than a forthcoming response would amount to an admission of

guilt, confirming that he was in material breach of the post-Gulf War UN Resolutions.

The second part of the Resolution would deal with inspections. This would stipulate that the Inspectors would have sixty days to certify that they had now been granted full and unfettered access to all installations and materials in Iraq, with provision for them to report back to the Security Council on what they had found. If Saddam were cooperating, inspections could continue after the sixty day period. This part of the Resolution would cover the conditions governing the work of the Inspectors including: free access (anyone, anywhere, anytime); no dispensation for "special sites"; regional bases for UNSCOM (the Blix point); provision for aerial surveillance including drones; and an explicit invitation to all members of the international community to provide full intelligence to the Inspectors. I asked whether the Administration would also want force protection for UNMOVIC (their earlier suggestion). Condi said that they had now abandoned this idea. There was a lot of (unspecified) opposition to it in Washington. Condi said that she thought that the second part of the Resolution could be dispensed with if Saddam's response to the demand for a declaration was unsatisfactory. We could argue that this would amount to material breach and provided a green light for action. I said that there were attractions in demanding a declaration from Saddam although we should not kid ourselves: he was likely to refuse, or to announce blithely that there had been no discrepancy with UNSCOM and that all his WMD capacity had long since been destroyed. But his response would show either that he was uncooperative and obstructive; or that he was ready to make claims that the Inspectors would probably quickly expose.

But I said there could be no question that the second part of the Resolution could be dispensed with if Saddam's response to the first part seemed unsatisfactory. As you had told the President at Camp David, it was essential that the Resolution stipulated intrusive inspection, and that this was carried out. This was the only way in which the international community would believe that we were serious about adopting the UN route. I reiterated forcefully the points you had made at Camp David about avoiding any impression that the Resolution was merely a pretext for quick military action, or that we were not sincere when we said that our preferred option was the reintroduction of an inspection regime. However unsatisfactorily Saddam responded to the first part of the proposed Resolution, we were bound to be faced with a chorus of demands that we should test his response by getting the Inspectors back into Iraq. It was only after they had reported that we could move onto the enforcement issue.

Condi pressed me on this analysis. I said that I was absolutely clear. We needed the international community behind us; this meant a Resolution that did not appear to be a pretext for military action; and this in turn meant serious commitment to UNMOVIC inspections. I was confident that this would be your view. I would check with you as soon as possible. The second part of the draft Resolution was an integral part of the strategy.

Condi said that "speaking very frankly", there was a timing problem. If we gave Blix sixty days to establish himself in Iraq, and UNMOVIC a further sixty days to inspect and report back, we risked running well into next year before we could clear the decks for military action (assuming Saddam's continued obstruction). I said we should refuse to accept Blix's ideal, but too leisurely, UNSCOM timetable. Once we had a Resolution stipulating the return of the Inspectors, we should get teams in quickly to look at carefully chosen targets. We should insist that they tackled the job right away. Blix could build up to full strength in slower time.

Condi said the Administration was debating giving the Inspectors a Security Council, rather than UNMOVIC, label. I said that we should not try to make them Security Council teams as such. This would look restrictive and alienate the wider UN membership. But associating the Security Council with the teams might be possible. It could even be advantageous, if we sold the proposition to the Russians as a way of ensuring that they were fully consulted and implicated. Condi said this was an interesting idea. She added that the discussion had been helpful. She would feed my reactions into the White House debate, and would welcome your own views by the end of the day. I promised to let her have them.

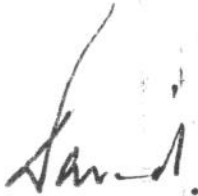
### Comment

The pressure on Bush to try a quick fix through the "material breach" ploy will be Cheney's attempt to rewrite the Camp David conclusions. I pushed back hard and made it clear that this would not run.

When we spoke subsequently, you agreed. You emphasised the need to play Iraq cleverly. We must look reluctant to use force, making it clear that we saw the current situation as a challenge to the credibility of the UN, and to the international community. You were increasingly convinced that, in the end, people would come round to accepting the need to deal with Saddam, if we had made full and willing use of the UN route. You were confident that we could get

the Security Council behind us once we had demonstrated clearly that Saddam remained in violation. But if we appeared to be riding roughshod over the UN, or taking it for granted, opinion would be very difficult to shift. We should move step by step. Once we had a new Resolution under our belt, we would be putting the onus on Saddam as Bush wanted. But this would only work, if the Americans resisted the Cheney temptation to go to the UN with what amounted to a take it or leave it Resolution, and with the clear intention of early resort to military force.

As you know, I am speaking again to Condi this evening. I shall spell out your arguments to her. Despite my prodding, we have still not been sent the text of the Bush speech, ostensibly because he is still not satisfied with any of the drafts. In my experience, this is par for the course. If we get the promised draft, it may well be late in the day. I think you should therefore try to speak to Bush again, probably tomorrow evening, to try to hold him to the Camp David conclusions.



DAVID MANNING