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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 September 2002

Dear Mark,

**IRAQ AND MEPP: PRIME MINISTER'S PHONE CALL WITH
PRESIDENT CHIRAC, 6 SEPTEMBER**

The Prime Minister spoke to French President Chirac for 25 minutes on 6 September. This letter is very sensitive and must only be seen by those with a clear need to know.

Chirac began by saying that WSSD had been as good as it could have been. The Prime Minister agreed, and was glad that there had been a joint UK/French initiative.

In advance of his meeting with Bush at Camp David on 7 September, the Prime Minister asked for Chirac's views on **Iraq**. In particular, could we present a new UNSCR on the restart of inspections and monitoring, which might offer a way through an otherwise difficult situation? It would be important to know that it would have French support.

Chirac said he would try to be brief, then responded at length. First, he was very worried by the increase, particularly in the developing world, of anti-Americanism that was becoming anti-Westism. This was worrying morally, politically and in terms of terrorism. Second, on Iraq he shared Bush's and the Prime Minister's views on the nature of the regime. But he thought an act of war would be irresponsible, dangerous militarily (with high losses likely), and dangerous internationally.

, a "kangaroo from Australia", who - in order to look good to the Americans - had systematically and stupidly provoked the Iraqis into getting rid of the inspectors. Saddam could now do what he wanted, and had the money to do so from his illicit oil exports to Turkey, Jordan and Syria. Chirac himself did not think that Saddam posed an immediate nuclear danger, but clearly there were CBW risks.

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The inspectors had to return immediately. There was now a climate of war, which meant that the Iraqis thought the inspectors were spies. First, Annan should give the Iraqis a guarantee that the inspectors were real. The inspectors could include one or two well-chosen Arabs. Second, the inspectors must have full powers to inspect wherever they wanted, with no negotiation on modalities. We needed intelligent inspectors,

If there were a UNSCR in this sense, the French would be ready to associate themselves with it and lobby for it.

If this did not work, there were two scenarios:

- (a) The US could attack Iraq on their own initiative. France would not participate, "since we are against unilateralism and do not want to feed anti-Americanism", and because it would be dangerous militarily especially if Saddam had CBW. It would not lead to the right result. There was a risk of Iraq blowing up in the absence of a serious opposition figure to take power. The disadvantages would be much greater than the advantages. He thought most Arab and EU countries would agree.
- (b) Or the UNSC could be seized. If so, France would be ready to discuss options. France would not be alone in the possible use of its veto.

The Prime Minister thanked Chirac for this clear statement. He underlined that unless Saddam really believed that there would be serious consequences unless he allowed the inspectors back in, he would not have an incentive to let them in. So he had to know that this was his last chance to cooperate. It was difficult to persuade the US to go down the UN path unless they believed that a refusal by Saddam to abide by his UN obligations would result in some damage to him. But he understood the French position: support for a UNSCR on inspectors, no support for unilateral military action, and ready to discuss UNSC measures if Saddam refused to comply.

Chirac confirmed that that was his position. He recognised that maximum pressure was needed on Saddam. Saddam understood that he faced a choice: inspectors or attack. The problem was that he always took stupid decisions. So Chirac was worried. And worse was Cheney's talk about military action whatever Saddam did on inspections, which gave Saddam no incentive to accept inspectors. There were imbeciles on both sides.

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The Prime Minister said that the **MEPP** would be vitally important. Chirac agreed. He approved of the Danish Presidency position at the Gymnich.

The Prime Minister agreed to report back to Chirac (either directly or through advisers) after his meeting with Bush. Chirac said that he would be speaking to Bush later on 6 September.

I am copying this to Peter Watkins (MOD), (PS/C), Ian Fletcher, John Scarlett and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office), Sir John Holmes (Paris), Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington), Sir Jeremy Greenstock (UKMis New York), Sir Paul Lever (Berlin), Sir Roderic Lyne (Moscow), Sherard Cowper-Coles (Tel Aviv) and Geoffrey Adams (Jerusalem).

Yours,



MATTHEW RYCROFT

Mark Sedwill
FCO

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