

LNCYAN 8033

DECLASSIFIED

04/03/103 12:04

ZCZC
LNCYAN 8033 WSLNAN 3480
SECRET
OO CAOFF
FM BEIJI TO FCOLN
041052Z MAR
GRS 1597

DISTRIBUTION

6 X DIO
5 X CRISIS
MR DODD
MR DRUMMOND

MR BOWEN

SECRET
FM BEIJING
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 89
OF 041052Z MARCH 03

INFO IMMEDIATE , CABINET OFFICE, SECURITY COUNCIL POSTS
INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK, UKMIS VIENNA,
INFO PRIORITY CANBERRA, EU POSTS, HONG KONG, OTTAWA, SEOUL
INFO PRIORITY TOKYO

SUBJECT: NOSEC: IRAQ: LOBBYING THE CHINESE

SUMMARY

1. Ehrman briefs Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister on our assessment of Iraqi non-cooperation and the need for a second resolution. China says the further information will be useful in enabling it to assess the situation accurately. Iraq must bear the major responsibility for failing to cooperate fully. But China believes inspections should be given more time. Pressing for a vote now will split the Council and harm its authority. He hopes the UK and US will reconsider. Ehrman argues that not following through on 1441 will harm the Council's authority.

DETAIL

2. Visiting Beijing as your Special Envoy, William Ehrman met Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Wang Guangya for 45 minutes on the morning of 4 March. His longer discussion with Zhang Jun (Acting Director-General, International Organisations Dept.) in the afternoon is reported in MIFT.

3. Ehrman began by recalling that Vice-Foreign Minister Wang Yi had told Mr Rammell in Seoul (Seoul telno 34) that Britain and China agreed on three points: that all Security Council members wanted to see compliance with Resolution 1441; that all demanded that the destruction of Iraq's WMD; and that no-one wanted to resolve the issue by force. The Prime Minister's speech to Parliament on 25 February had emphasised these points. We wished to give the Chinese Government a fuller briefing based on intelligence reports. A paper would be handed over in the afternoon meeting.

4. Ehrman said Saddam's behaviour since the middle of 2002 had been instructive. Recognising that he might soon face the return of the inspectors with strengthened powers Saddam had directed the implementation of a concealment policy, even though as late as September 2002 illegitimate work was still being carried out on anthrax. By November 2002 all production work on banned weapons at

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

04/03/103 12:04

Military Industrial Commission sites had stopped and evidence of prohibited activity was being cleaned up. Documentation was being falsified and compromising information removed from computer hard drives. Individual scientists and officials were made personally responsible for the items on which they were working, holding them in their homes and the homes of friends and relatives. Proscribed materials were concealed, including at innocuous sites such as hospitals, farms and schools. As early as April 2002 Saddam's son, Qusai, had issued instructions for the concealment of chemical warfare agents. Some materials, such as missiles, had been buried and others remained on trucks and trains that were continually on the move.

5. When in September 2002 we published the UK Dossier on Iraq's WMD, some doubts were expressed about our evidence. But much of what we set out had been supported or confirmed subsequently by UNMOVIC (for example the range of the al-Samoud 2 rockets). Even after the start of the inspections, Saddam was confident that his concealment strategy would work at least until the Spring when military operations might become more difficult. His aim was to buy time. This was reflected by Iraq's approach to the Declaration called for under SCR 1441. The regime had considered, but rejected, declaring some of its weapons, in the hope that this would see off the pressure. Instead the Declaration was padded out so that it would take inspectors time to assess and cross-reference with previous documents. Throughout the period of inspections, Iraq's security and intelligence agencies had been monitoring UNMOVIC/IAEA. Obstruction tactics were employed if the inspectors were close to uncovering WMD. Tracking of UNMOVIC convoys enabled the Iraqis to give warning of inspections.

6. The inspectors, despite these precautions, had found a number of undeclared items: 380 illegally-imported SA-2 engines for the al-Samoud programme; 12 122mm CW artillery rockets; mustard gas precursor; nuclear documents. Iraq itself had "found" 4 empty chemical warheads and one aerial bomb containing biological weapons agent.

7. Iraq was particularly concerned about interviews with scientists, because if carried out as mandated they would expose Iraq's WMD programmes. Iraq therefore continued to ensure that inspectors were not able to interview whom they wanted free from Iraqi monitoring. Scientists had been threatened with serious consequences for themselves and their families if they revealed any sensitive information. They had been ordered to refuse interviews outside Iraq. They had been coached in the answers. Some had been detained to prevent them from being interviewed. Scientists had been reminded that any rooms where interviews were held would be bugged. Of the limited number of interviews carried out to date all had been monitored.

8. For the future Iraq would continue ostensible cooperation with the UN to avert a war while continuing an active policy of concealment to avoid loss of WMD capability. As part of that Saddam had agreed to the destruction of the al-Samoud 2 missiles.

9. We judged that morale was generally low in Iraq, but the

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

04/03/103 12:04

over-riding climate of fear kept officers at their posts. We judged it unlikely that Saddam would leave. Faced with military defeat, Saddam would be prepared to use CBW. These weapons could be used against coalition forces, to put down any internal uprising, against neighbouring states judged to have supported the coalition or against Israel.

10. Ehrman emphasised that Saddam had not taken the final opportunity afforded to him by the requirements of 1441. The French/German/Russian proposal wrongly claimed inspections were not being hindered; wrongly suggested that credible comprehensive benchmarks could be set in the absence of cooperation; and wrongly suggested that strengthened inspections without cooperation could achieve anything, other than delay.

11. The UK/US/Spanish resolution would increase pressure on Iraq through a clear decision of the Council. Its adoption would not necessarily lead to immediate use of force. There would still be a chance for Iraq at the last minute to take radical action to disarm. It was the only remaining route to genuine peaceful disarmament. We hoped China would support us.

12. Wang Guangya said in reply that the consensus between China, the UK and the international community was that resolution 1441 should be fully implemented. There was no doubt about the objective. The issue was the means to be adopted to reach it. China was paying serious attention to whether Iraq was cooperating and to what degree. The issue had dragged on for over 10 years and the Iraqi leadership had to take responsibility for the failure to resolve it. Resolution 1441's aim was to strengthen cooperation and put the ball squarely in Saddam's court. Our briefing was helpful in giving China a more accurate assessment of what was happening in Iraq.

13. With the destruction of the al-Samoud missiles we had seen progress in ridding Iraq of WMD. China believed that as long as 1441 continued to be implemented, there remained the opportunity to disarm Iraq. Perhaps for the UK the glass was half empty: for others the glass was still half full. China believed that although it might take longer to solve the problem by peaceful means, the time taken would be worth it. Blix's report on 7 March was crucial, but it was not a deadline. There was a common desire amongst the international community to avoid war and to avoid the serious consequences of war. A war would not only harm innocent people but also bring humanitarian disaster. Every responsible government should reflect on the considerable anti-war sentiment among its own people. President Jiang Zemin had had telephone conversations with Bush, Putin and Chirac, and he would be speaking to Schroeder this evening.

14. Wang added that China was still studying the UK/US/Spanish draft. Despite the UK's statement that adoption of the resolution would not necessarily mean the use of force, Security Council members knew what it implied. China's position was to support the continued implementation of 1441. With progress made in its implementation it was not necessary to table a new resolution. Resolution 1441 had been adopted unanimously and that unanimity was important for upholding the authority of the UN. It was the firm position taken by the Security Council that had led to the

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

04/03/103 12:04

resumption of inspections. If the UK and US pressed for a vote the Security Council would be split. Non-P5 members would be put into a difficult position. China hoped the UK and US would reconsider the necessity of pressing for a vote on a second resolution.

15. Ehrman replied by emphasising the damage that would be done to the Security Council if we did not carry through on 1441. Wang had accepted that Iraq had WMD and was not fully cooperating. 1441 had given a final opportunity. The best that more time would bring was some temporary containment. There was no sign of a change of will by Saddam. We had done much to bring the US to the UN route. It would only succeed if the pressure on Saddam was maintained. There was a wider point. What would others pursuing WMD read into a failure to pursue the terms of 1441? North Korea, Iran and others would draw an unhelpful lesson from that. How long did Iraq need to be given?

16. Wang said unanimity had brought progress so far. Pressing for a vote would split the Council, which would in itself damage its authority. He ducked Ehrman's question on time.

Contact:

HUM

YYYY

WSLNAN 3480

NNNN

DECLASSIFIED
SECRET