

CONFIDENTIAL

NOSEC: IRAQ: US VIEWS, 11 MARCH

From: WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 325

OF 110042Z MARCH 03

AND TO IMMEDIATE CABINET OFFICE, SOSFA

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CABINET OFFICE FOR MANNING, RYCROFT, CANNON

Note from the Iraq Inquiry: This telegram was sent from the US on 11 March but its time of arrival in London was 12 March 00:42.

SUMMARY

1. Hadley and Armitage warn that Bush wants to put the UNSCR to a vote, even if we know there will be a veto. Bush has told Aznar as much.

DETAIL

2. I spoke to Armitage (Deputy Secretary of State) and Hadley (Deputy National Security Adviser) early evening on 11 March (just before Bush's conversation with the Prime Minister). We spoke separately to Volker (NSC).

3. Armitage was unsure whether Chile and Mexico were moving in the right direction. Bush was still trying to speak to Lagos ("Lagos's afternoon off") but had already spoken to Fox. Fox had bid for a 45-day deadline, and Bush had said no way. Fox had retreated, saying he would study the papers further.

4. Armitage asked whether, if we looked like getting 9 votes but one or two vetos, the UK would want to go for a UNSC vote or pull the resolution. I said this would depend crucially on calculations of how it would play in Parliament. Armitage thought that Bush's instinct would be to go for a vote, though the impact on the UK would weigh heavily with him. Hadley was more direct: Bush's instinct would be to go for a vote on 12 March, or 13 March at the latest, whatever the situation.

5. Separately, Volker told us that Bush had rejected the suggestion of Aznar (to whom he spoke just before the Prime Minister) that the resolution might be pulled: he wanted a vote, something he had promised the American people. Volker said that Aznar had also proposed that if we thought we had the votes we should get them all to co-sponsor. This might act as a disincentive to France and Russia to veto. But Volker agreed that co-sponsorship seemed a bridge too far right now.

6. Both Hadley and Armitage asked about the Defence Secretary's comments to Rumsfeld, after which Rumsfeld speculated publicly about the possibility of the UK not participating in the first phases of military action in Iraq. Did this mean that UK determination to go in alongside the US was diminishing? I said not. We remained confident that we would be alongside the US. I assumed the Defence Secretary had simply been setting out the parliamentary realities to Rumsfeld.

BRENTON

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Sent by WASHINGTON on 11-03-2003 42:42
Received by No10 on 12-03-2003 01:29

<http://no10intranet/fcotelegrams/bodytext.asp?ID=131034>

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12/03/2003