

RESTRICTED

IRAQ/ARAB LEAGUE: MOUSSA'S VISIT TO BAGHDAD

From: CAIRO

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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SUMMARY

1. Moussa returns from Baghdad with agreement from Saddam to facilitate the resumption of Iraqi dialogue with the UNSG. Saddam apparently also willing to let his foreign minister discuss the return of weapons inspectors with Blix.

DETAIL

2. Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa asked to see me today (24 January) to pass on to you an account of his visit to Baghdad (18-19 January). Moussa said that Saddam Hussein had shown the "seeds of flexibility" during the visit. He had professed a desire to re-open a dialogue with the UN Secretary General, without preconditions and with an open agenda. Moussa had raised the thorny question of weapons inspectors. Saddam had reportedly accepted that the time had come for Iraq to start talking about the return of the inspectors and asked Moussa to contact Blix on his behalf.

3. Moussa stressed that the Iraqis would not make the first move. The initiative would have to come from the UNSG. As a first step he recommended a meeting between Blix and the Iraqi foreign minister. He would be seeing Blix shortly.

4. I welcomed the efforts Moussa was making. I also made clear that any resumption of Iraqi cooperation with the UN would have to carry commitment. We should not start with, for example, Annan visiting Baghdad: his track record there was not ideal. The details needed to be agreed by Blix first.

5. Moussa had already reported the result of his visit to Annan, King Abdullah, Mubarak, the Kuwaitis and the US Ambassador here. He was about to leave for Saudi Arabia to brief Crown Prince Abdullah. He would discuss with Annan in person next week. The process was being held closely for now.

SAWERS

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This has in v.2
 The indicators that
 Saddam is working,
 trying to get off the hook.
 The US will need to give
 the fakes as long as
 the possibility of some
 change instead of a complete

✓ 2
 We should keep up
 the pressure.