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Send in 21/8

From: David Manning

Date: 28 August 2002

S 213/02

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell  
Alastair Campbell  
Sally Morgan  
Stephen Wall  
Anna Wechsberg  
Matthew Rycroft

### IRAQ: CONVERSATION WITH CONDI RICE

Condi phoned me at 1800 hours this evening. The President had asked her to stress that nothing had changed as a result of the statements and press articles of the last few days: "we remain where we were". She said the President was now determined to try to build international support for action on Iraq and believed this was possible. He was working on "the UN route", and planned to use his UNGA speech to challenge the international community to deal with the Saddam threat. He was thinking of proposing that the UN should pass a further tough resolution demanding wide-ranging disarmament measures from Saddam. If he accepted them (which she thought unlikely) Saddam would be forced to run Iraq in a completely different way.

I said that you, too, remained in the same place. We well understood the recent difficulties. But these pointed to the need for a core script that we could all stick to. Condi said that she could not agree more. I said that we also needed a clear line of action. The President's plan to challenge and encourage the international community to deal with Iraq through the UN sounded exactly the right course. If we got the context right, action would become much easier. Again Condi agreed. She added that the President had absolutely no doubts about your solidity

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and solidarity. What he wanted to do was to make it possible to broaden support for the US by bringing along other European leaders, and other countries more widely. I welcomed this. Action through the UN would do much to change the profile of the problem. If the UN route succeeded, well and good. If it did not, we would at least have tried to work with the international community. And anyone who blocked effective action in the UN would not only have to explain why, but explain what they would do instead. Condi said that this was exactly right.

Condi said that the President was anxious to talk to you tomorrow if you were free. I said that you were looking forward to the discussion. We had already fixed the time.

Condi asked whether you would be able to visit the US in the next few weeks as the President had floated with me when I was in Washington at the end of last month. I said that you would be happy to do so. We had provisionally pencilled in 11 September. Condi said this sounded fine. You and the President could discuss this tomorrow.

#### Comment

This was encouraging. The signs are that Bush is now thinking of opting for a coalition strategy that takes account of the UN (though probably on pretty tough terms). I was particularly struck by Condi's remark that Saddam would have to run Iraq in a different way if he signed up to proper disarmament measures. The fact that the Administration is now conceptualising this thought, rather than reiterating its commitment to Iraqi regime change irrespective of Saddam's behaviour, is significant.

Condi made it clear that Bush is anxious to talk to you tomorrow. My sense is that he will be keen to know that he still has your support; and keen to know that you approve of his plans to work through the UN. I am sure that you should encourage him strongly.

If Bush takes this route, it will transform the way that we can approach and handle the Iraq issue.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David", with a stylized, sweeping line above the name.

**DAVID MANNING**

