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From the Private Secretary

6 September 2002

Dear Mark,

**IRAQ: PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH HANS BLIX,
6 SEPTEMBER**

Hans Blix called on the Prime Minister on 6 September. Also present were Jonathan Powell, Alastair Campbell, David Manning, Amanda Tanfield (FCO), Paul Hamill (CIC), and me.

Blix set out the latest position with the Iraqis as follows. They were continuing to insist on a comprehensive settlement (lift the NFZs, remove the US threat, lift sanctions, and establish a zone free of WMD). But as the threat of military action increased, they were weakening their position (for instance dropping their insistence on the establishment of a zone free of WMD). He judged that the Iraqis would not move towards allowing the inspectors in if they thought that military action was inevitable, or if they thought that there was no prospect of military action. But they would move if they thought that there was a link between such a move and avoiding military action. The Prime Minister thought that there was such a link, so they should move on inspections. The inspection regime, though, would have to be tough.

Blix said that there were two Iraqi fears: (a) that once the inspectors were back in, there would be a stand-off over access which the US would take as a casus belli; and (b) that UNMOVIC would inherit UNSCOM's leakiness. Blix said that this had discredited UNSCOM and he had tried to change it. He said several times that he was grateful for UK intelligence and for our understanding that the flow of information had to be one-way.

Blix described the US idea of armed gunships to protect UNMOVIC as unrealistic given the strength of the Iraqi army. But he would support stronger inspections if that was the decision of the UNSC. If there were no further UNSC decision, the standard should be the previously agreed modalities for UNSCOM. UNMOVIC would also be interested in having a regional office. He noted that

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whatever arrangements were agreed, there would be limits to what the inspectors could achieve. For instance it would be very hard to catch Iraq's mobile installations.

In answer to the Prime Minister's questions about the threat posed by Saddam, Blix said that on the nuclear side in 1998 there was no serious risk of Iraq being able to produce HEU. But they had not met their obligation of full, final and complete disarmament. On the biological side, there was no evidence of full destruction of anthrax in 1991, so they could well have 10,000 litres. However, four years without inspections of course meant that "much much more" could have been produced. They could have received black market HEU. "What you don't know, you don't know."

The Prime Minister said that he would discuss the next steps with Bush on 7 September at Camp David. The US and UK would want a strong, tough UNSCR, genuinely implemented, ie not a pretext for military action. Blix cautioned that UNMOVIC would need a couple of months to organise the 80 inspectors plus interpreters, communications, helicopters, and the instruments for inspections. Thereafter UNMOVIC would have 60 days for rebaselining. So it would be nearly four months before the inspectors could present the issues to the UNSC.

I am copying this to Peter Watkins (MOD), (PS/C), Ian Fletcher and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office), Sir Jeremy Greenstock (UKMis New York) and Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington).

Yours,



MATTHEW RYCROFT

Mark Sedwill
FCO

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