

From: David Manning
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PRIME MINISTER

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

IRAQ: CONVERSATION WITH CONDI RICE

I had a further conversation with Condi yesterday evening lasting about 15 minutes. I spoke along the lines we had agreed.

I said it was your very strong view that we must make Iraq a challenge to the whole international community. We must do so through a UN Resolution that, as you had said at Camp David, provided for an intrusive inspection regime. The inspectors were an indispensable part of the strategy. Saddam would either refuse to let the inspectors back, or he would let them in but almost certainly obstruct their operations. We should then be in a very strong position to insist on action. You believed that we should deal with Iraq step by step. We needed to get this resolution under our belt, put the onus squarely on Saddam, and then decide what to do in the light of his reaction.

I returned to the issue of the Resolution. I said that it was essential that we put this forward with conviction and made it absolutely clear that we wanted it to succeed. We should be emphasising at every turn that war was the last resort. The US Administration would have the worst of both worlds if it appeared to

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have been forced reluctantly to choose the UN route, or if it appeared to want a new UN Resolution to serve as nothing more than a pretext for early military action.

I said that it was increasingly your impression that public opinion would come round if we proposed the UN route with real conviction. There was a crucial process point here. If and when it became clear that Saddam had yet again violated the will of the UN and the international community, there was a real chance that we could build wide support for further action. But if we failed to do this, and if it appeared that Washington wanted to go the unilateral route, the international community would be resistant or hostile to action. Securing wide support would be a great prize, one that you believed was in reach. We must not throw away the opportunity.

Condi did not contest any of this. Indeed, she sounded pretty receptive. But as you will see from the draft speech that we have received overnight, Bush is not currently planning to say anything about a Resolution or inspection. At present it is half a speech. It makes a strong and persuasive case about the horrors of Saddam and his regime, but cannot bring itself to say that, in dealing with this threat, we must have another UN Resolution and further inspections. Arguably this is implicit. But it would be far better in winning hearts and minds if Bush made it explicit, and did not leave it to Colin Powell to make the UN case afterwards, as Powell has apparently told Jack Straw that he has been tasked to do.

I told Condi that you would like to speak to Bush again before he makes the speech. She said that this would almost certainly be impossible today

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(11 September) because of his punishing schedule of memorial events (I am unlikely to be able to reach Condi today either). But I think we should try and book a call to Bush early in the morning, US time, tomorrow so that he hears these arguments from you again directly. There is little doubt that the Cheney counter-attack, with its wilful distortion of what you said at Camp David, will be sustained right up to the moment that Bush mounts the UN rostrum. Despite my two conversations with Condi yesterday, putting the White House straight, it would still be very valuable if you could speak to Bush yourself.



DAVID MANNING

