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Foreign &  
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Foreign Secretary's Conversation with  
US Secretary of State 12 March

Colin Powell spoke to the Foreign Secretary on a secure line at 4.30pm. He said that he had been over to the White House this morning: Bush's instinct was the same as his - to pull the plug, preferably tomorrow. They wanted Greenstock to make a suggestion either tomorrow or Friday explaining that the French had scuppered our UN effort and we were withdrawing our draft resolution. One hour later Bush would deliver a speech giving Iraq an ultimatum and two or three days. Everything would then be in place for 17 March.

Powell said that in their most recent conversation the Prime Minister had told Bush that he accepted this but would rather do it on Monday (so he could go to Parliament on either Monday or Tuesday). Powell repeated: "we were going tomorrow but the Prime Minister got the President to agree Monday". But now he had heard that Greenstock was hard at work with a new resolution including the dropping of OP3. What instructions had Greenstock received?

The Foreign Secretary explained that Rumsfeld's intervention yesterday had complicated matters here. We now had to go even further to show that we were pursuing an alternative to automatic war. Greenstock's instructions came from himself and the Prime Minister. He had already spoken to Ivanov and Alvear about the new draft. The Foreign Secretary said that he suspected that this would all go South but we had to try.

Powell lamented another of . But the key fact was that Bush had decided it was over: "all we are doing is finding a way to land this plane without crashing it". He said that Greenstock couldn't get too clever; we couldn't get into another negotiation. There was no point. Derbez had been on the line again saying

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he could not support anything that looked like support for regime change. And the Guineans had reversed themselves:

said we could not square the circle - and Bush did not want to see another solution. Powell

The Foreign Secretary said that nonetheless it was important to go through the motions. "Just as long as Greenstock doesn't succeed," interrupted Powell. The Foreign Secretary said that there was a one percent chance of success; but if Jeremy succeeded we would have to go for it, "sorry, Mister President". But there was a ninety nine percent chance that this would simply be for the PR.

I am copying this letter to Sir Jeremy Greenstock (UKMIS New York), Tony Brenton (Washington), Sir Michael Jay and Peter Ricketts.

Youn are  
Simon

(Simon McDonald)  
Principal Private Secretary

Sir David Manning KCMG  
10 Downing Street

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