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MO 6/17/15K

25 September 2002

Dear David

IRAQ: POTENTIAL UK CONTRIBUTION TO ANY MILITARY ACTION

Thank you for your letter of today to Peter Watkins. As we discussed this afternoon, following his discussion with the Prime Minister on 23 September, the Defence Secretary instructed that we should present Package 2 (predominantly Special Forces, Air and Maritime Forces) as a potential UK contribution at the CENTCOM Planning Conference which started that day. This would be a significant and useful contribution to US forces.

Separately, and heavily caveated, we have indicated to CENTCOM that we are still considering a Land option. We have emphasised that it is at the limits of what we could offer, and that we cannot be sure that we could deliver it. The US should therefore examine carefully how they would plan the campaign in the absence of such a contribution.

None of this entails a commitment on our behalf. In our discussion this afternoon we agreed that the UK involvement in the planning conference should continue on this basis. Defence staffs will continue actively to ensure that US expectations remain realistic.

On the reallocation of units to support any fire strike, we have agreed a presentational strategy with Alistair Campbell.

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO), Mark Bowman (HMT) and to and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office).

Yours

Martyn

M J WILLIAMS
Private Secretary

Sir David Manning KCMG
Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister

~~SECRET UK EYES ONLY UKMD~~