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SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 6/17/15K

18 April 2002

Policy Director

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PSO/CDS
PS/PUS
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MA/DCDS(C)
PS/CDI
DG Op Pol
Sec(O)1

IRAQ

1. The Secretary of State was grateful for your minute (D/Policy Director/6/2/2) of 12 April which he discussed with CDS, PUS, DCDS(C), DCDI and DG Op Pol this morning. I am sorry that, owing to current diary constraints, we had to schedule this meeting for a time when you could not attend yourself.

2. The Secretary of State found the analysis in your minute generally persuasive. However, while he agreed that option (c) was the most logical course to achieve the desired end state, we could not exclude the possibility that wider international and political considerations might force the US to take a sub-optimal option, at least initially. It would therefore be helpful if any further work on possible UK contributions could look at the feasibility of involvement in options short of (c).

3. Mr Hoon said that we also needed to give more thought to the legal aspects. Prima facie, the best legal foundation for any operation to displace Saddam's régime was that it would remove the threat posed by his WMD. However, it was conceivable that any new Iraqi régime – and, in particular, one led by another "strong man" – would wish to have WMD to meet the perceived regional threat from Iran or other states. We would need to be alive to this possibility.

4. DCDS(C) outlined the initial conceptual work on military options which had been conducted so far (para 2a of my minute of 8 April). A small, senior group – including specific representatives from other interested departments – had been established to brainstorm the options. Mr Hoon said that he was

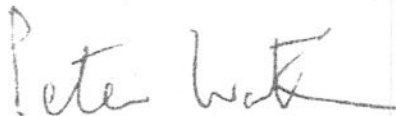
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content for this thinking to continue, but it should be kept on a very close hold until Ministers agreed otherwise.

5. Mr Hoon noted that work was continuing on the other two issues identified in my minute of 8 April. The key question was: how far ahead of a decision to deploy would we have to start any necessary preparatory action? This lead time may itself change over time, as budget areas – particularly the DLO – took steps to ensure that they could live within their budgets for 2002/03. In practical terms, this may mean that – paradoxically – a later decision to deploy might require a longer lead time. Mr Hoon said it would be helpful if the previously commissioned work could clarify this aspect further and, in particular, identify any specific measures which could materially affect the lead time.

6. Mr Hoon would like to review progress on this work in a week or so; we will be in touch separately to arrange a date/time.



P D WATKINS
PS/Secretary of State
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