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S 260 /02

Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister,
and Head of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat

25 September 2002

IMMEDIATE

Dear Peter

IRAQ: POTENTIAL UK CONTRIBUTION TO ANY MILITARY ACTION

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 20 September, and has discussed the issues with the Defence Secretary.

The Prime Minister has agreed that we should present Package 2 as a potential UK contribution at the CENTCOM Planning Conference this week, ie Special Forces, Air and Maritime Forces with a possible Royal Marines contribution for operations in Southern Iraq. We should not be shy about presenting this as a significant and valuable offer.

The Prime Minister does not want us to make any suggestion at this stage that we might be able to offer a major land contribution to a Force in Northern Iraq. We should not surface this possibility at the Planning Conference. He has, however, agreed to the replacement of Army units already allocated to Operation Fresco so that, if we opt later to offer a Land Force contribution, they would be available. I should emphasise that he has agreed to this changeover of units strictly for contingency purposes. We should do all we can to minimise publicity. —

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

Yours truly,
David Manning
DAVID MANNING

Peter Watkins
MOD

SECRET

28/9