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Telephone:
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From the Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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5 March 2003

Dear Tony

POST CONFLICT IRAQ: UN AND US ROLES

Explicit UN mandate essential for the UN and others to legally engage on the reconstruction of Iraq. US movement on this essential for our and other donors' planning. Opportunity to use coalition commitment to this to influence second SCR debate. Concerned about lack of US and international preparedness for scale of potential humanitarian effort needed: a little more time could reduce risks and prevent possible humanitarian crisis.

We need to be absolutely clear that the reconstruction of Iraq without an explicit UN mandate would breach international law. Without the UN mandate the coalition would be an occupying army with humanitarian duties under the Geneva Convention, but - like the Israelis in the Occupied Territories - without any rights to change institutional arrangements. The UN is clear that without the right mandate they could only respond to immediate humanitarian needs. My understanding is that the US has not yet accepted all our arguments on the UN role. Unless they do, DFID could do no more than support UN humanitarian efforts, and few others would be willing to engage.

From conversations with other donors, it is increasingly clear that all need a mandate in order to engage. Some will be constrained until it is agreed, not only in what they can do later, but also in their planning now. US planning on the transition to civilian administration is advancing rapidly. It is essential to get agreement on a UN post-conflict mandate ready before a second resolution is passed. We could then encourage the International Financial Institutions, the EC, the UN itself and other donors to plan more openly, and with better coordination, for the challenge of reconstruction and reform in Iraq.

Further work with the US is needed. We should be able to use some of the planning the UN is starting to do on how they see their future role. I understand Jack is considering how to work with the Americans to make our commitment to a strong UN role in Iraq clear

to other UN Security Council members.

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to other UN Security Council members. If we could be clear on this, it may help secure some wavering second resolution votes. Preparations are also in hand for a third resolution essential to give authority to the Secretary-General to adapt the Oil For Food programme on which 60% of the 25 million Iraqi people rely for daily survival.

You should be aware that the US and the international humanitarian community are not properly prepared to deal with the immediate humanitarian issues. Visits to Washington suggest the newly created US Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance is well led but under-staffed, under-resourced and under-prepared for the scale of the challenge. I understand General Jay Garner (Head of ORHA) and General Tommy Franks are adding their voices to those from the State Department who share our view that it is in the best interests of the Iraqi people and the coalition military for the period when coalition forces run Iraq to be as short as possible. But I am particularly worried that the US is making over-optimistic assumptions about the level of UN and NGO cooperation they will get in the early stages after any conflict starts – even more so if there is no second resolution, or the serious threat of CBW use.

But the US is improving its humanitarian preparedness daily. A little more time would make the US much better able to deal with some of the humanitarian consequences of conflict. My Department is doing what we can to advise the UK military on preparations for delivering humanitarian assistance including in the initial absence of the UN and most international NGOs. We too could also be better prepared given more time.

You must also be aware that without resources larger than my whole contingency reserve – just under £100 million, which I set aside for all unpredictable emergencies that may occur across the world in the course of the financial year – it would be impossible for DFID to take a leading role in humanitarian delivery in the South-East about which we spoke.

I hope we will be able to discuss these points on Thursday morning after Cabinet.

I am copying this to Gordon Brown, Jack Straw and Geoff Hoon.

Clare
Short

CLARE SHORT

Iraq: Key health statistics (Source: UNICEF)

- Almost a 1/3 of all children in the centre and south suffer from chronic malnutrition.
- The prevalence of low birth-weight babies has increased more than 5 times in the last ten years.
- Death from diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections – both easily preventable – account for 70% of child mortality.

	Northern Iraq	Centre and Southern Iraq
Mortality rates of children under 5 per 1000	72	135*
Maternal mortality per 100,000 births	120	294

*worse than the Democratic Republic of Congo or Mozambique

