

DECLASSIFIED

Pus office

From: David Manning
Date: 16 February 2003

S /03

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell
Matthew Rycroft

IRAQ: WAY FORWARD

Blix's careful fence sitting on Friday has encouraged the wishful thinkers and procrastinators. For the moment, there is almost certainly a Security Council majority for letting the inspections run, not for moving to early military action.

We need to go on making the argument that the issue is compliance. Our best bet may be to concede a little more time while issuing an ultimatum. We might:

- agree to the French demand for a further meeting of the Security Council on 14 March to hear another report from Blix;
- simultaneously table a second resolution stipulating that unless Blix reports on 14 March that Saddam is in full, unqualified, unequivocal compliance with 1441, he will be in further material breach. This would go to the vote immediately after Blix had reported;
- spell out either in the draft resolution or orally (advice needed from Jeremy Greenstock) that full compliance includes:
 - explaining satisfactorily what happened to all the BW and CW unaccounted for when UNSCOM were forced out of Iraq in 1998
 - full and unfettered access to, and cooperation from, who were allegedly involved in the destruction of Iraq's chemical stocks
 - full and unfettered access to, and cooperation from, all scientists UNMOVIC wish to interview both inside and outside Iraq, as provided for by 1441

DECLASSIFIED

194

DECLASSIFIED

- 2 -

These conditions set the bar too high for compliance, yet are fundamental to it. Blix will find it hard to pretend otherwise, whatever marginal improvements Saddam may go on making on process as opposed to substance.

When we put the second resolution down we should emphasise that we are giving the French the extra time they want; and we are taking Blix at his word. His presentation on Friday included the following: "Today, three months after the adoption of UNSCR 1441, the period of disarmament through inspections could still be short if immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA were to be forthcoming".

There are disadvantages with this approach:

- The Americans will dislike it. As usual, they are in a hurry. But the military timetable can be adjusted if necessary. It would probably mean action in the last few days of March ie after a vote on a second resolution on 15 March and a further 10 days for the Arabs to press Saddam to leave.
- Blix will dislike having to make a categoric judgement (although, interestingly, he was hinting privately to Jack on Friday that some sort of ultimatum might be a way forward). We must draft the resolution so that he cannot equivocate, and cannot honestly give a verdict of full compliance.
- The French will dislike it and will work to block it. Their game is to string things out indefinitely - which is why it is attractive to play their own date back at them.

But there are advantages too.

- It gives us another month to find our 9 votes. We can claim that we have been reasonable: four months on from 1441 no-one should seriously argue that it is impossible to tell if Saddam is complying. A deadline will also focus minds and make it clear to Security Council members that they are going to have to choose (something France wants to avoid).
- We have another 4 weeks in which the inspectors just might get lucky. A real find would have a major impact on Security Council opinion, a point the Mexican Foreign Minister made strongly to Jack on Friday.

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET - EXTREMELY PERSONAL

SECRET
DECLASSIFIED

- 3 -

- It will give Saddam 4 more weeks to make a mistake. He may do so, perhaps reacting badly if Blix announces later this week that the Iraqis must destroy their Al-Samoud II missiles with their costly engines. If Saddam refuses to cooperate, it will be a glaring example of Iraqi non-compliance.

Would it work?

It's impossible to be certain: but it gives us a chance. The odds are against a successful second resolution at the end of February. But an extra couple of weeks, tied to the French date, could make the difference.

If you want to try, I think you should say nothing until after tomorrow's European Council. We should let the French , allow them a little more time in New York, and then hit them with our draft second resolution, probably in mid-week. Before then, you would need to do a heavy selling job with Bush.



DAVID MANNING

DECLASSIFIED