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S 323 /02

From the Private Secretary

31 October 2002

Jew Peter,

### IRAQ: MILITARY OPTIONS

The Prime Minister held a meeting with the Defence Secretary, Foreign Secretary and CDS this morning to consider the issues set out in your letter of 29 October to David Manning.

**This letter is extremely sensitive and must not be copied further.**

CDS set out the position. US planning for a Northern Iraq option was proceeding on the assumption that there would not be a UK land contribution. The US were unwilling to approach the Turks about a possible UK contribution until they had a firmer indication from us of likely commitment.

CDS concluded that if the UK wanted to keep open the option of a land contribution and be able to influence the planning process, we needed to tell the US now that for planning purposes they could assume a possible UK land contribution (Package 3) on the same basis as a possible air, maritime and Special Forces contribution (Package 2). This would not be a final commitment to a UK land contribution.

CDS and the Defence Secretary said the US's own timetable was now slipping beyond a possible early January start date, due in part to the delay in concluding negotiations in New York. As a result the earlier tight timelines on warning UK Reservists no longer applied, and a warning notice would not be required until the middle of November. In any event no warning notice would be issued until the UNSCR had been adopted. The Foreign Secretary said consultations on the UNSCR were continuing. There was an outside chance of adoption this week, but the end of next week was more likely.

The Prime Minister asked about the additional costs of Package 3 compared with Package 2. Had they been discussed with the Treasury? CDS

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said he believed that if we made a major financial contribution to the campaign through Package 3, we would be under less pressure to finance a big share of the post-conflict reconstruction effort.

The Prime Minister concluded that the MOD should now tell the US that we were prepared to put Package 3 on the same basis as Package 2 for planning purposes, in order to keep the option open; but that no warning should be issued to the Reservists at this stage; and the Prime Minister should be consulted again before any such warning was issued.

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

*Yours,  
Anna.*

ANNA WECHSBERG

Peter Watkins  
MOD