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From the Private Secretary

27 November 2000

Dear Sherard,

IRAQ

The Prime Minister saw various papers on Iraq over the weekend including the IIC Assessment. He feels uncomfortably positioned on Iraq policy at present. The preferred option by far would be to implement SCR 1284, enabling the inspectors to return and sanctions to be suspended. But there does not seem to be much prospect of that happening any time soon. Meanwhile, the human consequences of economic sanctions are pretty appalling, which is bad in itself and it gives critics an easy point of attack; and the pressures on Saddam are not that great.

Work is in hand to review the policy options, in advance of discussions with the incoming US Administration. The Prime Minister would welcome the Foreign Secretary's views on the approach we should adopt, bearing in mind that the first instinct of a new Administration will be to seek ways to unseat Saddam rather than to accommodate him.

I am copying this letter to Nicky Moffat (Ministry of Defence), and to Richard Abel and Tom McKane (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc.

JOHN SAWERS,

Sherard Cowper-Coles
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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