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*by e-mail



From: Anna Bewes
Private Secretary

Date: 13 December 2002

cc. PS/PUSS*
PS/Suma Chakrabarti*
Nicola Brewer*
Carolyn Miller*
Michael Mosselmans*

Special Advisers*

Alistair Fernie

IRAQ

The Secretary of State held a meeting on 10 December to review recent developments in our work on Iraq. The meeting was attended by Suma Chakrabarti, Nicola Brewer, Carolyn Miller, Michael Mosselmans, and you.

General update

2. You updated the Secretary of State on the situation regarding weapons inspections, and other recent developments. You noted that a key date would be 27 January, when the Weapons Inspectors were expected to produce their first report (although Hans Blix would be issuing an interim view on the Iraqi declaration around 19 December).

Whitehall Discussions

3. The Secretary of State asked how our discussions with Whitehall were proceeding. Carolyn Miller said there seemed little enthusiasm elsewhere to discuss costings, although Nicola Brewer noted an acknowledgement from FCO that such information should be relevant to any decision on action. She suggested that we should raise at the next Cabinet Office meeting some of the US and CHAD estimates. The Secretary of State agreed, and recommended also that we increase discussions with the Treasury on costings – they would have to be involved in any final decision, so would have a key interest.

4. [redacted] reported briefly on his work on costs to the UK of a humanitarian response following any action on the ground; this was still at a very early stage, and would need more work before it could be taken with any authority. The Secretary of State underlined the need to ensure that all costings included up front both the military and humanitarian factors together.

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5. [redacted] said that MOD did not seem to have taken into account in their considerations the possibility that in, or for a while after any conflict humanitarian organisations might well not be in the region, and the military would find themselves in the frontline of caring for injured and vulnerable civilian populations. This would also have resource implications for them. Nicola Brewer said that it had been difficult to find any one person within MOD with a broad enough overview of the situation – but she would try to speak to their Director General for Policy.

6. The Secretary of State asked about what more we knew on the humanitarian consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction. You said that MOD had done work on this, but we had not been able to see the papers. [redacted] underlined the need for us to have such information – we had to know at what point after any such use it would be safe for humanitarian workers to return to the region; and also what training would be necessary in preparation for any such work.

7. Carolyn Miller reported that we were working with the FCO on evacuation plans for any DFID people in the region, should the situation deteriorate.

8. Suma Chakrabarti pointed out the need to co-ordinate lines for letters, PQs, etc., with other government departments. The Secretary of State agreed. We should prepare a response to questions about our humanitarian response planning: something brief along the lines of 'We are preparing, as always, for all scenarios'.

Action: MENAD/Press Office

Training

9. [redacted] mentioned the need to consider training for DFID-funded personnel who might be deployed alongside the military in any humanitarian response. The Secretary of State pointed out that we would not usually deploy our own people, but instead tended to work more through the UN or NGOs. She asked that the Department revert to her before putting any people through training.

Liaison with others

10. [redacted] said that Oshima, Head of OCHA, would be passing through London the following week; we hoped that he would share details on their level of planning for the region. The Secretary of State agreed that she would also see him on the 18th December.

11. Carolyn Miller said that a follow up meeting with the US was planned for January. Nicola Brewer noted the need to continue to try to get the US to see the UN as having a real role in this situation. [redacted] would be taking this up with Cronin.

12. Alistair Fernie said that we knew from ECHO meetings that other organisations were planning for humanitarian response post any conflict, but in a very limited fashion. Most would plan to fund UN organisations rather than being directly involved themselves.

Anna Bewes, Private Secretary

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