

... MILITARY MACHINE. IN SPITE OF THE INEVITABLE

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Sir Anthony Acland's
assessment of
American intentions,
on his return
to Washington. He
predicts a long haul.

cc PS
PS/AS,
P/M's Waldsignature
Mr Tomkins,
Mr Gaudin
Mr Gove-Robert
PS/AS 10
Chief of Operations Staff
my phone call office
R/K

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IRAQ/KUWAIT

1. SINCE MY RETURN LAST TUESDAY, I HAVE BEEN ASSESSING WITH THE POLITICAL AND INFORMATION SECTIONS OF THE EMBASSY AND WITH THE DEFENCE STAFF THE GENERAL MOOD HERE. I HAVE SEEN GENERAL POWELL, KIMMITT, SECRETARY CHENEY AND GATES, AND HAVE SPOKEN TO SCOWCROFT ON THE TELEPHONE. YOU MAY LIKE A REPORT BEFORE YOU SEE BAKER. I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF THE VIEWS EXPRESSED TO ME ARE NOT QUOTED BACK TO OTHERS AND PARTICULARLY NOT TO AMERICAN CONTACTS.

2. THE SHORT TERM IS CLEAR. THE ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO THE EMBARGO POLICY AND TO MAKING ECONOMIC MEASURES AS EFFECTIVE AS POSSIBLE. WITH SOME INEVITABLE EXCEPTIONS, THE COUNTRY, CONGRESS AND MEDIA CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CURRENT POLICY. THE MOOD IS NOT BELLICOSE. THE PRESIDENT HAS SUPPORT BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN SEEN TO BE FIRM YET MEASURED, AND TO HAVE SECURED UNPRECEDENTED INTERNATIONAL BACKING. THERE IS IN ANY CASE NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE EMBARGO AND A DEFENSIVE POSTURE IN SAUDI ARABIA UNTIL THE MILITARY BUILD UP IS COMPLETE. THIS IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED. THERE IS OF COURSE THE WIDESPREAD HOPE THAT THE IMPRESSIVE COALITION RANGED AGAINST

SADDAM HUSSEIN WILL SOMEHOW BE EFFECTIVE AND THAT HE WILL EITHER BE REMOVED FROM POWER BY FORCES INSIDE IRAQ OR THAT HIS NERVE WILL CRACK. I DO NOT FIND MUCH REAL BELIEF, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS LIKELY IN THE NEAR TERM AT LEAST, OR THAT SANCTIONS WILL BE RAPIDLY EFFECTIVE. 3

3. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT A WHOLE RANGE OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS GOING ON IN ORDER TO PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR ACTION DURING THIS PERIOD, SHOULD THERE BE A SERIOUS INCIDENT OR PROVOCATION. IT IS, I THINK, RECOGNISED THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A RESPONSE, BUT THAT IT WOULD NEED TO BE FINELY JUDGED SO AS TO BE FULLY ADEQUATE WITHOUT AT THE SAME TIME BRINGING ABOUT A GENERAL CONFLICT BEFORE THE AMERICANS WERE READY FOR ONE. THIS PLANNING IS BEING VERY TIGHTLY HELD INDEED, AND I DO NOT THINK THAT WE SHALL BE CUT INTO

IT HERE. THE BEST LINE WILL BE THROUGH AVM WILSON TO GENERAL SCHWARZKOPF. OUR INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT IS RECOGNISED - AND WITH GRATITUDE - AND I DOUBT WHETHER AN AMERICAN REACTION TO A MAJOR INCIDENT (UNLESS IN IMMEDIATE SELF DEFENCE) WOULD BE SO SWIFT AS TO PRECLUDE CONSULTATION WITH US. THE INTENTION WOULD BE TO DISCUSS OPTIONS BRISKLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARTICULAR INCIDENT. BUT THERE IS NO HARM IN REPEATING THE NEED FOR CONSULTATION. AS I HAVE SAID TO CONTACTS HERE, AN INCIDENT COULD INVOLVE US FROM THE BEGINNING.

4. THE LONGER TERM IS BOTH MUCH MORE DIFFICULT IN SUBSTANCE AND MUCH HARDER TO PREDICT. ITS STARTING POINT IS WHEN THE BUILD UP OF FORCES IS ENOUGH TO PERMIT THE MILITARY OPTION. I DO NOT EXPECT THIS POINT TO BE REACHED UNTIL LATE OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE NEED TO GET HEAVY ARMOUR IN PLACE. IT IS ALSO FOR QUESTION WHETHER THE CURRENTLY PLANNED LEVELS WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO MAKE TAKING THE OFFENSIVE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A RISKY OPTION. THERE IS NO DISPOSITION TO UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH OF IRAQI FORCES NOR THE MAGNITUDE OF THE TASK TO DISLODGE THEM. FROM THE MOMENT OF MILITARY SUFFICIENCY, THE INITIATIVE REVERTS TO THE PRESIDENT, BUT THE CHOICES AVAILABLE TO HIM BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. IF THE BUILD-UP IS COMPLETE BY, SAY, EARLY NOVEMBER, THE PRESIDENT CAN STILL ARGUE THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE TROOPS ARE THERE, SANCTIONS MUST BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO WORK. THIS WOULD ENABLE HIM TO GET THROUGH THE 6 NOVEMBER MID-TERM ELECTIONS WITHOUT THE VAST UNCERTAINTIES OF MILITARY ACTION. BUT AFTER THE ELECTIONS AND AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF SANCTIONS, THE MILITARY OPTION MAY COME INTO PLAY. IN THAT EVENT, THE BEST OUTCOME WOULD BE A SHORT, SHARP AND SUCCESSFUL ATTACK WHICH WOULD FORCE IRAQI WITHDRAWAL AND DESTROY SADDAM

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HUSSEIN'S MILITARY MACHINE. IN SPITE OF THE INEVITABLE CASUALTIES, THAT WOULD BE APPLAUDED, BUT IT OBVIOUSLY CANNOT BE A GUARANTEED CERTAINTY. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT BETS IN ITS FAVOUR ARE INCREASINGLY HEDGED. A LONG, DRAWN-OUT, MESSY CAMPAIGN, WITH VERY HEAVY CASUALTIES, WOULD BRING DOWN MUCH CRITICISM ON THE PRESIDENT, THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE MILITARY AND WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR PUBLIC OPINION TO ACCEPT. THE ALTERNATIVE, IF SANCTIONS DO NOT WORK, OF SEEING SADDAM HUSSEIN REMAINING ENTRENCHED IN KUWAIT, WITH PERHAPS THE MALE HOSTAGES STILL HELD, AND WITH HIS MILITARY (INCLUDING NBC) POTENTIAL INTACT FOR THE FUTURE WOULD, ON THE OTHER HAND, GENERATE GREAT PRESSURE FOR THE PRESIDENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION QUOTE TO DO SOMETHING UNQUOTE. THE DESPATCH OF SUCH A MASSIVE FORCE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND THE EXPENDITURE OF SO MUCH MONEY (AT A CRITICAL TIME FOR THE ECONOMY) WILL PROVOKE FROM A NUMBER OF QUARTERS THE DEM
ND FOR A
RESULT.

5. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, CONGRESS AND MEDIA HAVE THE PATIENCE FOR A LONG AND SUSTAINED EFFORT, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE UNATTRACTIVENESS OF THE ALTERNATIVE. BAKER SEEMED - IN HIS TESTIMONY TO CONGRESS - TO BE PREPARING OPINION FOR THE LONGER HAUL. THE ADMINISTRATION'S EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BURDEN-SHARING OVER THE LONGER TERM ALSO POINTS IN THIS DIRECTON. GENERAL POWELL SAID TO ME THAT THE PATIENCE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SHOULD NOT (NOT) BE SOLD SHORT, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE MILITARY OPTION WOULD INVOLVE MANY BODY BAGS RETURNING TO THE USA. HE ADDED THAT AMERICA HAD NOT IN FACT WEARIED OF MAINTAINING DEFENSIVE FORCES IN EUROPE AND KOREA, AND HE EMPHASISED VERY STRONGLY THAT THE ONLY TASK LAID ON HIM BY THE PRESIDENT WAS A DEFENSIVE ONE. CHENEY ECHOED THAT HE HIMSELF WAS NOT AS CONCERNED AS SOME ABOUT THE RESOLVE OF THE COUNTRY FOR A LONG HAUL.

6. ANOTHER ELEMENT WHICH HAS NOT, I THINK, YET BEEN ADDRESSED IS THE SHEER DIFFICULTY OF PLANNING WITH SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENTIALITY - LET ALONE CONDUCTING - AN OFFENSIVE WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE COORDINATED WITH A MOTLEY ASSORTMENT OF ARAB ALLIES AND WITH THE APPROVAL OF SAUDI ARABIA - THE SOVEREIGN TERRITORY FROM WHICH AN OFFENSIVE WOULD PRINCIPALLY BE LAUNCHED. SUCH PLANNING COULD PRODUCE IMMEDIATE STRAINS WITHIN THE COALITION, TO PUT IT AT ITS LOWEST.

7. MY PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION FROM THIS IS THAT UNLESS SADDAM

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HUSSEIN DOES SOMETHING VERY STUPID WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY THE PRESIDENT IN ORDERING A MILITARY OFFENSIVE, WE SHALL SEE THE PERIOD OF TRYING TO MAKE SANCTIONS WORK EXTENDED RATHER THAN CURTAILED WITH INCREASING TALK OF DEFENSIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REGION. PUBLICLY ALL OPTIONS WILL BE KEPT OPEN, SO AS TO GIVE NO COMFORT TO SADDAM HUSSEIN. BUT CONTINUED FAILURE TO EVICT THE IRAQIS FROM KUWAIT MAY PROGRESSIVELY DAMAGE THE PRESIDENT'S REPUTATION FOR BEING ABLE TO HANDLE MAJOR CRISES IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. THE CENTRAL PROBLEM IS WHETHER, HAVING TRANSPORTED THIS VAST FORCE TO THE REGION, THE PRESIDENT (A) USES THEM (B) LEAVES THEM THERE, OR (C) BRINGS AT LEAST SOME OF THEM HOME (TO SAVE COSTS). THERE ARE DISADVANTAGES TO EVERY OPTION, AND I DO NOT THINK THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS YET DECIDED WHICH IT THINKS THE LEAST BAD. NOR DO I THINK IT HAS YET TAKEN A FIRM VIEW ON WHETHER WESTERN OBJECTIVES WILL HAVE BEEN SECURED IF SADDAM HUSSEIN IS SOMEHOW FORCED TO WITHDRAW FROM KUWAIT, BUT LEFT IN BAGHDAD WITH HIS MILITARY CAPABILITIES LARGELY INTACT. MY JUDGEMENT AT PRESENT IS THAT WHILE SUCH A SCENARIO WOULD LEAVE THE ADMINISTRATION PROFOUNDLY UNEASY, THEY WOULD CONSIDER THAT IT FULFILLED THE LETTER OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS AND WOULD THEREFORE HAVE TO BE LIVED WITH, BUT THAT REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WOULD THEN BECOME THE MORE IMPORTANT.

8. ON ALL OF THESE ISSUES, HOWEVER, THE FACT SEEMS TO BE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, NOT YET MADE UP ITS MIND - AND IN THE ABSENCE OF IRAQI PROVOCATION, IT HAS NO NEED TO DO SO FOR PERHAPS SEVERAL MONTHS YET.

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