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COMMUNICATION OF 21 MARCH 2003 RECEIVED FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION CONCERNING IRAQ

The Secretariat has received a letter from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, attaching a statement by the President of the Russian Federation concerning Iraq.

In the light of the request expressed in the letter, the text of the letter and its attachment is attached hereto.

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Annex

ПОСТОЯННОЕ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВО
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
ПРИ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯХ
В ВЕНЕ



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN VIENNA

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" 21 " March 2003

Dear Mr. EL-BARADEI,

Please find attached for information and for distribution as an information document among Permanent Missions in Vienna the Statement by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on Iraq at a Kremlin Meeting.

Please accept, your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



GRIGORY V. BERDENNIKOV

Ambassador, Resident Representative
of the Russian Federation
to the International Organizations
in Vienna

Mr. MOHAMED EL-BARADEI
Director General
International Atomic Energy Agency
Vienna



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Statement by President Putin on Iraq at a Kremlin Meeting

Today the United States started a military action against Iraq. Already there are human victims and destruction. A whole region is under a threat of a large-scale humanitarian and environmental disaster.

Let me stress from the beginning that military actions are taking place contrary to the world public opinion, contrary to the principles and norms of international law and the Charter of the UN.

Nothing can justify this military action -- neither accusations of Iraq of supporting international terrorism (we have never had and do not have information of this kind) nor the desire to change the political regime in that country which is in direct contradiction to international law and should be determined only by the citizens of this or that state.

And finally, there was no need to launch military action in order to answer the key question that was put by the international community, namely, does or does not Iraq have mass destruction weapons and if it does, what should be done and within what timeframe in order to liquidate them?

Furthermore, by the start of the operation Iraq posed no threat to the neighboring states or to other countries and regions of the world because especially after a ten-year blockade it was a weak country both militarily and economically. It was still less of a danger because international inspectors were working there. On the contrary, of late their activities had produced serious positive results.

I would like to note that joint work at the UN Security Council, including joint work with the United States, the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1441 that does not authorize the use of force but that has made it possible to resume the activities of international inspectors as well as the set of other measures to influence the Iraqi leadership marked the start of practical activities to disarm Iraq by peaceful means.

In this connection, regardless of how the situation around Iraq will shape up, on behalf of Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council I would like to appeal to the UN Secretary General and to international inspectors. I want to say words of thanks and appreciation to them. They have honestly performed their duty in a responsible manner and in the process they have displayed a high level of

professionalism and courage. I am sure that the institution of international inspectors will yet be invoked by the international community.

The military action against Iraq is a big political mistake. I have already referred to the humanitarian aspect. But the threat of the disintegration of the established system of international security causes at least as much concern.

If we allow international law to be replaced by "the law of the fist" whereby the strong is always right and has the right to do anything and in choosing methods to achieve his goals is not constrained by anything, then one of the basic principles of international law will be put into question, and that is the principle of immutable sovereignty of a state. And then no one, not a single country in the world will feel secure. And the vast area of instability that has arisen will grow and cause negative consequences in other regions of the world.

It is for these reasons that Russia insists on early termination of military actions. And we are still confident that the central role in resolving the crisis situations in the world, including the situation around Iraq, must belong to the UN Security Council.

I would like to stress that Russia is committed to trying to bring this situation back to a peaceful course and to achieve genuine solution of the issue of Iraq on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions, a solution that would take into account the legitimate interests of the Iraqi people, respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country.

The Kremlin, Moscow, March 20, 2003