

IRAQ: PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

Recommendation

On the basis of the following paper, that Ministers:

- Agree that, with Iraqi buy-in, the UK establishes a PRT structure in Southern Iraq.
- That the PRT be focussed on improving co-ordination and delivery of UK assistance; governance links between the central authorities and Governorates; improves our strategic oversight of southern Iraq.
- That while there are presentational advantages of establishing a PRT in MND (SE), accept that improvements in the effectiveness of our engagement in the south will be marginal
- Recognise that the PRT model may help encourage other coalition partners to engage in reconstruction efforts in southern Iraq, but that multilateral donors are sceptical about the PRT model, are unlikely to fully participate, but need to be engaged.
- Engage with Iraqis and key Coalition MND(SE) partners (Australia, Japan, Italy, Denmark) to secure their participation.
- That we adapt the US PRT model to suit local circumstances in all four southern provinces for the necessary duration:
 - Basra: current effort reorganised along PRT lines and staffed by a UK senior civil servant (structure at Annex A);
 - Dhi Qar: current effort reorganised along PRT lines, possibly staffed and led by Italy;
 - Maysan: current effort continues under a PRT banner until transition. Capacity building after military transition could be provided from Basra, subject to security assessment and transport maintaining contact with Iraqi staff.
 - Muthanna: as Maysan, with possible Coalition Partner contributions (i.e. Australia).
- Continue to influence US thinking on PRTs through UK membership of the three Baghdad-based PRT bodies, including through UK representation on the National Coordination Team (NCT), carefully explaining how the UK effort meets their objectives. Engage at an early stage, possibly at Ministerial level, with State, NSC, DoD in Washington to notify the US of our intentions.
- That we announce this at the Baghdad PRT conference on 5th December.

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Summary

1. The US is establishing three PRTs in Iraq: Babil, Tamim, Ninewa. Following a 'lessons identified exercise' it intends to roll out a further 12 PRTs across Iraq, including in MND(SE), by April 2006.
2. The US has agreed to listen to UK recommendations on the nature of PRTs in the south before taking action. This paper considers the options and makes a recommendation to Ministers.

What are we currently doing in MND(SE)?

3. Since 2003, the UK has spent £170m in the south on reconstruction, including capacity-building / governance efforts. The 2005 effort currently includes:
 - DFID's Governorates Capacity Building Programme (GCBP) embeds public administration and other advisors in provincial structures to support strategic planning, donor co-ordination, civil society engagement and private sector development. DFID are currently considering a one year extension of this programme until March 2007.
 - Support to the Iraqi-established Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committees (PRDCs). These are chaired by the Iraqi Provincial Councils, supported by the UN and meet monthly. They bring together provincial authorities and technical directorates alongside international agencies (UN, UK, US, Danish) to exchange information on the reconstruction effort and respond to local priorities.
 - IISP (Iraq Infrastructure Services Programme) (£40 million - DfID funded) began in April 2005, focusing 75% on power and 25% on water and fuel services. Project has two-pronged approach – rehabilitation of infrastructure in the south, and working with the Ministry of Electricity in Baghdad on a strategy to address Iraq's long-term power requirements.
 - SIESP (Southern Iraq Employment Services Programme – DfID funded) which combined an Emergency Response Fund and an Employment Generation project to meet immediate needs on reconstruction in the south and supported initiatives to create employment for unskilled workers. This is almost complete.
 - MND (SE) Civilian Military Co-operation (CIMIC) teams support emerging provincial planning structures by channelling the Civil Effects Fund (CEF) and CERP (US) funding through Iraqi structures to build the capacity and credibility of provincial governance. CIMIC teams have provided assistance to the technical directorates in the scoping and sponsoring of project proposals for the development of essential services.

Key Political Gain

7. Bring potential new coalition Partners to assist in Southern Iraq. Early indications are that these could supply reconstruction experts or funding, (i.e. respectively Germany and Japan). But Ministers will need to work hard on achieving this as it will also be part of the aim of building a new partnership between Iraq and the International community.

The Risks / Constraints

8. The risks and costs of operating in Iraq are well known. But those particularly pertinent to the PRT concept are:
 - Security constraints: Recent IED attacks have restricted most civilian staff movements to all but essential travel by helicopter. This may hamper the ability to deliver PRT objectives, although can be mitigated through the use of Iraqi staff. It is also possible that PRTs themselves could attract insurgent interest.
 - Resources: UK will need to staff at least one additional civil slot (head of PRT) and one military one (embed in the National PRT). Maintaining a PRT in provinces after transition (not recommended) would have significant force protection costs, perhaps as high as \$50m a year for Maysan and Muthanna.
 - Loss of Iraqi consent/progress: Unlike many other provinces, the Iraqis are taking a leading role in reconstruction and capacity-building in the south. This needs to be preserved and augmented. Need to ensure we do not exceed Iraqi absorption capacity for engagement and to gain full Iraqi consent for deployment of PRTs in the South.
 - Loss of donor participation: Multinational donors (including UN and World Bank) are most likely to physically engage through the south but remain sceptical about PRTs. This could impact on the effectiveness of PRTs and lead to less UNAMI engagement overall.
 - Timelines. The US PRT proposal envisages a continued presence of 2+2 years. The overall US concept is that PRTs would remain as proposed until 2007, drawing down to Iraqi staff until 2009. A similar UK timeline and full PRTs would mean adjusting the Ministerially-agreed military transition plans to provide appropriate force protection and QRF forces. This will be in the region of 300-400 troops for each Province.
 - US Liaison: US thinking on PRTs in theatre have yet to crystallise – attitudes towards the concept have split along Military/Civilian lines. General Casey is clear that he wants to see what the US PRT trial brings before committing to a full roll-out. SBMR-I has indicated that we should not be unnecessarily apprehensive about US reactions to our plans as the US do not expect rigid adherence to the full roll-out of the US PRT model. On the other hand US Ambassador Khalizad, with support from Secretary of State Rice, has indicated, at least initially, his strong desire for the full roll-out of PRTs in each of the Southern provinces.

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- Not least managing Khálilzad's initial expectations that there will be 15 fully-fledged and funded PRTs adhering to a comprehensive US model in Iraq by April 2006. We believe PRTs should take account of local dynamics and build on achievements to date.
- 12. Once Ministers have reached a decision on the preferred option for PRTs in the south, details of the implementation will need to be agreed with the US in Baghdad and briefed in Washington in parallel. If we encounter serious pushback to our preferred option from the US, it might be necessary for the Foreign Secretary to speak to Rice and for the Defence Secretary to speak to Rumsfeld.

Parliament and Media

- 13. There will be parliamentary and media interest throughout. The No 10. Iraq Communications Group will need to factor this decision into its Iraq media planning. We will also need to engage with our key coalition MND(SE) Partners in the South (US, Japan, Australia, Italy, Denmark) to co-ordinate PRT media messages.

Next Steps

- 14. Once ministers have decided their preferred option we will need to consult further with the US, MND(SE) partners and engage Iraqis at a national and local level to operationalise the concept. This will include presentation of the UK PRT model to the Baghdad PRT conference on 5 December.

Iraq Policy Unit
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Basra Proposed UK Led PRT

