

DECLASSIFIED

PG.01

CONFIDENTIAL

From: MED
Date: 07 June 2001

cc: Amanda Tanfield
Iain Macleod, Legal Advisers o/t

Martin Hetherington, MENARG
Rob Macaire, Washington
Came Ross, UKMis New York

To: Mr. Patey
Mr Goulty

SUBJECT: IRAQ BASKET III; THE OPPOSITION AND REGIME CHANGE

1. Peter Gooderham's letter to you of 15 May (attached) indicated that pressure is now building within the US Administration for reviewing policy on baskets two and three (military posture and regime change). Peter suggested that there was a small window of opportunity open to us to try to influence Zalmay Khalilzad, NSC Senior Director for the Gulf, South Asia and Pakistan, on regime change issues and asked for a short non-paper to share with him.

2. I submit a draft non-paper which sets out the background to our own approach and offers a few ideas on ways of supporting the Iraqi opposition. I would be grateful for your comments on the draft.

Iraq Section

NO OF ATTACHMENTS 2

DECLASSIFIED

383

CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES

DECLASSIFIED
NON-PAPER

IRAQ: POLICY TOWARDS THE OPPOSITION

Background

1. Our ability to influence and/or direct the Iraqi opposition is constrained by the fact that we are reliant on contacts with the external Iraqi community while any **internal** opposition remains closed to us. With no diplomatic or presence inside Iraq for ten years, we have been unable to develop links with key military or tribal figures who might lead a political opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime. We have no means of knowing whether such individuals entertain any thought of political alternatives: if they do, they are highly unlikely to acknowledge it, given the penalties they would suffer.
2. We are obliged, therefore, to deal with the **external opposition**. This, in turn, throws up a number of problems:
 - There is no coherent structure to the external opposition. The Iraqi National Congress (INC) has regrouped in recent years and made some attempt to reach out to other representative bodies, but has also succeeded in alienating some of its constituent members. The Iraqi National Accord (INA), for example, has frozen links with the INC. Others are highly resistant to associating themselves with the INC (often for the reasons set out below). Offers of political backing or financial support from the West have exacerbated these internal rivalries.
 - The external opposition generally has little to no credibility. Regional governments have no faith in the INC's ability to achieve their goals. High-profile Western support has damaged their credibility further, leaving them open to charges of being Western stooges. The personal reputation of Dr Chalabi is a factor in this. A number of groups are careful to distance themselves from both the INC and the UK/US. SCIRI is one of the most effective and credible groups but retains very close ties with Iran and historically has been wary of involvement with the US.
 - For the reasons set out in the first paragraph, it is difficult to judge the level of support such groups enjoy on the ground or within the security/military apparatus. The Kurds (KDP, PUK, IUMK) have an identifiable constituency in the north; SCIRI (through the Badr Corps) and other Shia groups can also point to proxy insurgency activity in the south. But it is impossible to say what (if any) support the INC can muster inside Iraq. The Iraqi regime often plays on the external opposition's ineffectiveness and links to the UK/US to its own advantage.

UK approach

1. Despite these difficulties, we have pursued a policy of supporting the external opposition, primarily through the INC, and other pressure groups because they can fulfil a number of helpful roles

CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES
DECLASSIFIED

2

~~CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES~~
DECLASSIFIED

- They provide a rare forum in which Iraqis can criticise their government or express different political beliefs.
- They remind the world at large of the horrific abuses committed by the present Iraqi regime.
- They are well placed to articulate an alternative vision for Iraq's future.

4. To date, UK support for the Iraqi opposition has been based on the principles of maintaining a constructive dialogue in private with the more effective groups, whilst keeping a careful eye on the public profile of our relationship with them. We have encouraged the opposition to focus on improving its presentation of its ideas inside and outside Iraq, facilitated discussions of how a future Iraq might look, and encouraged greater outreach to others in the exile community. Our support has therefore largely taken the form of providing practical assistance (e.g. hosting seminars, Ministerial messages of support) rather than financial support. It should be noted that while our support has been enthusiastically received, it has rarely translated into effective action on the part of the opposition.

Regime change

5. UK policy has not included support for **regime change**. There are clear constraints in international law to our ability to support those working for the overthrow of a foreign government (e.g. the Friendly Relations Declaration of 24 October 1970 (GA resolution 2625 (XXV))). Beyond that, we have doubts as to the external opposition's capability to deliver.

6. Plans shared with us in the past have involved a national liberation movement in which Iraqis, backed from the outside, would launch a series of attacks on Saddam's forces with the intention of occupying specific territory. Allied air support would be required. The leadership council of the external opposition, once in control of some territory, would turn itself into a provisional government and seek international recognition. Beyond the legal question over committing forces to support such an operation, we would also be faced with the problem of securing host nation support for our forces (based in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait etc).

7. Turkey, Syria and Iran would be alarmed at the prospect of an uprising which might result in Iraq splitting into two or three (along ethnic lines), given the read-across to their own populations. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would share this concern to an extent, fearing the creation of a Shia state on their borders. All would worry about each other's interference and that, in the worst case scenario, Iraq might degenerate into civil war. Thus it would be extremely difficult to persuade Iraq's neighbours not to interfere in the event of an uprising, and nigh on impossible to convince them to support it.

DECLASSIFIED
~~CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES~~

CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES
DECLASSIFIED

8. In any case, we do not assess the external opposition to be capable of leading a military operation as outlined above. They do not have the leverage within the Iraqi military and security apparatus to realise a plan of this kind, and leading oppositionists are not credible figures for a provisional government. Regime change relying mainly or exclusively on the external opposition is therefore not a viable option.

Support for the opposition

9. Within the limits set out above, there are nevertheless a number of ideas for supporting the opposition further which are worth considering (though we should take care not to waste political capital and the credibility of our wider Iraq policy by lobbying regional governments on behalf of the opposition).

- Build on recent projects to revive the INC's media operations by establishing a more transparent and medium-term funding base for these initiatives (they have been severely hampered by the requirement to conclude short-term contracts only).
- Encourage the INC to expand its humanitarian assistance programme to get over the message that there are external forces concerned for the welfare of the Iraqi people
- Greater UK/US contact with all opposition groups (not just the INC), particularly with a view to promoting the new sanctions policy.
- Continue support for Kurdish reconciliation and ultimately elections in the north, as an example of our future vision for all Iraq.
- Provide more funding to groups such as AMAR, Indict and the al-Khoie Foundation. These have enough of an independent identity and agenda to have credibility and their work helps to discredit the current regime.
- Use the INC and others to identify Iraqis able to travel who would benefit from attending sponsored courses in civil administration, democracy building etc.

Contract with the Iraqi people

10. As part of our strategy we need to set out for the Iraqi people the sort of relationship we envisage with Iraq when it is re-integrated as a law-abiding member of the international community (implicitly after Saddam has gone). This is designed to appeal to regional states and to signal to any successor regime the sort of relationship with the international community that would be in prospect (see Annex).

Middle East Department
7 June 2001

DECLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES

CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES
DECLASSIFIED

Annex

Contract with the Iraqi people

We want to work with the International Community to enhance stability and security in the Gulf region. We are committed to the maintenance of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its current borders.

We want to work with an Iraq which respects the rights of its people, lives at peace with its neighbours and which observes international law. We want to see Iraq's full re-integration into the International Community.

The Iraqi people have the right to live in a society based on the rule of law, free from repression, torture and arbitrary arrest; to enjoy respect for human rights, economic freedom and prosperity.

For all this to happen the Iraqi regime must abide by its obligations under international law, including compliance with relevant UN resolutions: including re-affirmation of recognition of Kuwait and acknowledgement of the inviolability of the border with Kuwait.

The record of the current regime in Iraq; systematic use of mass executions, torture and arbitrary arrest as tools of repression; history of aggression; continued refusal to meet international obligations suggests that its priorities remain elsewhere. The regime must end its mistreatment of the Iraqi people and be held to account for its war crimes. We must ensure that the Iraqi people have access to information not controlled by the regime. Those who wish to promote change in Iraq deserve our support.

Until such time as Iraq is able to rejoin the international community we will continue to ensure that it is not in a position to threaten its neighbours and that there are tight controls on its ability to build up its military and WMD capability. We will also endeavour to minimise the impact of these controls on the Iraqi people. But we look forward to the day when Iraq rejoins the international community. We will then wish to pursue the following objectives:

- to support an international reconstruction programme for Iraq
- to re-build our political relations
- to facilitate Iraq's access to financial markets by encouraging generous debt rescheduling through the Paris Club
- to encourage Iraq to adopt, with IMF and World Bank support, growth orientated economic policies
- to support Iraq's integration into the region through co-operation with neighbouring countries and encourage an Iraqi application to join the WTO

DECLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES

CONFIDENTIAL UK/US EYES
DECLASSIFIED

- to promote investment in Iraq's oil industry
- to encourage the establishment of a comprehensive retraining programme for Iraqi professionals including the development of academic exchanges and provide scholarships for Iraqis to study overseas
- to promote within the EU an aid/trade package for Iraq