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## **SECURITY OF OUR POSTS IN BAGHDAD AND BASRA**

### **SUMMARY**

1. Headlines from the most recent OSA visit.

### **DETAIL**

2. (Senior Overseas Security Adviser) returned from Iraq on 6 June. He will let us have his detailed report on Baghdad and Basra as soon as possible. But you might find it useful to have the headlines from his visit.
3. The starting point for the review remains that the security risks to which our staff are exposed in Iraq are extreme by normal diplomatic standards. All plausible security measures are being put in place to provide as great a degree of assurance from attack as possible. But we are operating at the limits of what can be achieved, consistent with running a diplomatic mission. In such an extreme environment, the likely consequences of an accident or a piece of bad luck could make the difference between life and death. SMD's clear assessment is that it is more a question of when there is a fatality amongst our diplomatic staff, rather than if. This assumption needs to be shared or challenged by the risk owners.

BAGHDAD AND BASRA, 22 MAY TO 3 JUNE

4. key findings are as follows:

- The security situation in Iraq, and for our posts, is deteriorating significantly in Baghdad and Basra but for different reasons. In Basra, we do not have sufficient military forces to dominate the ground with the result that our Consulate General is housed alongside an increasingly dangerous city. The Shia extremists have permeated the IPS and the city is controlled by extremists and criminal gangs, many of whom are inter-linked.
- In Baghdad, there is a growing dependency on Iraqi forces for security. But the Iraqi forces, especially the police, are permeated by Shia militia, who pose a threat to our staff and mission.
- The threat of kidnap is increasing. In Baghdad, the threat has increased because of the handover of large areas of the city to Iraqi security forces by the MNF-I and in Basra, the threat has increased because of lack of British troops on the ground. SMD is looking at providing key staff with transponders to detect their location, in case they are captured. We will need to address as a matter of policy, how Embassy/Consulate vehicles should respond if stopped in an apparently legitimate Iraqi check-point.
- view is that senior staff in our missions are facing undue political pressure to "produce the goods" which could lead to the acceptance of inappropriate levels of risk. For the moment, we are dependent on the security managers and heads of the individual bodyguarding teams who are acting as a constraint on senior staff movements to risky areas.
- picked up, on a personal basis, OGD speculation about moving off-shore given the nearly impossible operational environment.

*Andrew Noble*

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