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British Embassy  
Baghdad

HMA Ambassador

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IPU

## STAFF AND SECURITY AUDIT

1. We spoke last week about the PUS' concern about the security of staff in Iraq following the rocket explosion on the British Embassy compound the previous week.
2. Operating in Iraq is not without risk. All staff here appreciate this. They are all volunteers and understand there while there is a risk involved Senior Management put their security and safety at the top of the priority list and are doing all they can to evaluate and manage that risk. With SMD we have and are putting considerable effort into mitigating it:
  - All staff are given a four-day residential course to assist them in living in hostile environments.
  - All staff are issued with body armour.
  - This Embassy compound and the Consulate in Basra have been built with hardened accommodation that provides considerable protection from explosive devices. (As the recent incident shows, it works.)
  - They are guarded 24hrs a day by ArmorGroup and their contingent of Ghurkas.
  - CRG provide close protection when needed.
  - Security advice is given to all staff daily, based on information from many sources and evaluated both within the Embassy and Consulate and elsewhere by security experts.
  - In Baghdad staff are encouraged to undertake the bulk of their work within the International Zone, where most of the Government and Party offices are in any case situated.
  - When activity with a higher risk has to take place, such as Red Zone moves in Baghdad, staff are transported by CRG in a three armoured car convoy fitted with ECMs. SAT teams travel each route in advance to warn of any particular risk that has appeared since the evaluation of the route was made.
  - Travel to and from the airports in Baghdad and Basra is undertaken by helicopter only
  - Most travel outside the palace in Basra is undertaken by helicopter. All road moves in Basra are the subject of rigorous risk assessment by the OSM and CRG
  - Any indication that the risk has increased results in increased precautionary measures such as the cancellation of road moves in Basra, compulsory wearing of body armour, a stop on Red Zone moves in Baghdad or a complete lock-down.



3. The main risk to us inside the Embassy compound is from Indirect Fire. IDF is not uncommon in Baghdad, as the daily statistics bear out. But such incidents in the International Zone are thankfully rare. Certainly in Baghdad the British Embassy is not thought to be a primary target: we are well below the radar screen and propose to stay there. In Basra, the Consulate sits within a relatively small compound with other potential targets (UK military, US Regional Embassy Office). Our safety record is good. Since 2003 we have only suffered two fatal casualties in Baghdad, a DFID oil consultant and a CRG team member. In Basra two CRG personnel were killed by the first Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) in July 2005.
4. Staff have reacted well to the recent events in both centres. There was no discernible panic during the incidents in Baghdad: just a calm and professional response as our contingency measures kicked in. Staff dealt with the extra security measures taken over the subsequent few days with equanimity. I have reiterated to staff that they are all volunteers and if at any time they feel anxious they should make their concerns known. They are free to leave and no-one would think any the worse of them. No-one has asked to leave. Basra have a variety of mechanisms in place for catching potential problems early, paying particular attention to young first posters.

## STAFF AUDIT

5. We have as you requested conducted an audit both in Baghdad and Basra of our staff to ensure that staff levels are right size to meet our objectives and the risk involved. There are of course no dependants in Iraq. And the decompression breaks means that we either need cover in country or we would be looking for frequent and guaranteed cover from London.

## BAGHDAD

6. We have currently around 120 UK nationals directly employed by HMG living and working on the Embassy compound. Only about 30 of these are FCO staff. The rest are DFID, contractors, Civilian Police advisors etc. These numbers are augmented by up to 20 other resident staff employed by other Governments (Austrian Presidency, Canadian Embassy, and European Commission Office), around 30 UK nationals employed by contractors (ArmorGroup; KBR, Frontier Medical and Rotary), and casual visitors. There are about 60 Ghurka guards on compound at any one time (one shift working, the other sleeping). In addition, during the day there are 43 LE staff, another 20 Iraqi nationals employed by KBR, in addition to those employed by Rotary as casual labour. There are also a variable number of CRG staff, depending on the time of day and their duties. Taking into account visitor levels and leave patterns there can be over 200 people on the compound at any one time.
7. The FCO staff are basically split between three sections.



8. In Consular/Visa there are two full-time VCs. Most immigration work, except for officially sponsored visits and visits by senior Iraq figures is already handled by Amman. Passport work is growing. The biggest demand on the section is during kidnaps. Conceivably we might manage with just one VC: but this would offer no cover for leave breaks and more importantly would leave Consular Section short-handed during kidnaps and in handling the aftermath. I have just responded to a letter from David Richmond asking us not to lose sight of the Hassan and Bigley cases and to keep up the pressure for a resolution. Consular cases are almost always complicated and time consuming.
9. Management/Security section. We have 7 UK based staff but the SMO doubles up as Consul. Security considerations mean that some tasks (e.g. transport manager) which could be undertaken elsewhere by LE staff, needs to be carried out here by a UK based member of staff. We keep this situation under review. And once I am confident that we can relax these requirements I will recommend that we do so. Given that this exercise is being conducted because of our security concerns it would be folly to reduce staff in this area.
10. Political/Economic/Military is by far the largest section and large by FCO global standards. But then so are the requirements. Nigel Sheinwald's letter of 28 February is a good indication of the level of high level interest and demands on this post. Each section deals with an UK Government priority objective from Transition to Sectarian Outreach to Human Rights. I am confident that we cannot meet those demands without our current complement of staff and at the same time ensure staff get the decompression breaks to which they are entitled. We could, if our complement were always up to strength and future recruitment guaranteed, cut one or two jobs at the margins and reassign duties. But even if we dropped lower priority activities I fear this would put even more pressure and result even longer working hours for staff who are regularly putting in 13/14 hour days, six days a week. We keep our Redzone moves to a minimum but this does not mean we are unable to do our job as most politicians, NGOs and many others are accessible from within the International Zone.
11. Commercial: We have one D6 officer who covers trade promotion but also air service and related matters. Although we do not have many visiting British businessmen, there is considerable interest in the market and our CO has led two missions of Iraqis to regional trade fairs to link up with UK business. This may take on even more relevance in the context of increasing capacity of the Iraqi oil industry and electricity sector. We continue to receive requests for high level lobbying most recently by Seimens and HSBC. The air service part of his work is important in that it covers the resumption of direct Iraq airways flights to London, UK involvement in Basra airport and accreditation of new airports in Erbil and Suleimaniya. This would have to be reallocated to another member of staff on the heavily loaded (see above) economic side.
12. DFID: The head of DFID takes security seriously and liases constantly with us and DFID London. DFID staff and consultants in Baghdad (25-30 depending on the number of consultants) operate more in the Red Zone than others. But they do not hesitate to stop Red Zone moves or to curtail staff movements and numbers in response to individual



circumstances. DIFD has a contingency plan, which sets out in three stages the activities they would have to abandon should staff be progressively drawn down. The Head of DFID does not think that the current security situation warrants any drawdown.

13. Civ Pol: A large section: but 2006 is the year of the Police. Police reform lags well behind that of the Iraqi Defence forces. This is the year we are making a concerted effort to help the Iraqi Police Service catch up. This key objective would have to be curtailed if these numbers were reduced.

#### BASRA

14. The numbers in Basra are similar to those in Baghdad- at any one time there are between 215 and 230 FCO and OGD staff and contractors on the Basra Palace compound. The Consulate in Basra serves three main purposes: to influence and monitor the political process in the South; to support the SSR, governance and reconstruction agendas; and to liaise with MND(SE) in the British Area of Operations. Current staffing levels reflect the importance HMG attaches to each of these priorities. In addition, we run a small Visa and Consular operation and a British Council Office. Our Commercial Office has just been strengthened by the arrival of a UK-based UKTI officer. Given Basra's potential commercial significance (the Southern Oil Company produces 85% of Iraq's oil), this is a welcome development.
15. There would be scope to operate at reduced staffing in Basra if we were willing to sacrifice some of the services we currently offer, or to de-prioritise some of the work being done. Options include cutting:
  - Consular and visa services
  - UKTI services
  - Some Prisons and Police advisers
  - Some chancery functions (Visits Officer, Press and Public Affairs).
16. But the Consulate, as part of their contingency planning, has looked at staff drawdown options in some detail. The fact is that taking any of the options above would impact severely on the service we can offer, while having a negligible effect on the risk. To reduce the risk appreciably, we would have to cut numbers drastically, with a consequent loss of function and impact on objectives.

#### FUTURE SECURITY

2. We continually discuss locally and with SMD any additional precautions we might take that would improve the security of our staff and reduce risk. We review and amend our risk assessments on a daily basis, and in response to each incident (e.g. we're amended our approach to IPA road moves within hours of the Al-Amarah incident last week). The people looking after us are acknowledged as being among the best in the market. Recent change have been a more rigorous pre-screening to ensure that staff are fit enough to cope with security measures and don't pose a danger to themselves and others; and the



provision of fixed accommodation at BIAP and Basra Air Station. Future challenges include the shrinking of the International Zone, the gradual transfer of responsibility for security to the Iraqi forces and Transition in MND-SE. We continually assess and evaluate these changes and will not hesitate to recommend changes to the establishment should we deem them to be necessary, even at the expense of achieving our objectives. Both missions have a robust Contingency Plan that can be invoked quickly to reduce staff numbers. Having reviewed again the two missions I judge that all staff are carrying out, or enabling others to carry out, jobs required of us by our clients in the UK.

William Patey, CMG  
Ambassador of the United Kingdom  
Baghdad