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**REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS
IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Basra and Helmand have seen efforts to join up working between civilian and military actors, across Departments, and with international partners and the host government. The international community will continue to need to design and deliver stabilisation strategies in complex, hostile environments. Lessons from Basra and Helmand should apply to all such future interventions. Implementation in these theatres of some of these lessons is also desirable. The Helmand Review (September-October 2006) has helped to catalyse action on a number of these. Whilst the expected lifetime of the Basra PRT may be too short to warrant adoption of some, a number remain applicable.

Lessons identified can be broadly categorised under four themes:

Stabilisation and transition strategy

- Stabilisation requires linking up civilian and military efforts to enhance the credibility of the government and create opportunities for development. Further conceptual work is required, as well as learning by doing, to identify what is most likely to succeed.
- Effective transition and exit strategies require an agreed framework with the host government and with international partners and which are supported by an effective information campaign.
- Realistic transition planning is needed for Basra; if we assess that implementing partners are unlikely to be present, the PRT will need to focus on priorities that can be delivered during the remaining life-span of the Basra PRT and that are not sensitive to an absence of donors when the PRT closes.
- The security contexts in Basra and Helmand have made institutional capacity building difficult. Innovative approaches can alleviate this to some degree (e.g. meetings in neutral locations) but cannot substitute for regular face-to-face working, and in their absence ambition should be tempered.

Whitehall leadership

- Inter-agency efforts should have a policy docking point in Whitehall. This should be supported by clear division of delegated responsibilities among Departments that reflects capacity to deliver on discrete elements.
- Whitehall needs to provide a more comprehensive and timely guidance on substantive issues that are raised in the monthly assessments of the Southern Iraq Steering Group and Kabul Steering Group.
- Inter-Departmental, joint funding mechanisms would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of inter-Departmental stabilisation operations.

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Operational integration

- Achieving inter-agency, civil-military and multi-national coherence is essential in a stabilisation context. This requires clear structures for strategic direction and management, as well as integrated planning and implementation.
- If not dove-tailed into a broader strategy, the military's short-term consent winning projects are likely either to have a limited impact or be out of line with longer-term development objectives. Strong partnership between civilian experts and J5 future plans is required.
- Better Basra (BBAP and Operation Sinbad have been planned largely in isolation from one another with opportunities for synergies missed. Coordination between the military and the PRT would be enhanced through a working level sub-group of the Southern Iraq Steering Group. An updated and prioritised BBAP could usefully develop synergies across all lines of operation, building on potential linkages with Operation Sinbad.
- The multiple incompatible communications systems operated across Government stymie joint working. When deploying together on operations, Departments must settle on one system of secure communications.

Civilian capacity

- Further work is needed to develop specific recommendations on ways to strengthen the cadre of civilians within Government that is prepared to work in conflict zones. In addition to initiatives already underway in DFID, FCO and PCRU, consideration should be given to Departments creating pools of deployable experts, exploring the potential for accessing local government, and extending the Engineering and Logistics Staff Corps.
- It is desirable to staff integrated efforts with a balance of contractors and civil servants, to ensure both the stabilisation and sectoral expertise and understanding of Whitehall required.
- Individuals from the province in which a PRT operates can make vital contributions beyond proficiency in the local language, bringing invaluable networks and professional skills; where possible, more use should be made of such staff.
- Effective project management, with a single line of responsibility, is needed to ensure adequate logistic and infrastructure support for the deployment of civilians.
- Clearer indication by DFID and FCO of the rationale for decisions on restrictions on movements of civilians for whom they have duty of care would help remove misconceptions about decisions taken.

REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTs)
IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

INTRODUCTION

Background to the review

1. This report responds to a request from the Minister for the Armed Forces, dated 10 July 2006, to consider what improvements could be made to the *structure, process, purpose and direction, resources, authority and accountability* of the UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq. The study is based on consultations that were held across Whitehall, and in Basra, Kabul, Kandahar and Lashkar Gah. The UK effort in Helmand is assessed in detail in a separate Review of the UK Joint Plan for Helmand, which was submitted to the Afghanistan Strategy Group for review by Ministers on 19 October 2006. That Review has informed this paper. As there is already a detailed action plan to take forward the recommendations of the Helmand review, only those actions that are outstanding in the Helmand Action Plan are reflected in this report.

2. Never before have UK stabilisation efforts been so high on the political agenda. In recognition of the complexity of the contexts in which it is operating, the UK has sought to integrate efforts across Departments. The military is particularly keen on the 'comprehensive approach', recognising that successful governance and development activities are key to transition to national government authority and civilian-led development. PRTs in Basra and Helmand are a manifestation of recent efforts at joint working. Yet despite being staffed by both civilians and military personnel, comprised of UK staff and international partners, both PRTs have struggled to deliver strategic integration.

3. Integration – inter-Departmental, civil-military, and multi-national – is a central theme in this review. This report should be seen as part of an evolutionary process by which the UK seeks to develop its approach to post-conflict stabilisation, and as a chance to build consensus around lessons that have been identified. The review itself would also have benefited from being carried out by an inter-Departmental team. Instead, those writing the report sought to be consultative – though the time available to the review team in Iraq was particularly limited. Assessing the impact of the PRTs' work is outside of the scope of this review, but it should perhaps still be noted that the review team did not have access to Iraqi interlocutors while in Basra.

Structure of the review

4. The report is structured in six sections around the key issues that emerged from the consultations in Whitehall and in-country in Afghanistan and Iraq. The main considerations were:

- A. Political and security context and transition strategy. What is the quality of the PRT's planned transition to national government authority and civilian-led development? How does the security context affect the ability of the PRT to fulfil its mandate? Are the structure and workplan of the PRT flexible enough

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to cope with change in a high-risk environment? Do the policies and activities or the PRT add up to stabilisation?

- B. Leadership and strategic direction. How coherent is the leadership and strategic direction provided to the PRT by Whitehall and international management and oversight structures?
- C. Degree of operational integration. Has the PRT achieved a genuine integration of effort?
- D. Ability to provide civilian input. Have Departments been able to find, field and adequately support civilians with the right skill sets? Are they able to finance priority activities?
- E. Fit with host government plans. Do the PRT's plans and activities fit with the host government's plans and strategies? Are they owned by the host government?
- F. Relationship with international partners. Have international partners been involved in the PRT's planning to ensure donor coordination and multi-national integration?

PRT model: a brief historical perspective

5. PRTs were originally set up by the US-led Coalition Forces in Afghanistan in 2003. They were bases through which reconstruction, security sector reform and the extension of the authority of the Government of Afghanistan could take place. There is a historical precedent to PRTs in the model for British counter-insurgency operations in Malaya in the 1950s. The strategy in Malaya was to purge an area of insurgents, hold and secure the area, and win support from local people through rejuvenating it. One area of control would then spread to another like an "ink spot" – until the entire country was covered.

6. The majority of PRTs in Afghanistan are primarily military-led organisations. When the PRT model was first advocated in Iraq in mid-2005 (reflecting the Afghanistan experience of the newly arrived US Ambassador Khalilzad), they were intended to be civilian led. However, the US has proved unable to identify sufficient suitably qualified civilians to fill key posts in the PRTs, despite significantly scaling back the scope and pace of its PRT ambitions throughout 2006. US PRTs have relied heavily on military personnel, often double-hatted or transferred from military duties. This has created tensions in theatre between the State and Defence Departments with the latter locally viewing PRTs as a distraction to the main effort rather than a positive contributor to stabilisation. By contrast, the UK-led PRT in Basra has been the epitome of civilian leadership.

7. Even in Afghanistan there is no one model of a PRT; they differ in size, composition and operational style. The structure and activities of each PRT needs to be alive to the security context in which it operates. Replicating the governance and development practices of the earlier UK-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif has proven difficult in the significantly more hostile environment facing the PRT in Helmand.

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8. There is no clear consensus on what the role and functions of PRTs in general should be; there have been numerous studies and reviews written on these questions. However, it can be argued that the PRT is a loose brand name that may not survive beyond the current phase of international involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead of seeking to contribute to specific debates about PRTs, this review looks at the broader lessons that can be learned from Basra and Helmand about how best to deliver stabilisation strategies in hostile environments through an inter-agency effort.

The Basra and Helmand PRTs

9. The PRTs in Basra and Helmand were set up for different reasons, at different phases of international engagement. HMG has made a virtue of necessity in Basra where the PRT was stood up in a very short time; it is the only multi-national PRT in Iraq; and its focus on governance has been held up as a model for other PRTs in Iraq. It is not clear, however, that the PRT is geared towards supporting other stabilisation and transition activities, including those by the military. As a latecomer, three years after the arrival of the military, and being established primarily in response to US pressure for the UK to establish PRTs across southern Iraq, the UK-led PRT in Basra has evolved separately from military efforts, particularly in the initial stages. Physical separation between the PRT and military headquarters, different timeframes, and the absence of an integrated plan and delivery mechanism have led to working in parallel rather than in full partnership.

10. The Helmand PRT was designed and staffed on the basis of the Joint UK Plan for Helmand. Despite this, inter-agency integration was weak in the first months of the UK deployment. There was insufficient appreciation of the effect that military decisions can have on all strands of the Plan and insufficient consultation with civilians in Helmand on tactical decisions that had a strategic impact. Overall leadership was hampered by the fact that the UK Regional Coordinator 'owned' the Plan but did not control the levers for delivery. The Helmand Task Force headquarters has recently moved back to Lashkar Gah in recognition of the need for closer joint working with the civilian staff of the PRT. A single civilian head of PRT has now been appointed, as in Basra, to replace leadership by committee and enhance strategic coherence.

11. Despite some key differences, there are a number of common features between the Basra and Helmand PRTs which allow lessons to be drawn for the future. Both PRTs:

- Are charged with the delivery of stabilisation programmes in hostile environments where there is a need for military presence;
- Were set up as integrated inter-agency delivery mechanisms;
- Are multi-national teams of civilian and military personnel;
- Were established to be short-term entities to function as long as the international community is directly responsible for security (i.e. until the host government security forces are able to assume full responsibility for security operations); and
- Both focus on capacity building.

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12. This review will focus on these shared features and seek to draw lessons that can be applied both to the Basra and Helmand PRTs, as well as to future multi-national inter-agency stabilisation efforts.

A. POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONTEXT AND TRANSITION STRATEGY

Political and security context

13. UK Force levels in Iraq and Afghanistan from mid-2007 onwards are not yet determined. However, most commentators expect that the UK will need to maintain troops in Afghanistan beyond the three year time frame it originally envisaged. In Iraq, the pace of drawdown will reflect the increasing authority by the Iraqi Government and what the UK military believes it can achieve. Uncertainty about this makes medium-term planning for the Basra PRT very difficult. Its more limited expected life means that the benefits to be derived from implementing some of the lessons identified (especially institutional ones) may not be sufficient to warrant the cost of putting them in place.

14. The security environment in Basra is worse than in Helmand. In Helmand, there have been no direct attacks against the PRT compound, although there have been two suicide attacks against personnel entering and leaving the PRT. At the moment, these are the greatest threat to the PRT staff. By contrast, the Basra PRT has operated in a less favourable and continually deteriorating security environment. Civilian movement across the South – but particularly in Basra – was already severely restricted at the time of its establishment from July 2005 in response to the increasing threat posed by sophisticated road side bombs. From April 2006 increasingly frequent and accurate indirect fire against the Basra Palace compound has added further disruption to the PRT. In light of the recent intensification of rocket and mortar attacks, the decision has been taken to relocate the PRT from the Basra Palace compound. All UN professional staff have been temporarily withdrawn from Basra, and the US presence has reduced to minimum staffing levels.

Sustaining progress beyond the PRT

15. As yet, there is no clear UK transition strategy for Basra, to full national government authority and more conventional development assistance from a broad range of donors. The PRT was established with the expectation that it would close down by late 2007 – early 2008. Staff in the PRT have suggested that the PRT's core functions can be handed over to more traditional development actors, particularly the World Bank and UN. However, it is difficult to see how these organisations would be in a position to take over, given their perceptions of the current security environment. In the event that the security environment were to improve to the extent that development actors could operate, it would be essential for realistic transition planning to have been carried out. If we assess that implementing partners are unlikely to be present, we will need to focus on priorities that can be delivered during the remaining life-span of the Basra PRT and that are not sensitive to an absence of donors when the PRT closes. Further work, in the context of updating the Better Basra plan, is required to determine what is achievable.

16. In the case of Helmand, the UK is working within the framework of a Government of Afghanistan plan; the PRT seeks to extend the authority of Afghan institutions to operate in support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. The current commitment is for a UK-led PRT to remain in place until at least early 2009, while seeking to encourage delivery of Afghan national priority programmes and other partners such as UNAMA to engage in Helmand. It is already clear, however, that we will not be able to deliver all that we intended within three years and that continued external security support will be needed beyond 2009.

Capacity building

17. An effective transition strategy requires building the capacity of key institutions. Fulfilling the PRTs' capacity building mandate requires close and frequent contacts with Iraqi and Afghan counterparts. The security contexts in Basra and Helmand have made it difficult for institutional capacity building to take place. In addition, capacity building of provincial level institutions in Basra and Helmand is partly dependent on the extent of commitment by national governments in Baghdad and Kabul.

Comment [s1]: I think this is acknowledged in Basra

18. Iraqi counterparts have been under threats and pressures not to visit the PRT in the Basra Palace compound. They may feel more confident visiting the Basra Air Station or to Kuwait, where PRT staff will be based after relocation from the Basra Palace compound, but this remains to be tested. Road moves for PRT staff in civilian vehicles are prohibited into Basra city, and many Iraqi counterparts are wary of delegations arriving in military convoys. Regular e-mails and phone conversations are a poor substitute for face-to-face contact. A US review of PRTs that predate the decision to relocate the PRT concluded the following:

"Security challenges have constrained the PRT members' ability to meet regularly with their provincial counterparts and to perform the teaching, coaching, and mentoring that form the core of the PRT capacity-development mission... PRT members are at particular risk when travelling to and from their engagements with Iraqi counterparts, as are provincial government officials and local Iraqi staff working with the PRT... Because of the unstable security situation at both the Anbar and Basrah PRTs...we question whether the continued deployment of PRT personnel to Anbar and Basrah...makes operational sense at this time."

- US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction¹

Despite these obstacles, governance and rule of law experts in the PRT continue to seek ways to build the capacity of their counterparts. The PRT has hosted a number of out-of-country events and more are planned for the future.

19. In Helmand, civilian staff in the Helmand PRT are still able to visit key officials in their offices. The main constraint to capacity building has been an inability to recruit and deploy key civilian staff, including the Governance and Policing Advisors, as well as consultants to support the strengthening of the Governor's office. This staffing gap is being addressed.

¹ Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq*, SIGIR-06-034, 29 October 2006.

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Contributing to Stabilisation

20. The UK is facing new challenges in seeking to support state-building in situations where there is ongoing violent conflict, such as in Iraq and Helmand. Neither military nor conventional development activities alone can achieve stabilisation. A stabilisation² strategy requires linking up civilian and military efforts, and understanding what policies and activities (development, security and political engagement) will most effectively contribute to stabilisation in a particular context. Possible areas for engagement include: quick impact projects; political engagement and outreach to isolated communities; building the capacity of key institutions, including the security sector; and support for the delivery of essential services to enhance confidence in government. To be effective, these actions should be appropriately prioritised and sequenced and identified on the basis of a solid stabilisation assessment and analysis of the local situation. Moreover, individual projects should always be used strategically as a means of building trust for broader engagement.

21. Research into the kind of projects and interventions most likely to have a stabilisation impact is being undertaken internationally, but further work is required to provide the understanding required of what is likely to succeed. Conceptual work is being undertaken by the UK with counterparts in the US and Canada. Our understanding of how to achieve stabilisation, as distinct from long-term development interventions, will also involve learning by doing. In Helmand, it took several months into the UK deployment to reach clarity about the prioritisation and sequencing of activities under the Joint UK Plan for Helmand. Important interdependencies between the security, governance and development strands of the plan only became evident after close engagement with Afghan counterparts on the ground. In Basra, there may be scope for reviewing and possibly re-prioritising the PRT's stabilisation activities, including a better linking of civilian and military efforts, to meet likely transition plans.

Strategic communications

22. Another element of an effective transition strategy is communicating UK intentions to the local population. This has been a weakness of UK efforts in both Basra and Helmand. In Helmand, the Taliban has successfully painted the UK presence as an occupying force that is bent on destroying poppy crops, the main livelihood of the population. We need to engage with key local counterparts, including the Governor and Provincial Council members, to develop a common vision that can be communicated to the population. This gap has been recognised in Whitehall and work is ongoing to implement information strategies that target both local and international audiences.

Key lessons and recommendations:

- Realistic transition planning is needed for Basra; if implementing partners are unlikely to be present, the PRT will need to focus on priorities that can be

² Stabilisation is the process by which underlying tensions that might lead to resurgence in violence and a break-down in law and order are managed and reduced, whilst efforts are made to support preconditions for successful longer-term development.

delivered during the remaining life-span of the Basra PRT and that are not sensitive to an absence of donors when the PRT closes. Further work, in the context of updating the Better Basra plan, is required to determine what is achievable. There may be scope for refocusing the PRT's activities there towards short-term stabilisation.

- The security contexts in Basra and Helmand have made institutional capacity building difficult. Innovative approaches can alleviate this to some degree (e.g. meetings in neutral locations) but cannot substitute for regular face-to-face working, and in their absence ambition should be tempered.
- Stabilisation of an area where there is ongoing violent conflict requires linking up civilian and military efforts to enhance the credibility of the host government and create opportunities for development. Further conceptual work is required, as well as learning by doing, to identify what is most likely to succeed.
- An effective transition strategy needs to be agreed with the host government and should include a comprehensive communications strategy targeting the local population.

B. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Reporting lines

23. In a stabilisation context, achieving inter-agency, civil-military and multi-national coherence is essential. There will continue to be a need for separate civilian and military reporting lines. The issue is how best to ensure coherence given this inevitability.

24. For both PRTs, there is a need for clarity about the locus of responsibility for strategic direction and management, as well as programme oversight. The PRTs have dual reporting lines: UK and international. To complicate matters further, the military itself reports along two separate lines: through ISAF in Kabul and Corps in Baghdad, on the one hand, and through PJHQ on the other. Strategic integration at the top level is particularly challenging in the Iraq context, where military priorities are decided by the US-led Corps in Baghdad. The focus of the US's National Coordination Team (NCT) in Iraq has been to support the establishment of PRTs and to disseminate information; it has not provided strategic direction to the Basra, or any other, PRT. It is worth noting that there were serious disagreements with the US about communication lines – to the Consul-General first or to NCT – and that NCT has at times communicated with the PRT via MND(SE) military channels. In Afghanistan, ISAF has developed a concept of Afghan Development Zones, but there is no NATO reporting line for the civilian elements of the PRTs.³

³ "In the view of many PRT veterans, the entire [Afghanistan] multinational PRT programme would benefit from an agreed concept of operations and an effective central coordinating authority". Robert M. Perito, *The US experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified*, United States Institute of Peace Special Report 152, October 2005.

25. On UK lines, the PRTs report to the senior FCO representatives in southern Afghanistan and southern Iraq: the UK Regional Coordinator and the Basra Consul-General. The Kabul Steering Group, the Helmand Executive Group⁴ and the Southern Iraq Steering Group all bring together UK civilian and military staff to enhance coordination and leadership in-country. These mechanisms are led by the FCO.

Integrated planning

26. Integrated planning is indispensable when operating in a complex security environment. In a stabilisation context, military planning needs to be conducted within an overarching HMG strategic aim in order to support civilian activities. This does not preclude maintaining tactical flexibility on the ground. The Helmand Plan is an integrated plan designed by FCO, DFID and the military, from which the military campaign plan and DFID programmes are derived. Challenges have included securing civilian staffing and ensuring that military operations are in line with the plan, but the plan itself remains substantially sound.

27. In Basra, the PRT has become the implementing arm for much of HMG's Better Basra (BBAP) initiative. This, and the PRT's assistance to refine BBAP, have provided much-needed strategic focus for the PRT. However, the Better Basra Plan is not an integrated plan, though certain objectives, such as police and prison reform, are shared. The military has a separate operational plan, aimed at delivering the Multi National Division (South East) element of the overall Multi-national Force-Iraq plans. This has important implications; activities taking place after each 'pulse' of Operation Sinbad and the PRT's stabilisation efforts are not coordinated, often losing potential complementarities. Joint planning might allow clearer linkages to be made between local authorities that have been engaged under Operation Sinbad and the provincial development planning process, for example. There has been better integration between Operation Sinbad and the policing elements of the Better Basra plan. However, while the PRT is nominally charged with delivering the rule of law strand of the plan, policing and prisons experts report separately to the Consul-General. Work is ongoing to prioritise the Better Basra plan in light of the current security situation and relocation of the PRT; an updated plan would usefully develop synergies across all lines of operation.

Policy docking point

28. In Whitehall, there is no lead Department that proactively provides all of the strategic direction needed to either PRT. Cross-Government committees under Cabinet Office find it difficult to resolve matters in which Departmental interests diverge. The nature of the debate over the level and source of administrative funding for the Basra PRT, and drawn out discussions over the role of the military engineers in delivering stabilisation projects in Helmand are indicative of the challenges of setting direction by committee.

⁴ A further coordination mechanism, the Southern Afghanistan Group which was chaired by the UK Regional Coordinator, is expected to be reinstated after the UK takes control of Regional Command South

29. Both the Kabul Steering Group and the Southern Iraq Steering Group produce monthly reports that are important mechanisms for flagging up issues where decisions are required from London. Whilst some of these are addressed in Whitehall meetings, there is a clearly expressed need for a reply to substantive issues not covered by these meetings.

30. Ideally, one lead Department should have ultimate policy responsibility for a PRT. Cross-Whitehall leadership might most appropriately come from the FCO, reflecting reporting relationships in-country, but there is a lack of consensus in Whitehall. Cabinet Office might be an alternative, but would need strengthening of its capacity. Another option might be an inter-Departmental unit.

31. The lead Department in any civilian strand should be backed up by clear division of delegated responsibilities among other Departments that reflect capacity to deliver on discrete elements. This is not always the case as indicated in para 32 below.

Key lessons and recommendations:

- Achieving inter-agency, civil-military and multi-national coherence is essential in a stabilisation context. This requires clear structures for strategic direction and management, as well as integrated planning and implementation.
- An updated and prioritised Better Basra plan would usefully develop synergies across all lines of operation, building on potential linkages with Operation Sinbad.
- Inter-agency efforts should have a policy docking point in Whitehall. This should be supported by a clear division of delegated responsibilities among Departments that reflects capacity to deliver on discrete elements.
- Whitehall needs to provide a more comprehensive and timely guidance on substantive issues that are raised in the monthly assessments of the Southern Iraq Steering Group and Kabul Steering Group.

C. DEGREE OF OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

32. In both Helmand and Basra, inter-agency and civil-military integration is at the heart of the PRTs' ability to deliver. Genuine inter-Departmental integration must be led from the highest level and must be reinforced at each level of the hierarchy. On an operational level, integration can be hampered by unclear responsibilities. The FCO has the nominal lead for the Governance line of operation in Helmand, but lacks the programme budget, the staff and the expertise to deliver. DFID has provided programme funding, but needs the FCO-recruited GCPP-funded Governance Advisor for effective implementation. Clear Departmental leads will enhance accountability for delivery.

Structures, co-location and joint working in theatre

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33. In Helmand, joint working is based on an integrated plan and supported by the structure of the Helmand Executive Group which brings together the military Commander in the PRT, and FCO, DFID and British Embassy Drugs Team representatives. Those who sit on the Helmand Executive Group are also those PRT staff with responsibility for the delivering the work strands of the Helmand Plan. The Helmand Executive Group is directed by the UK Regional Coordinator (who has primacy for civilian issues), and the UK Task Force Commander (who has primacy for military issues).

34. PRTs in Iraq are civilian led. Despite some military staffing of the Basra PRT, civil-military integration is generally weak, as evidenced by the fact that Better Basra and Operation Sinbad were planned largely in isolation, missing opportunities for synergies. The Southern Iraq Steering Group (SISG) is an important coordination structure, co-chaired by the Consul-General and the General commanding MND SE. The ability of the SISG to achieve greater coordination between the military and the PRT could be enhanced by the establishment of a working level group similar to the Helmand Executive Group.

35. In Helmand, early challenges to coordination caused by the geographic separation of the PRT from key military functions, such as intelligence (J2), current operations (J3) and future plans (J5), have been rectified by the decision to locate all elements of the UK Task Force headquarters in Lashkar Gah. Joint working between elements of the Basra PRT and military are likely to improve by the immediate relocation of the PRT infrastructure team to Basra Air Station, but the bulk of the PRT (located in Kuwait) will continue to be physically separated from the military for the time being.

36. Stronger partnership between future plans (J5) and the more tactical activities of CIMIC (J9) should contribute to better integration of military and PRT priorities. At the moment, CIMIC is the Basra PRT's main counterpart. While the PRT's focus is on strengthening the capacity of province level Iraqi institutions, CIMIC is focused on tactical-level short and medium-term consent winning projects. Perhaps because of this emphasis, some PRT staff in Basra feel it inappropriate to work with the military. Yet it is through such close collaboration that the PRT can contribute to ensuring that military controlled funds are used in a way that best promotes stabilisation (e.g. US CERPS – Commanders Emergency Response – Programme). Different timeframes for military and civilian led activities should not preclude joint planning; an example of positive engagement has been joint working between the PRT's rural development expert and CIMIC to design a CIMIC-led project for spraying date palms.

37. In Helmand, the military has very limited funds for short-term projects (£40,000 monthly). Departments have allocated £6.5 million for Quick Impact Projects, of which £3 million was allocated by DFID to the Global Conflict Prevention Pool for projects to be delivered by military engineers; decisions about projects are taken by a joint working group under the Helmand Executive Committee. This helps to create positive inter-dependency that ensures that short-term stabilisation projects take into account issues about sustainability and create entry-points for longer-term development.

Key lessons and recommendations:

- Accountability for delivery is enhanced by clear Departmental leads in country that reflect the capacity of that Department to fulfil its role. The Helmand model whereby FCO has the nominal lead for the Governance line but DFID provides the programme budget, staff and expertise should be reviewed.
- If not dove-tailed into a broader strategy, short-term consent winning projects are likely either to have a limited impact or be out of line with longer-term development objectives. Strong partnership between civilian experts and J5 future plans is required.
- A working level group to enhance coordination between the military and key Basra PRT staff, specifically J5 and J9, should be set up under the Southern Iraq Steering Group. (The Helmand Executive Group provides a possible model.) This will help ensure that the more tactical activities of CIMIC, the BBAP, and the PRT are properly integrated.

D. ABILITY TO PROVIDE CIVILIAN INPUT

38. Civilian Departments find it difficult to find, field and adequately support civilian experts with the right skill sets in the desired timeframe. If the UK Government is to continue to field civilian staff to hostile environments, it will need to invest more in a specially trained, adequately resourced and logistically supported civilian cadre. The PCRU can provide a start-up capacity, but it is not currently mandated or resourced to provide staff for more than six months for any one post. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, Departments have to staff medium to long-term posts, some of which require specialist skills, in highly insecure environments. The pool of available staff rapidly runs out as staff typically only remain in post for 6 months. This contributes to continuity problems; between military rotations every six months and civilian leave cycles of six weeks in-country and two weeks on leave, the integration of effort suffers.

Staffing

39. Departments have struggled to recruit civilians willing to work in Helmand. The Helmand deployment was started from a blank slate, which had both advantages and disadvantages. Out of a planned establishment of up to 19 UK based civilian staff, nine are currently in place. Of these the majority are permanent civil servants, with well established channels into their respective Departments. The Basra PRT, on the other hand, has largely been created from pre-existing UK, US and Danish programmes and staff. While not at full manning levels, the PRT has 20 expatriate civilian staff, including US and Danish staff; all 16 UK funded civilian staff are contractors. Contracted senior specialists bring vital expertise, but a trade-off is that they are unfamiliar with Whitehall and do not have strong links to Departments. A balance of contractors and civil servants is desirable to ensure the right mix of expertise in stabilisation and familiarity with Whitehall.

40. There are a number of possible ways to increase the availability of civilians suitable and able to work in conflict zones, and efforts are underway:

- a) DFID and FCO are taking steps to enhance their ability to recruit, train and retain staff to work in hostile environments (e.g. in DFID –a crisis response pool has been established, though this has yet to be used, and a review of human resource policies and practices is underway);
- b) PCRU is implementing a series of actions agreed with its Board to expand its pool of suitable deployable civilian experts ; and
- c) PCRU and FCO Conflict Issues Group are considering the feasibility of establishing a shared database of civilian experts, accessible across Whitehall..
- d) DFID and PCRU are planning to establish a framework arrangement with consultancy companies to provide experts in certain governance areas specific to conflict countries by April 2007;
- e) Other options include: establishing a; exploring the potential for accessing local government; and extending the scope of the Engineering and Logistics Staff Corps; and Departments following the example of DFID to create pools of deployable staff; and
- f) Filling any residual civilian capability gaps by reviewing the potential of Reservists and serving officers to meet priority needs in environments which are so hostile that no civilians could be expected to serve.

Further work to develop specific recommendations is needed.

41. More consideration should also be given to the vital role that individuals from the province in which the PRT operates can play to help deliver PRT objectives. In many cases, beyond their proficiency in the local language, they can bring invaluable professional skills and networks. The Basra PRT has made use of Iraqi professionals as part of its governance and infrastructure teams, while Afghans only work in the Helmand PRT as interpreters. Security concerns must be recognised and solutions found to minimise risks (e.g. contracting through third parties and arms length relationships).

Life support

42. Initially, Whitehall did not fully realise that standing up the Basra PRT would involve more than a reallocation of existing resources. In fact, set up requirements were extensive – in terms of staffing, security management, communication and logistics, administrative capacity, and hardened offices and accommodation. The Helmand PRT was established without pre-existing civilian infrastructure in place. It still has no reliable secure civilian communications, the construction of hardened work and living accommodation is behind schedule, and vehicle fleet management has been challenging. Effective project management, with a single line of responsibility, is needed to ensure adequate logistic and infrastructure support.

43. The multiple incompatible communications systems operated across Government stymie joint working and have particularly detrimental effects in the

field. In both Basra and Helmand, the PRTs currently rely almost exclusively on insecure web-based e-mail. In Basra, there is limited access by the PRT to the FCO confidential system, with most of the team operating on insecure e-mail. In Helmand, the military secret system is available to civilian departmental staff, but the FCO and DFID in London do not operate on this system; a temporary solution is about to be installed, albeit belatedly. Secure video-conferencing facilities are also incompatible. Agreement on the use of one system of secure communications would substantially enhance operations. At its simplest this might involve installing DII in FCO and DFID departments that deal with conflict and post-conflict areas. Planning for the delivery of communications infrastructure must begin as soon as a requirement for an inter-agency operation is identified. If a permanent system cannot be delivered on time, Departments will need to accept the significant cost of a temporary arrangement.

Duty of care

44. Security management in Basra has been robust. Early concerns in Helmand have now been addressed with the deployment of a Security Manager to the PRT, and the strengthening of the procedures of the Post Security Committee in Kabul. The different standards of duty of care between the military and civilian Departments have been a consistent and unhelpful source of tension between military and civilian efforts. On occasion this has – particularly at the operational level – led parts of the military to conclude that civilian efforts are limited and half hearted. In both theatres, DFID and FCO implement a common duty of care policy. A risk-benefit analysis is central to applying this policy. The differing views taken on the value of retaining particular individuals in posts, given the variation in the potential of each individual to have an impact under the constraints imposed by the security environment, has on occasion led to perceptions that different interpretations of duty of care exist. Work is needed to remove these misconceptions by indicating clearly the rationale behind any differences in the conclusions reached in applying the common DFID/FCO duty of care. Further thought needs to be given to the duty of care arrangements for nationals engaged by or associated with the PRTs.

Funding

45. Existing mechanisms for funding stabilisation operations in conflict and post-conflict scenarios do not meet current needs. Military costs are met through long-standing arrangements between MOD and Treasury, based on the principle that the core MOD budget finances a standing military capability but that the MOD is able to call upon the Treasury contingency reserve for the additional costs of employing this capability in operations. There are no equivalent arrangements for meeting the civilian costs of operations.

46. Currently, no single budget exists with a remit to meet civilian costs of stabilisation, including contributions to Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). A number of different sources have been used, often in combination. These include the Global and Africa Conflict Prevention Pools, the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF), the FCO-managed peacekeeping budgets, Departmental (FCO, MOD, DFID) budgets and the Treasury Reserve. Other civilian costs have typically been met from existing DFID, FCO and PCRU budgets. With no obvious first port of call for funding, and a

variety of possible sources existing, past experience has seen requests for funding contributions being passed round Departments. Agreement on a single joint source of funding for the civilian aspects of stabilisation operations would simplify the process of allocating shared funding for joint plans and would enhance inter-Departmental integration.

Key lessons and recommendations:

- If the UK Government is to continue to field civilian staff to hostile environments, it will need to invest more in a specially trained, adequately resourced and logistically supported civilian cadre.
- Further work is needed to develop specific recommendations on ways to strengthen the cadre of civilians within Government that is prepared to work in conflict zones. In addition to initiatives already underway in DFID, FCO and PCRU, consideration should be given to Departments creating pools of deployable experts, exploring the potential for accessing local government, and extending the Engineering and Logistics Staff Corps.
- Further work is also needed to review the potential of Reservists and serving officers to fill priority needs in environments which are so hostile that no civilians could be expected to serve.
- It is desirable to staff integrated efforts with a mix of contractors and civil servants, to ensure both the stabilisation and sectoral expertise and understanding of Whitehall required.
- Individuals from the province in which a PRT operates can make vital contributions beyond proficiency in the local language, bringing invaluable networks and professional skills. Where possible, more use should be made of local staff, with thought given to ways in which security risks can be minimised (e.g. through third parties).
- Effective project management, with a single line of responsibility, is needed to ensure adequate logistic and infrastructure support for the deployment of civilians.
- The multiple incompatible communications systems operated across Government stymie joint working; agreement on the use of one system of secure communications would substantially enhance operations when deploying together on operations,
- Clearer indication by DFID and FCO of the rationale for decisions on restrictions on movements of civilians for whom they have duty of care would help remove misconceptions about decisions taken.
- Inter-Departmental, joint funding mechanisms would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of inter-Departmental stabilisation operations.

E. FIT WITH HOST GOVERNMENT PLANS

47. A framework agreed with the host government is needed for acceptable political solutions to be reached and for the development of exit strategies and transition planning. UK-led inter-agency efforts need to align themselves with host governments' plans and strategies. The UK also needs to take care to ensure sufficient integration of the host government into UK planning processes to generate a sense of ownership. Whilst the details of a number of the component elements were shared, neither the Helmand Plan nor Better Basra Plans have been fully shared with Afghan or Iraqi Government partners. Successful transition from UK activities to delivery by the host government will be significantly enhanced through consultation with them on the UK strategies.

Key lessons and recommendations:

- Effective transition and exit strategies require an agreed framework with the host government; UK planning processes need to integrate local counterparts.

F. RELATIONSHIP WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

48. Rather than designing a UK Plan in isolation, involving international partners to develop a common plan should be considered. All Basra PRT staff are charged with implementing strands of Better Basra and have contributed to the plan itself, but non-UK nationals do not have access to the full plan which is classified as confidential. In the case of Helmand, the tactical activities level of the Joint UK Plan for Helmand was developed without the participation of any of the international partners present in the PRT. Where possible, major strategy documents such as Better Basra and the Helmand Plan should be shared with all PRT staff, at least in a declassified form.

49. If we are to ensure coordination to deliver stabilisation outcomes, UK-led multi-national efforts need to take care that international staff are fully integrated into their work. Unlike the Helmand PRT, where US, Danish and Estonian civilian staff were originally left outside of the formal PRT structures, the Basra PRT has US and Danish staff acting as Deputies and integrated in to the sectoral teams. Partnership with the US and Denmark has brought the Basra PRT staff, programmes and funding which the PRT would otherwise have been unable to access.

Key lessons and recommendations:

An integrated multi-national effort requires involving international partners at all stages of planning and delivery; involving international partners to develop a common plan should be considered.

ANNEX A – TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Objective

1.1. The objective of the work is to consider what improvements could be made to the *structure, process, purpose and direction, resources, authority and accountability* of the PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq. The work responds to a request from the Minister (Armed Forces) dated 10th July 2006.

1.2. The review team will:

- review the support provided by HMG to the UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Basra and in Helmand, and consider the impact of the nature of this support on the effectiveness and efficiency of these PRTs;
- identify good practice and lessons for HMG support for any future inter-agency offices operating in hostile environments;
- make recommendations on any necessary changes in HMG's support for the Basra and Helmand PRTs, to enable them to achieve their respective objectives.

2. Scope of Work

2.1. The team will review, for both the Basra and Helmand PRTs:

- the accountability for PRT delivery and operations;
- the leadership and strategic direction provided by HMG;
- the structures and procedures adopted by HMG to manage the PRTs (including departmental ownership/lead, lines of reporting, both in-country and in the UK);
- the human and financial resources made available by HMG, and the processes for securing and deploying them;
- the structures and procedures adopted by the PRTs to manage themselves and their relations with other partners.

2.2. In each area, the review team will consider the likely impact of the current arrangement on the effectiveness and efficiency of the PRTs, in terms of their ability to achieve their respective objectives.

2.3. Drawing on this analysis, and on existing material outlining the arrangements pertaining to other PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq managed by international partners, the review team will identify best practice to inform HMG support for any future inter-agency offices operating in hostile environments.

2.4. Finally, the review team will identify specific ways in which HMG might support the Basra and Helmand PRTs in future, to enable them to achieve their respective objectives.

2.5. The review team is **not** required to review progress made by the Basra and Helmand PRTs against their respective objectives, nor to make a systematic assessment of the likely impact of either operation. The review team is **not** required to present a comprehensive review of the arrangements pertaining to other PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq.