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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

20 August 2004

Dear George

IRAQ: NEXT STEPS

I had a long discussion with the Prime Minister yesterday about the latest developments in Iraq. He sees the current insurgency in the South and the continuing problems in the Sunni triangle, together with recent reports concerning the problems with the police chief in Basra, Allawi's comments about equipment and the wider problem of training that revealed, and the ongoing difficulties on the reconstruction front, as posing a real risk to our objectives.

He has asked for a paper that sets out a full picture of the situation in Iraq after the National Conference, how we are going to get from here to successful elections in January, and the challenges we will face. As far as possible the paper should also offer initial thoughts on how those challenges can be addressed.

I recognise that this is a significant piece of work, but I would be grateful for an initial assessment that I can show to the Prime Minister on his return on 26 August. He said yesterday that he wanted to discuss our overall strategy with President Bush soon, and it is likely that this paper will form the basis for that discussion.

I am copying this letter to Tim Dowse (Cabinet Office), Geoffrey Adams (FCO), Mike Naworynsky (MoD), Jonathan Sedgwick (Home Office), Moazzim Malik (DfID), PS/"C", Sir David Manning (Washington), Sir Peter Ricketts (UKDel NATO), Sir Emyr Jones Parry (UKMis New York), Dominic Asquith (Baghdad), Simon Collis (Basra) and Richard Dalton (Tehran).

Yours,

ANTONY PHILLIPSON

George Fergusson, CO

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