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D/PUS/2/45(172)

21 April 2004

*Dear Sir,*

I undertook to write to colleagues setting out the arrangements for looking after civilian personnel in Iraq. In doing so, I am also covering areas which are Michael Jay's responsibility; this has accordingly been agreed with the FCO.

There are two categories of HMG civilian employees in Iraq: MOD civilians deployed as part of the military operation; and other staff either seconded to the CPA or deployed directly by other departments, including contractors, but who all come under the wing of IraqRep.

In the case of the first category, the 70-80 MOD Civil Servants deployed at any one time, direct support of Operation TELIC effectively enjoy the same protection as the military, alongside whom they live and work. They would be unlikely to have to leave, but if they were, the arrangements would be made through the Permanent Joint Headquarters which is part of their reporting chain and also 'owns' the military transport assets. This would be fairly straightforward given the numbers involved.

Of the IraqRep staff (including civil servants and contractors) there are about 120 each in Baghdad and Basra and 20 or so in smaller locations. Most are based in secure locations which are currently protected by coalition Armed Forces. Protection whilst on the move is normally provided by private contractors. The security guidelines for these staff is constantly under review, based upon risk assessment done by full time FCO security managers in Baghdad and Basra. Staff understand that they remain volunteers and are aware that they may return to the UK if not comfortable with the security arrangements.

In the event that HMG civilians had to be withdrawn from the south, the UK Armed Forces would assist with the evacuation of UK staff, through Basrah Airport, by road to Kuwait, or by sea, depending upon the operational circumstances. Those in Baghdad would be assisted to leave through the airport. In the outlying areas the US military would assist. Detailed contingency plans are being drawn up.

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*Sir John*

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There was some concern on Wednesday that the withdrawal of civilian contractors could undermine the reconstruction effort which itself would help to improve the security situation. The impact on reconstruction would indeed be serious if contractors began to withdraw, although there is little evidence that this is happening on a large scale. Most companies seem to realise that they must balance their desire to participate in reconstruction effort with the need to look after their staff. Many are reassessing their security arrangements, but look likely to remain. You may have seen David Richmond's telegram of 18 April which assess that most are operating at 75% of their capacity pending security developments. No UK or US funded contractor has withdrawn from Iraq. Although the companies themselves are responsible for the security of their staff, the CPA is now looking to integrate the security efforts of all contractors working on the US supplemental-funded reconstruction effort. This will involve sharing information and advice and establishing a quick reaction force able to respond in emergencies.

The existence of contingency plans in the event that we need to move our people quickly is a matter of prudent planning: the security situation in Iraq is tense, but no worse in most places than it has been previously. The situation in Baghdad is kept under review, as are the security arrangements to ensure that we are in a position to deal with the consequences of any deterioration.

Ministers will be presented with a short paper on the subject at Thursday's Ad Hoc Ministerial on Iraq.

I am copying this to Wednesday morning colleagues.

John, en,  
Kevin  
L.

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