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IRAQI SECURITY FORCE CAPABILITIES

Summary

Coalition recruited sufficient numbers of Iraqi security forces. Retention fell during Easter crisis but recovering. ICDC perform reasonably well, the police generally poorly. Iraqi Intelligence starting slowly. Training accelerated but more needed. Fresh equipment starting to come through but more required. Iraqi command and control embryonic. To be successful Iraqi leaders needed. Army to be reorientated from external threat to counter-insurgency. A solution is to soften de-Ba'athification and rehire selected senior and middle-ranking officers of the former regime. Only just starting to happen.

Matthew Rycroft asked for a note on Iraqiisation: recruitment, retention, operational effectiveness and command and control. This is a first shot for the Bush/PM vtc today. We are aiming for an improved version for the Friday box. This has been produced in consultation with departments but not agreed with them.

Army

2. Iraqi Army personnel were not involved in the recent security crisis. An Iraqi MOD is being established and an Iraqi Chief of Staff and other senior officers have been appointed. In response to recent events, the Iraqi Army is being tasked with internal counter-insurgency as well as external defence. The previous target of recruiting 35,000 soldiers by September has been brought forward. An Iraqi National Task Force, or internal mobile reserve, of three battalions is due to form by 28 April. Plans are in hand to form the first Iraqi Division and an Iraqi Joint HQ by 30 June. (The subject of MNF/Iraqi command and control arrangements from national to local level post-transition is being currently being discussed by John Sawers in Washington.) Another objective, softening de-Ba'athification, is the recruitment of 800 former Iraqi army officers by 15 May, with a further 3,700 thereafter. The change in the Army's focus may be necessary. The Iraqi Army was an underused asset, but we must recognise that its intervention in internal security does pose a political risk for the future.

Iraqi Civil Defence Corps

3. 36 ICDC battalions under direct Coalition military command, with a ration strength of 40,000, came close to full recruitment in early April. The ICDC performed better in the current crisis than the police but still face severe problems, including serious levels of desertion. Numbers have fallen to 25,000, but are recovering as soldiers return. Further leadership training and better equipment (a particular ICDC complaint) is to be given.

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Police

4. With 75,000 men, the Iraqi police are fully recruited. (8,000 border police are also fully recruited.) High wages have helped with retention, despite the threat of suicide bombings of police stations. The main problem has been poor training. This was already being accelerated before the April violence. However, poorly led, ill-disciplined, inexperienced and faint-hearted, faced with armed confrontation in the Easter crisis, units faded away. (Most have now returned to their posts.) In the worst case, in both Najaf and Fallujah, individual policemen joined the opposition.

5. Generally, the performance of the police remains poor. The exceptions are in the Kurdish areas in the north, where the police force developed some capacity prior to the occupation, and in MND (SE), where the police forces have faced less threat and, at least in Basra, have performed reasonably well in recent operations, for example, responding to the recent suicide bombings in a professional manner.

6. In reaction to the problems identified, the Iraqi police units which performed least well are being reconstituted. Their police leaders will undertake one week refresher training, under the supervision of International Police Advisers who are starting to arrive. Police stations will be reoccupied with protection provided by the Iraqi Army and ICDC. Police will continue to be mentored by International Police Advisers thereafter (where available). Police station security is to be improved. Efforts will also be made to improve command and control from the Ministry of Interior downwards. On a national basis, public safety committees will be established of local notables to which police chiefs will report in an effort to improve police/community links.

7. This looks fine in theory and genuine advances have already been made in improving training, but this will be long-term process. Assuming that new equipment continues to arrive, the key problems will remain:

- The slow arrival of international police advisers as mentors. In MND (SE), on the advice of the senior UK police adviser, the deployment of the first UK police mentors is being delayed pending a security review;
- strengthening Iraqi leadership both in the Iraqi police and other Iraqi security forces; and
- establishing working co-ordination mechanisms between Iraqi security forces and the MNF.

Intelligence

8. The head of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) has been appointed. Over agents have been vetted and trained and have begun operations. They will operate from a new HQ building in Baghdad shortly.

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The first outstation is also planned to open in Basra soon.

is for agents by end June.

The national target

9. , the INIS was slow to get started. Its capabilities are developing from a low base, but it takes time to set up effective and reliable intelligence networks. Agents also need to be vetted very carefully which has also taken time. INIS has promise but could fall foul of Iraqi political infighting after the transition. A number of Iraqi groups, , have their own private intelligence organisations.

I have asked for clarification of how these groups are to be either integrated with the INIS or disbanded. A plan is not clear.

10. I am copying this note to Desmond Bowen and George Fergusson; John Scarlett; John Buck and , IPU, FCO; Ian Lee and David Johnson, MOD; , SIS; and Jim Drummond, DFID.

TOM DODD

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