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16 FEB 2004

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From: John Buck
Date: 16 February 2004

cc: John Sawers
Nick Westcott
Neil Crompton, IPU
Philip Parham, IOU
, ITSU
Charles Bird, UND

I agree with this. There are many
lessons to learn from the - wholly
unprecedented - Iraq experience;
but I don't think Hilary Synnott's
criticisms are entirely fair.

To: PS/PUS

Mr Jay 16/2

MICHAEL
JAY

c.c. Cedric Adams
as listed
m.R o/r

SUBJECT: FCO RESPONSE TO IRAQ

1. You asked for views on Hilary Synnott's comments to the Foreign Secretary last week about the FCO's response to immediate post-conflict requirements in Iraq.
2. Hilary Synnott complained about the time taken by the FCO to deploy people and secure equipment, compared with the swifter response of DFID. The comparison with DFID is puzzling, and the comparison is not really fair:
 - DFID has not deployed secure communications; and Hilary Synnott's major frustration on staffing was over DFID's slow recruitment and deployment of the consultants he first requested in September, some of whom have still not arrived. The FCO deployed Hilary Synnott himself and other key FCO staff in Basra quickly when it became clear that they were needed. IPU, on behalf of Whitehall, also deployed around sixty staff from different Government Departments in CPA Baghdad in the first couple of months after the end of major hostilities.
 - . Other civilian staff were required in much greater numbers, and were subject to quite different security constraints.
3. But this is not to say that the FCO record is perfect. We have learned several lessons and gained valuable experience for the future:
 - (i) human resources in London: as soon as it becomes clear that the FCO will have to manage a major new overseas deployment of this sort, a sufficiently staffed unit should be created in London. The staffing of the Iraq operation at this end was hand-to-mouth from the start, and only recently received adequate strength, depth and

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continuity. We need to accept in future, far more quickly, that the requirement will be with us for the medium term.

- (ii) targeted reprioritisation of FCO human resources: the FCO needs to be able to redirect human resources more swiftly and flexibly, both at home and overseas. The current work on identifying flexible human resources should help. We need to be able to target specific officers with suitable qualifications more systematically than HR records have allowed in the past. Prism should deal with the latter problem. Our recent targeted trawl of Arabists to be on standby to assist the political process (with letters from John Sawers to the potential secondees and their HoMs/Directors) illustrates the sort of approach we should use in future.
- (iii) financial resources: in the same way as HMT provided a £3 billion multi-year fund for the military operation in Iraq, a genuinely flexible allocation should be made for the civilian post-conflict effort in such circumstances (the Treasury's £60 million envelope has not operated in this way). In the case of Iraq, this might have been controlled by the Ad Hoc Ministerial. This would have saved the huge amounts of time and energy which were required to wrangle over funding for several different aspects of the operation, and prevent the Treasury from playing one government department off against another. The only area on which the Treasury have been genuinely helpful has been security.
- (iv) co-ordination with DFID: because DFID was not fully on side in the early stages, the FCO ended up recruiting several consultants who would normally have been in DFID's bailiwick. And when DFID did agree to recruit a large tranche of consultants for CPA South, they were slow to implement their commitment (leading to the complaint in Hilary's valedictory despatch).
- (v) recruitment expertise: the FCO had little previous experience of recruiting consultants for this sort of operation. The collective experience on Iraq has enabled us to develop a pool of knowledge on which we can draw for any similar exercise in future. It has also generated FCO and DFID databases of possible candidates (FCO, OGD and private sector) for other post-conflict operations.
- (vi) duty of care/security requirements: deployments are delayed by our duty of care criteria (i.e. that all secondees are volunteers doing worthwhile jobs with all reasonable protection and adequate security training). This is unavoidable. But our experience of arranging security for civilian staff in Iraq, and the stock of security assets we have built up (mainly armoured vehicles), will equip us to streamline this aspect of future operations.
- (vii) identifying staffing needs: part of the problem in Basra (particularly with the posts for which DFID has been recruiting) was lack of clarity about what was actually needed. Often Hilary Synnott and his staff were themselves uncertain. Their requests bounced

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about quite a bit. It would have made sense to have a senior post-conflict reconstruction expert in Basra working to Hilary Synnott and clearly defining the needs from the outset.

- (viii) secure communications: a secure communications package and engineer were deployed in the first wave of equipment for the British Office in Baghdad. A full Firecrest system for the flat-pack Embassy was ready to be shipped in May, but was held back pending decisions about the opening of the Embassy. It subsequently became clear that Firecrest would be required in different locations in Baghdad (the CPA Palace for Iraq Rep and the BOB Villa) and in Basra. Firecrest systems were designed for a largely static network of posts, and they have to be custom-configured to each location. This, and changing circumstances on the ground (eg the move of CPA South), meant that Firecrest was not finally installed in Baghdad and Basra until October. This delay was a major disadvantage. It is difficult for the FCO to establish authoritative leadership in such a situation without secure e-mail between London and theatre. Part of the answer lies in secure laptop systems (on which Nick Westcott and I discussed our plans with the Foreign Secretary on 6 January). FCO Services have also created a new post to co-ordinate and improve emergency deployment of secure IT and communications.

4. We have already fed most of these points into Charles Bird's review of post-conflict reconstruction.

Signed: John Buck

John Buck
Director Iraq

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