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Director General Operational Policy

DG OP POL/IRAQ (60/07)

Margaret Aldred
Cabinet Office

11 September 2007

Dear Margaret,

IRAQ – OPTIONS FOR UK MILITARY CONTRIBUTION

1. As requested, I attach the MOD's first cut of illustrative options for land force levels in southern Iraq through to February 2009. I should emphasise that this analysis is provisional, has not yet been considered by the Chiefs of Staff and requires a great deal of further work in concert with OGDs, the US and other Allies, and the Iraqis. It does not cover UK forces based elsewhere in Iraq, primarily Baghdad, which currently number c500 personnel.

2. To put the options in context, we have included the assumptions from which we have started (which may also need to be refined), and our assessment of the pros and cons of each. In summary, the four options are:

1 - a minimal contribution of 250-750 personnel, embedded as teams or individuals in Coalition (i.e. mainly US) units or formations to provide niche training to the Iraqis or niche support to the Iraqis and/or the Coalition;

2 - a 1500-strong battle group or equivalent plus logistic support embedded within a US formation, primarily to continue security sector reform training to the Iraqis but with a limited combat capability;

3 - a two-star HQ plus two battlegroups and limited logistic/enabling capabilities totalling c2500 personnel. This option would also require significant US logistic and enabling support;

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4 - a 3000-3500-strong framework brigade with a two-star HQ, two battlegroups and full logistic and enabling support capabilities, able to operate without US support.

3. All four options assume a change of mission from command of MND(SE) to one of continuing support to Iraqi Security Force development, and that there will be no long term UK garrison in southern Iraq. They also assume that UK reconstruction and development will continue in parallel under the PRT.

4. Please let me know if you need further clarification.

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