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From: Iraq Planning Unit  
Date: 12 February 2003

cc: PS/Mr O'Brien  
PS/Baroness Symons  
PS/PUS  
Peter Ricketts  
William Ehrman  
Edward Chaplin  
Edward Oakden  
Charles Gray – MED  
Stephen Pattison – UND  
Christopher Segar – AMED  
Amanda Tanfield - MED  
Special Advisers

To: ~~Private~~ Secretary

**SUBJECT: MEETING ON IRAQ DAY AFTER ISSUES BEFORE CABINET, 13 FEB**

1. The Secretary of State is attending a discussion of Day After issues before Cabinet tomorrow. We understand that it is likely to focus on humanitarian issues.

2. I attach:

- A) key messages for this meeting
- B) a background note on humanitarian issues (by [redacted] the part-time DFID secondee to the Iraq Planning Unit)
- C) a background note on other key "Day After" issues, on the assumption that discussion may stray beyond humanitarian issues
- D) a summary of our key messages on "Day After" issues generally.

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3. We hope that the meeting will:

- a) encourage Ms Short to allow DFID to engage fully in planning;
- b) persuade Ms Short that she should allow DFID money to finance small-scale projects in the area administered by a UK Commander. MOD are (understandably) worried that the area administered by a UK Commander will be the "poor relation" of those administered by the US, leading to unrest in the UK-administered area; and
- c) provide an opportunity for the Foreign Secretary to encourage all Ministers, in their contacts with US counterparts over the next few days, to press home the key messages at D) attached, in particular the need for UN involvement in post-Saddam Iraq: to win the cooperation of moderate Arabs and others (necessary if lasting change is to be achieved), and to encourage burden-sharing.

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## Prime Minister's meeting on humanitarian issues in Iraq

### Key messages

- Iraq already has a huge humanitarian crisis, of Saddam's making. Important that our public should understand that now. So when Iraq is liberated, we are not blamed for the humanitarian problems that already exist.
- We don't know now how large a humanitarian disaster our forces will find. If oil revenues are seriously interrupted, the main funding for food and medicines for 60% of the Iraqi people will dry up. The international community may need to find high levels of humanitarian assistance. We are encouraging the EU, which has more than 200 meuro of reserves for humanitarian operations, to address this on a contingency basis.
- Our military commander, General Brimms, believes it very important that UK forces should be able to carry out quick-start small-scale reconstruction projects to win hearts and minds. But there is no agreement on how to fund these in Whitehall. We need to cut through this Gordian knot. It would be good to assign to General Brimms' HQ staff a DFID official with recent experience in Afghanistan or Kosovo.
- DFID's traditional partners in the NGO community may initially be reluctant to enter Iraq because of CBW or other security fears. We should be ready to use other players to distribute humanitarian aid if there is a hiatus. Our friends have identified a number of Iraqis who would be suitable. We should start talking to them now.
- We should also look to fund Arab NGOs who can deliver humanitarian aid. They exist, at least, in Jordan. Valuable symbolism in showing this is not a western take-over of Iraq.

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## BACKGROUND ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

### Current humanitarian situation

1. Iraqi people's lives are perilously fragile – their private coping strategies worn away by years of misrule and dependence on food and medicines under the UN Oil for Food programme.
  - Almost a third of all children in the centre and south suffer from chronic malnutrition. The prevalence of low birth-weight babies has increased more than five times in the last ten years.
  - More than half of Iraqis living in rural areas have no access to safe water. The average Iraqi child under 5 suffers from 14 bouts of diarrhoea per year.
  - Iraq's under-five mortality rates is 131 per 1,000 live births – worse than the Democratic Republic of Congo or Mozambique. Death from diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections – both easily preventable – account for 70% of child mortality.
2. The infrastructure to prevent such deaths and cure the illnesses which lead to them is in chronic disrepair. Hospitals, clinics, sanitation facilities, water treatment plants – all suffer from a terrible lack of maintenance. It is also significant that Iraq's population is largely urbanised and around 60% of people in the country are dependent on Oil for Food supplies. Unlike Afghanistan, for example, they have few or no coping mechanisms, and in urban areas are largely dependent on electrically-pumped water and sewage systems. A sudden disruption to this already fragile situation could lead to a spiralling human catastrophe even without the prospect of the further death, injury, damage and disruption which conflict could bring.

### UK / UN / US contingency planning

3. Government policy objectives on Iraq set out to the House by the Secretary of State on 7 January include as an immediate priority to “continue to support humanitarian efforts to relieve the suffering of the Iraqi people”. The UK is planning for a range of humanitarian contingencies, including discussions with UN agencies, the US and others. There have also been discussions between MoD,

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PJHQ and DFID about how to minimise harm to the Iraqi people if military action is taken.

4. HMG is in regular contact with the USA and a range of UN humanitarian agencies, mainly through DFID. All are making detailed contingency plans. In public the Secretary of State for International Development has said that we are confident that UN preparations are as good as they can be given risks and uncertainties. But there has been some reluctance on the part of UN agencies to share the detail of their contingency plans with the US and UK for fear of this becoming public while discussions about military action (and whether it is authorised through the UNSC) are ongoing.

5. We would strongly support a leading UN role in response to any humanitarian crisis – and after. Both politically and in terms of aid effectiveness this is the best option, and it is also preferable to a large bilateral UK effort, which might end up being enormously expensive. But in the initial stages following the commencement of military action, coalition forces will be required to provide for immediate humanitarian needs. The US intent is to oversee all humanitarian operations and they assume that this will include directing, and providing protection for, any UN agencies and NGOs providing humanitarian relief. Cencom's plans for providing immediate humanitarian relief appear quite comprehensive, though there are some questions about how much coordination is taking place between different groups planning to provide assistance on the ground.

6. For the longer-term we have been pressing the US hard for a leading UN role in the coordination of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. Opinions within the US Administration on the desirability of such a role for the UN are mixed, leaning towards sceptical. Meanwhile CenCom continue to plan on the assumption that they, or a succeeding military administration, will continue to direct all work, effectively 'sub-contracting' UN and other agencies. They are working on the assumption that – even in the event of military action without a second US resolution – all UN agencies, NGOs and other bilateral donors will all contribute to the humanitarian effort.

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#### Current UK assistance

7. DFID has provided over £100m of bilateral humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people since 1991 (mostly through international NGOs), as well as contributions to EC and UN agencies. The UK has worked for the introduction of, and improvements to, the UN Oil For Food programme to lessen the humanitarian impact of sanctions. UK funding for the UN and other humanitarian agencies includes provision for emergency preparedness for a variety of contingencies across the world. Earlier this week DFID announced they are supplementing this funding with an additional £3.5m contribution to support UN humanitarian contingency planning for Iraq. This money will be allocated to a range of UN agencies including UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and UNSECOORD.

#### Key humanitarian risks

7. There are five key risks of conflict in Iraq which have potentially very serious humanitarian implications. There are questions as to how much US-led military planning has taken these into account so far, or is able to do so.

- **Use of CBW** – other channels show that Saddam may deploy CBW if military action commences, or he might use it pre-emptively if military action looks certain. It is difficult to speculate on the possible scale of a CBW strike, suffice to say that the potential is for enormous numbers of casualties. (In the event of such a strike, the military strategy of the US-led coalition would largely be to continue to focus on taking out the regime as quickly as possible. There appear to be no plans to deploy troops to respond if possible in providing immediate assistance to affected communities.)
- **'Catastrophic success' / swift collapse of Iraqi regime** – under this scenario, the initial bombing phase of the campaign would lead to a very swift collapse of Saddam's regime, before significant numbers of coalition land forces arrived in Iraq to provide immediate assistance and help re-establish essential systems such as water supply and humanitarian relief. The power vacuum this would leave also increases the risk of internal / ethnic conflict.
- **Blowing up of oil wells** – , northern Iraqi crude oil has a very high hydrogen sulphide content. Should wellheads be destroyed, without ignition, or desulphurisation plants damaged, there is a

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potential risk of the mass release of deadly levels of (odourless) hydrogen sulphide. The population of Kirkuk is potentially very vulnerable. The probability of this scenario is not yet clearly assessed.

- **Prolonged conflict** – if conflict runs beyond a few weeks, the potential humanitarian disaster of large populations left without food and water supplies increases substantially.
- **Port blockages** – there are concerns that the huge volume of military and humanitarian traffic passing through the main port in Umm-Qasr could lead to serious delays to critical humanitarian supplies.

#### Financing

8. Not only would a lead role for the UN in humanitarian and reconstruction efforts confer greater legitimacy on US / UK action, in the eyes of critics, but the potential financial costs of this work – partly depending on the extent of damage to Iraq's oil fields – are enormous. We do not believe that the US administration has yet thought through the implications of significant damage to Iraq's oil fields carried out by retreating Iraqi forces. This may be one area in which we can help persuade them that an international, UN-led effort is more desirable.

9. At present the Oil for Food programme provides \$10-12bn resources each year for humanitarian and other supplies. At the least this programme is likely to be interrupted for two to three months. Serious damage to oil fields and refineries could mean oil could not be pumped for up to 30 months (according to Pentagon analysis), leaving other countries to fund costs in the interim, on top of the several billion dollars which would be required to repair and renovate the oil fields themselves, and repair other essential infrastructure damaged during the conflict or previously neglected by Saddam.

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## OTHER (NON-HUMANITARIAN) ISSUES

1. Key other issues which might be raised at the meeting, though on which we are not yet in a position to submit considered advice, include:

### For how long do we want to run a geographical sector of Iraq?

2. Although we understand no firm decisions have yet been taken, it seems very likely that UK forces (under US Command) will find themselves occupying an area of south-eastern Iraq, including Basrah, and possibly extending further north than initially envisaged, nearly to Baghdad.

3. Considerations underlying this military planning include a) where UK land forces are likely to end up anyway, following behind the front US line in the south; and b) that the UK seems better placed than the US to administer the area of Iraq bordering Iran. The US will need to administer northern Iraq (it is the only country with the leverage to limit fighting between Turks, Kurds and other Iraqis), and will want to administer Baghdad (possibly with friendly Arab support).

4. In practical terms, administration of a geographical sector will be very labour intensive. It could be dangerous and difficult. Geographical sectors under different interim administrations (even under an overall UN or US interim administration) would also mean that different systems became embedded in Iraq – which is counter to our medium-term goal of a united (albeit probably federal) Iraq under Iraqi Government.

5. There is likely to be a hybrid model of both geographical sectors under different interim administrations, and lead countries responsible for some issues nationwide. So, for example, the US want to lead on military issues throughout Iraq. But the detail of a hybrid model remains unclear.

### Do we want to lead on justice?

6. The US are keen that the UK should be lead nation on justice throughout Iraq. We are currently considering whether to take this on, and if so, on what basis. It would be very difficult to do this without a UNSC Resolution authorising a transitional administration.

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### UN governance

7. The biggest area of difference between us and the US remains the role of the UN. A second resolution for military action aside, we are clear that we shall need a legal basis for much that will need doing in Iraq: the rights and powers of an occupying power will not be sufficient on their own. We are continuing to press on the US the need for UN involvement in the Aftermath. So far we appear to have made little progress.

### British commercial involvement

8. Much of the key infrastructure in Baghdad and other cities was installed in the past by British firms. TPUK are collecting information on the availability of spare parts and engineers who could be deployed once the situation has stabilised to restore vital operations as quickly as possible.

### Iraq Planning Unit

9. The Iraq Planning Unit is now established, with (at present) the following staff:

- Dominick Chilcott (FCO, Head of Unit)
- (MOD, military)
- (DFID, part time)
- Nick Cannon (FCO, seconded to No 10, part-time in the Planning Unit)
- (FCO).

10. DFID are currently trying to identify a full-time secondee; MOD are also looking for a full-time civilian secondee.