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From: Nicholas Cannon
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PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell
Alastair Campbell
David Manning
Stephen Wall
Matthew Rycroft
Clare Sumner

IRAQ: LAW AND ORDER SITUATION

You asked for a note on the law and order situation in Iraq. The following material is what MoD have available: they are currently seeking further details on other cities in the US-controlled sector (especially Najaf, Nasiriyah, Karbala).

Basra

- UK forces trying to re-establish police force. Some 2-300 policemen reported for duty on 12 April (less than expected). Joint military/police patrols started on 13 April. Some of the Iraqi police are resented by locals (for former corruption more than brutality). MoD police advisers have been sent to Basra.
- UK forces today announced a "zero tolerance" policy for looters.
- Situation is one of targeted crime (eg bank robberies) rather than generalised looting.
- Signs of locals taking responsibility for own property, and attempts by the public to stop looters.

Umm Qasr

- No working police structure. Police out of action for around one month and police stations damaged and looted. 25 ex-policemen currently being vetted. Joint military/police patrols being set up.

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Az Zubayr

- UK military conducting street patrols, and looting reported to be in decline.

Rumaliyah and Safwan

- UK-controlled towns in Basra area. Police forces being re-established by UK forces on model of Basra.

Al-Amara

- Situation stable and looting has ceased. Local police force disbanded and disappeared one week ago. Ad hoc security arrangements in force: local leaders have placed armed guards on their own property, and have established an effective pass system to control movements in the city and nearby towns.

Al Majarr al Kabir (25 km south of Al Amara)

- Town of 130,000 residents. Town council has established a "security sub-committee", running a "security team" of 50 police, with patrols and check points on main routes into town.

Baghdad

- Situation in areas directly controlled by US military is relatively stable: US expects it to improve over coming week as reinforcements arrive. US military say that, while some looting is still going on, it is exaggerated by the media (who are focussing on districts not yet under US control). Hospitals shown by media as being looted may be largely those reserved for regime cadres.
- US military are identifying individuals (eg ex-policemen) to participate in joint patrols with the military (as in Basra). First joint patrols started this morning.
- According to Reuters, 2,000 Baghdad police officers (out of 40,000) reported for duty this morning (some serving, some retired). They are assembling at the Police College. The head of the police department at the Interior Ministry, Major General Zuhair al-Nuami, has urged the police to return to work immediately to conduct patrols, man checkpoints and keep traffic moving.

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- The press has reported that in middle-class districts of Baghdad, locals are spontaneously organising armed vigilante groups to set up checkpoints, guard shops, hotels and other potential targets, recover stolen property and detain looters. Residents who had fled the city are returning in large numbers, causing traffic jams (a sign of returning confidence?).



NICHOLAS CANNON