

To: NYMIX - eTelegrams
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FM IRAQR TO FCOLN

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From Special Rep for Iraq

SUBJECT: IRAQ: BREMER'S IMPACT

Summary

1. Security in Baghdad remains the most urgent issue. The military are being pressed hard to change their modus operandi, and are starting to adjust. Our ideas for building up the Baghdad Police are greeted with keen interest. The problems facing the coalition are many, and there is still doubt over how quickly Washington and the UN will be able to move money and people to Baghdad to really start rebuilding services and laying a base for economic reconstruction. Resentment will grow daily if life does not become easier soon. But Bremer is getting a grip. We will not always agree with him, e.g. on the role of the UN and the threat from Tehran. But his energy, intelligence and management skills mean we are much better served now he is here.

Detail

2. Jerry Bremer's arrival in Baghdad has made a big difference. In his first ten days, he has grasped the most urgent problems, shown leadership, and pulled the military and civilian efforts together. The problems remain as before, but there is now a plan to address them, and implementation has begun.

3. Security in the capital is marginally improving, though there remains a long way to go. The more intensive US patrols and military's new found determination to stop crime have been a good start. But Bremer is determined to go much further - he wants Baghdad to be more like Mosul and Basra, and he is worried that security in

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the capital could still get worse before it really turns the corner. He is pressing the Army to put their tanks in a tank park and send their troops onto the streets on their feet. Abizeid is an ally in this, but other US generals are dragging their heels. The arrival of a fresh division should help, and Bremer has not given up hope of bringing the 101st Airborne down to the capital - our visit to Mosul on 18 May showed what a spectacularly good job General Petraeus and his troops, drawing on their Balkans experience, are doing in the north.

4. Slocombe and Bremer are confident about the medium term, and their plans to start establishing a new national army are taking shape and are sensible. Our help will be welcome, but this will remain a US lead. Slocombe's presence is vastly reassuring.

5. The gap in American plans is how to build up the Baghdad Police, which is why there has been such a positive response to the ideas worked up by A/CGS and the Chief Constable of Hampshire in the last few days for a UK input in this area. Properly structured, it would make a vital contribution over the next two months, and bring the security effort closer to ordinary Baghdadis. We would have to be careful how we spin it, but the substantive case is strong - no issue in Iraq is more important or pressing.

6. De-Baathification has gone down well. The failure to apply a rigorous and consistent policy has allowed many Iraqis, good ones and bad, to believe that there was still a chance the Baathists could come back. That in turn contributed to the security problem. First reactions from Iraqis have been positive. Many caught by the proclamation have gone quietly, and more junior officials have breathed a sigh of relief that the old Baathists are being given the boot at last. The decree was a huge hit with the political parties we are working with. There are still pockets of problems, e.g. in the Foreign Ministry, and the extent of the purge will mean that some exemptions will be required in technical ministries. But Bremer will keep these to a minimum.

7. Bremer is now starting to tackle the new set of problems. Electricity, fuel, water and sewerage are still badly disrupted. The reconstruction effort is a long, slow haul, and Bechtel still are not here in sufficient numbers. The security situation has not helped. It is still not clear whether OMB will be able to release sufficient funds to enable the April salaries to be paid by the end of May. The decision in principle by the UN to buy the harvest crop was important, but again getting the money and distributing it will be another matter. Passing the UNSCR will be a great boon, especially by freeing up Iraqi assets and allowing oil to be sold without controversy. But the road ahead will be a long slog.

8. There are many other problems in the pipeline. The most immediate are:

- how to stabilise the Iraqi currency without printing more Saddam dinars;
- what to do about military pay and pensions;
- how to get the courts and detention centres functioning properly;
- how to secure Iraq's borders and re-establish customs;
- how to preserve forensic evidence from the mass graves without preventing grieving Iraqis from trying to identify lost relatives;
- who should deal with the restitution issues, and how, following Saddam's Arabisation policies in northern Iraq which drove many Kurds

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into refugee camps. There are already clashes over this, with people being killed, in Kirkuk;

- more parochially, how to ease Garner out without tipping him out, and how to retain morale in an organisation which has to come to terms with the fact that in Baghdad at least it has not been a success.

This is without mentioning the need to track down what happened to Saddam and his cronies who are still at large, and the WMD story, nor the task of establishing a new political dispensation. So it is a mighty full agenda, with a few easy wins.

9. But Bremer has made a real difference. He has a quick mind, he listens, his instincts are conservative but not ideological: he judges issues on their merits. He has the confidence of Washington, and that has the effect of moving more decision making to Baghdad. He has sized up the local politicians, and is in the process of demonstrating to Chalabi, _____ that he will not be outgunned in Washington. He has formidable energy, starting his day with a three mile run before his first meeting at 0615 and continuing through until after 2300 every night. The contrast with Garner's make-it-up-as-you-go-along approach, followed by evenings of _____ couldn't be greater. There are still awkward angles: Bremer is deeply suspicious of the Iranians and will want to help Washington use Iraq's recovery to undermine the mullahs next door. He has respect for UN agencies but is scathing about the UN as a whole. He is not as media savvy as he might be. But he is, on the balance, a Good Thing, and well suited for the job he now faces as Governor-General of Iraq.

10. My getting here a few days before Bremer was fortuitous. He arrived thinking 'US' but with me at his elbow he quickly switched to 'Coalition'. He has been keen for us to work together in public and private, and has picked up on many UK suggestions, big and small. He allowed us to re-balance the decree on removing the Baathists, over-ruling the wilder strictures of Wolfowitz and Feith in the process; he has given us a near equal hand in the political process; and he accepts, e.g. on issues like the death penalty, that he has to take account of our policy and law as well as Washington's. Our partnership has also given us a basis for straightening out the Coalition's legal authority, which is now happening thanks to the input of our legal advisor, Gavin Hood; and it has allowed me to inject ideas and names for top jobs in his re-organisation.

11. Bremer is putting in place a structure for success. Tim Cross has done a great job holding our position in adverse circumstances, and deserves a medal for fortitude. Our volunteers from Whitehall are bringing real skills, and we now need to get the right people out here for the next phase. We also must sustain our input on the political side. Bringing Iraq through its recovery and to becoming the first Arab democracy will make it a demanding two years. It will be worth the effort.

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