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TO 0058

DAVID MANNING

cc John Scarlett
Jim Drummond
Nick Cannon

IRAQ: BRITISH REINFORCEMENT IN BAGHDAD

I attended yesterday's Chiefs of Staff meeting to consider the possibility of 16 Air Assault Brigade reinforcing the coalition presence in Baghdad. The starting point was that the security situation is characterised by violent crime and ineffective policing. There is no judiciary to speak of and no detention facilities. The violence is not directed towards the coalition but is of a criminal nature.

2. The Americans are seized of the need to get a grip on security in Baghdad. They understand that Baghdad is the centre of gravity and that imposing security there is necessary in order to avoid strategic failure. Nevertheless, 3 Infantry Division is not prepared to change radically its method of operation. That said, 1 Armoured Division (US) is due to be in Baghdad, on roulement, from the end of the first week in June. 4,000 (US) military police are now deploying to Baghdad. Overall, there are 25,000 US troops in Baghdad and the latest report was that 11,000 were on patrol or static guard in the last 24 hours.

3. The proposition is that the deployment of 16 Air Assault Brigade could assist in achieving three effects on the ground:

- a. gaining the confidence of the people of Baghdad;
- b. building the confidence of the embryonic police force and helping with its training;
- c. creating conditions which deter criminality.

The tasks envisaged for 16 Brigade would involve information operations; patrolling on the streets; and instruction for the police.

4. There was considerable debate around the table on the merits of the idea. There was no doubt that the Americans would get to grips with

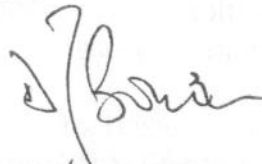
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the problem on their own terms. But there was likely to be a gap of a few weeks, in which further deterioration was possible. It was pointed out that the US had an operational reserve (in the US) of an airborne brigade which could be deployed immediately. The starting point was that the current American HQ had no campaign plan, no command and control for a different concept of operations and already had the means to reinforce with fresh infantry troops whose methods were proven to be successful elsewhere in Iraq.

5. The CDS judged that this was an unattractive military option with considerable risk attached. Only two battle groups of the three in 16 Brigade would be available, and they would need to be reinforced with other elements from 1 (UK) Division, thereby rendering the security of the British area of responsibility more vulnerable (especially on the Humint, IO and logistics side). He doubted that the deployment of some 1600 British troops could operate to achieve the desired effects over a period of 45 days, so as to change the strategic situation in Baghdad.

6. Advice is being put to Mr Hoon today, with his Private Office writing to you before the weekend.



DESMOND BOWEN

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