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From the Assistant Private Secretary

23 May 2003

Dear Kara,

IRAQ: MEETING WITH GERRY BREMER

David Manning called on Gerry Bremer in Baghdad on 20 May. John Scarlett and John Sawers also participated. The following points were discussed:

- Security: Baghdad was by no means a "city in anarchy". But the law and order problem was also a question of perceptions. De-Ba'athification and the dissolution of security ministries would create a new reservoir of angry men. So there was a need to step up patrols and tighten up security. But the crime problem seemed largely confined to Baghdad.
- Bremer foresaw a "looming Kurdish problem in the next year or so".
- Ex-Ba'athists were regrouping to act against the Coalition or as criminal gangs. There had been incidents of sabotage and politically motivated power cuts. But there was no apparent sign of coordinated command among the Ba'athists, nor of any role played by external forces in disorder in Baghdad. Bremer intended the Coalition to go hard after the ex-Ba'athists and the Badr Corps.
- Bremer thought there was a lot of work to do before power was handed over to the Iraqi politicians: he had told them so pretty bluntly. He was looking at the steps needed to work up to a National Conference in July. One idea was a preparatory committee of say 20-30 participants: Chalabi has suggested that this should mean four or five from each of the seven "Leadership Council" parties, but Bremer wanted something more inclusive. Bremer thought that power should be transferred to the Iraqis in stages, with the Coalition retaining control over finance and security until the last stage. He envisaged the process of drafting a constitution taking at least a year.

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- Bremer commented that the Shias were very divided. But we should be wary of Iran, the only country in the region with a coherent foreign policy. David said that he had told the Iranian ambassador that Iran would be judged by the way it handled the Iraq and al-Qaeda issues.
- Bremer intended to restructure ORHA.
He would put a three-star general in charge of military reform. An official (perhaps a British secondee) could take over service delivery. He also wanted a "Coalition Consulting Council", to coordinate relations between ORHA and outside organisations such as the UN, UN agencies and NGOs.
- David flagged up the UK political importance of the search for WMD. Bremer said that the Iraq Survey Group was basically a military organisation, but that he intended to direct it personally. David recommended consideration of amnesty deals for some of the scientists or officials involved in the WMD programme: currently they were afraid to come forward.
- Bremer said that ORHA's media handling remained slow and inefficient. David noted that we had just deployed some CIC staff to help address this. John Sawers said that ORHA's own staff needed to be rallied behind the media strategy. Bremer agreed: he had been annoyed that an anonymous member of ORHA had described his de-Ba'athification strategy to a reporter as a "fascist" measure.

I am copying this to Dominick Chilcott (Iraq Planning Unit), John Scarlett (Cabinet Office), Anna Bewes (DfID), Peter Watkins (MoD), PS/C, John Sawers and Chris Segar (Baghdad) and Tony Brenton (Washington).



NICHOLAS CANNON

Kara Owen, FCO

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