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Suma Chakrabarti
Permanent Secretary

9 July 2003

Sir Michael Jay KCMG
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FCO

Dear Michael,

SAFETY AND SECURITY OF UK SECONDEES IN IRAQ

Like you, I had become increasingly concerned about the recent deterioration of security and the threat it might pose to UK staff working in Baghdad. So I am very pleased that last week's joint FCO/DFID security assessment mission to Baghdad took place. The recommendations they are making have followed a thorough assessment of the situation and of what needs to be put in place to ensure adequate protection for our respective staff. I support the conclusions. Their recommendations should be considered as mandatory for all UK staff.

DFID is working closely and urgently with FCO colleagues to provide the security package that is now required. As a first step, we are immediately contracting armed support services, using a commercial organisation, to provide protection for the DFID staff in Baghdad. We looked at a number of such organisations and have shared all this information with the FCO Security Unit for their consideration, and with the aim of a joint DFID/FCO contract for the longer-term. We will also contribute DFID assets to help cover wider HMG needs by offering any spare vehicle capacity to help build up a wider UK pool of appropriate vehicles as quickly as possible. As a joint DFID/FCO effort, we intend to send out a first batch of vehicles this weekend. The consignment will also include a supply of hand-held communications equipment from our stockpile for the use of UK staff.

We will, of course, continue to maintain a careful watch on the evolving security situation in Baghdad, and also in Basrah where the threat would seem to be increasing.

*Yours,
Suma*

Suma Chakrabarti

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