



SECRETARY OF STATE

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4 August 2003

Dear Matthew, OR

IRAQ: FORCE LEVEL REVIEW

We have reviewed the security situation in the Multinational Division (South East) area of responsibility in Iraq and concluded that an additional infantry company (130 personnel) is needed. The requirement is driven by deployments to Maysan, and by expanding the requirements of the CPA. This is a very small adjustment to our overall strength (about 1%). We will present it as a sensible reaction to changing circumstances.

Martyn Williams' letter of 10 July explained that the incoming commander of UK forces in Iraq and the new Multinational Division (South East) (MND(SE)), Major General Lamb, was conducting a formal review of the security situation and requirement for forces.

Major General Lamb concluded, and Defence Ministers agree, that our forces should be slightly rebalanced by deploying an additional Infantry company (some 130 personnel) to Iraq, beginning tomorrow, and by preparing additional forces based in Cyprus and the UK for short-notice reinforcement tasks, some of which may involve movement of UK troops to Cyprus for acclimatisation. In addition, a riverine capability of some 30 will deploy, subject to final reconnaissance visits.

This course of action is needed because in-theatre reserve, equipped with armoured vehicles, has now been committed to Maysan, following the incident at Al Majjarr Al Kabir and is likely to remain so. In addition, as the CPA finds its feet, additional tasks are being identified for the military to perform – for example, providing security during the payment of stipends. Paradoxically we are having to deploy more personnel partly because our reconstruction efforts

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are being successful (there is more worth securing and more civil activity to safeguard).

We do not anticipate any other major changes to our forces deployed. However, the operational environment continues to evolve, and it is likely that we may have to deploy specialist personnel on specific tasks as they arise and make other minor adjustments to our force structure. One such adjustment is the withdrawal of some Armoured Engineers from Iraq. This will mean that the net change in forces following the deployment of the infantry company and riverine capability will be an increase of some 120, to a total deployed strength of some 10,000 personnel. While critical media commentators may speculate that we are having to reinforce because of a deteriorating situation, we shall present these changes as a minor adjustment to reflect the changes in task as Iraq recovers from the conflict.

Given the Parliamentary recess, Mr Ingram will be writing to Bruce George, Bernard Jenkin and Paul Keetch to explain the adjustment in force levels.

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO), Anna Bewes (DFID) and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office).

Yours,

Danielle Latham

DANIELLE LATHAM
Private Secretary

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