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Minister of State

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The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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Dear Jack

6th November 2003

UK POLICING ASSISTANCE - IRAQ

We spoke last week about concerns raised in recent weeks by Assistant Chief Constable Stephen White (PSNI), the senior police representative to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Basra, that efforts by his team to restore law and order in Southern Iraq were being affected due to under-resourcing.

Although I am aware that some additional support staff from the MOD police have now been made available to ACC White you indicated that it was still your intention to have his concerns looked into. This is clearly a difficult and complex issue, but my own view is that an assessment from those on the ground is critical in deciding under what circumstances, and with what purpose, further UK policing assets should be deployed.

I know that Stephen has discussed the situation with Hugh Orde and he has agreed to identify at least 6 and up to 10 PSNI officers of Inspector to Superintendent ranks with operational experience in working with the military willing to undertake a secondment to Basra. They could be deployed in a management support role to Stephen White and for mentoring local senior Iraqi police officers. My officials would be happy to discuss the logistics of this with your officials. Hugh is required by law to seek the approval of the Policing Board for secondments of this nature.

The Chief Constable has also indicated that he is prepared to consider a further PSNI commitment as part of an UK wide contribution to any international policing effort in Iraq, though presumably this would be arranged under the auspices of ACPO.

I think it is important to acknowledge that the Chief Constable has made this proposal in the face of significant manpower pressures within his own service. In many ways it is indicative of the significant contribution the PSNI has made and continues to make in bringing their expertise and experience of policing civil disorder situations to international policing operations.

Yours ever

RT HON JANE KENNEDY MP
Minister of State for Northern Ireland

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