

File: Iraq

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The Consequences of Operational Transition for Civilian Activities in Southern Iraq

A Paper for DOP(I) 20 Oct 2005

Draft - 27 Sep 05

Issue

1. How to manage the risks posed to civilian activities in southern Iraq by the drawdown of UK Forces.

Options

That Ministers:

2. Note the risks that operational transition poses to civilian activities in southern Iraq, and to the UK's objective to involve other donors (especially the UN and World Bank) in reconstructing Iraq;

And either:

- a) Agree to a significantly reduced civilian presence in southern Iraq after the transition of UK forces

Or

- b) Agree to maintain current levels of civilian activities in southern Iraq;

Recommendation:

3. That Ministers choose option a). This will involve a continued consular presence, reduced development and reconstruction activities based in Basra province only, and an end to the training of the Iraqi Police Service (IPS). Option b) would incur unacceptable costs and levels of risk to UK staff.

Risks

4. Ministers should note the potential risks involved with these two options:

Option a): A reduced civilian presence in southern Iraq may attract accusations of 'cutting and running' from our commitment to post-war reconstruction; international actors (World Bank, UN) may be discouraged from establishing a presence in the region;

Ngel
this was discussed at Senior Officials today. It needs a lot of work. I made the point that the govt would find it very difficult to accept a recommendation of withdrawal from the South-East to Baghdad. Revised draft next week with more focus on what we need/want to do. What that would involve in terms of UK presence & cost/resources.
Thats. I agree
DD
30/9

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Option b): Maintaining current levels of civilian activity in the south after Transition will increase security risks to UK staff; the increase in security costs may attract accusations that too much is being spent on security and staff protection, rather than on tangible assistance to Iraq.

A handling strategy has been developed to deal with the presentational issues surrounding these two options.

Background

The UK's Civilian Activities in the South

6. The UK's civilian activities in the south cover the following areas:
- i) Diplomatic/ Consular: The UK has a Consulate-General in Basra, providing a range of political and consular services for the UK.
[FCO to expand]
 - ii) Development/ Reconstruction: The UK is currently delivering a range of development and reconstruction assistance to the four southern provinces. This includes supporting the administration of Provincial Councils, and programmes to improve electricity and water infrastructure. The successful implementation of these programmes depends on UK staff working with key counterparts at project sites. Development projects conducted remotely from outside of Iraq will be ineffective. If this kind of development activity is to continue, a security framework must exist that allows regular interaction with key personnel, including frequent travel to and from project sites. DFID's existing programme in the south will conclude by July 2006.
 - iii) Training of the Iraqi Police Service (IPS): Police Advisors (PA's) have been developing the capability of the IPS in the four southern provinces. Currently, the IPS is functioning independently, and has developed the capacity to fulfil a number of basic policing functions, although to varying standards. The PAs are providing advice and

training to the IPS, aimed at improving areas such as public accountability and human rights awareness. The current IPS Training Programme is due to end by April/ May 2006. *[FCO to advise]*

Implications of Operational Transition for UK Civilian Activities

7. Civilian activity in southern Iraq is heavily reliant on UK forces for a range of services. Civilians benefit from military accommodation in Maysan, Muthanna and Dhi Qar, helicopter transport, and regular intelligence on security threats. UK forces also provide area security and Quick Reaction Forces in the provinces. Therefore, should civilians wish to continue operating in the south after transition, an increased investment in private security contractors will be necessary, although no private alternative can afford the same level of service as the military. Consequently, transition will heighten the security risks to UK staff in the south.

Resources

8. In FY 2004/5 HMG spent £19.2 million on operating costs (Life Support, local staff etc) in Basra. Of this figure, £16 million was spent on security (Armed Protection, Guarding). It is estimated that a significant increase in resources allocated to security will be necessary if HMG is to continue with its development and consular activities. This will entail a minimum rise of 80-100% on current security costs.

Discussion of Options

Political/ Consular

9. Under both option a) and b) the UK would maintain a Consulate-General in Basra province for the foreseeable future. Military Transition will offer an opportunity to establish normal diplomatic relations with the sovereign Iraqi Government. The absence of British troops may ease the UK's ability to exert political influence over developments in the south. The Shiite-dominated southern provinces will be a powerful political component of a federal Iraq. In addition, natural resources and maritime access will make the region central to the country's economic development. Therefore, a

permanent UK footprint in the region will be important for delivering on UK objectives. *[FCO to advise]*

Development and Reconstruction

10. Should Ministers choose to curtail civilian activity after Transition (option a), development and reconstruction activity would be scaled-down. Projects in Maysan, Al-Muthanna and Dhi Qar would not continue, but a small presence may remain in Basra.

11. However, this scale-down is unlikely to adversely affect the security and welfare of the southern provinces. Although DFID's interventions were critical in the immediate post-conflict phase, the limited resources available to DFID to invest in infrastructure and local governance are less likely to make a significant long-term difference to the provinces, given the scale of the development challenges facing southern Iraq.

12. The UK's most effective contribution to the long-term rehabilitation of infrastructure and local governance in the south will be to encourage a sizeable World Bank and UN presence in the south. However, it is unlikely that the multilaterals (and other donors) will engage in the south for some time, if the UK is viewed as scaling down its presence (Option a).

13. Currently the UN is planning to deploy up to 30 permanent staff in Basra in the future, while the World Bank has tentative plans for a locally staffed office in the south. The UN and World Bank have a combined total of US\$1 billion for assistance in Iraq, of which only approximately 30% has been disbursed to date.

14. Should Ministers choose to continue with current levels of civilian activity, it would send a positive message to the UN and World Bank. However, there will be risks to the security of our staff and the cost implications of dealing with these risks will be substantial. This raises significant value for money concerns. DFID would need to be able to assure

parliament that the substantial resources invested would lead to effective and sustainable development.

Training of the Iraqi Police Service (IPS)

15. Similarly, maintaining the presence of Police Advisors in the provinces would entail increased security risks to UK staff and increased costs.

16. The consequences of terminating IPS Training are unclear. The most significant risks to the future progress of the IPS are the infiltration of militias and political groups, criminality and corruption, and abuse of detainees. Although steps are being taken to mitigate against these risks, the Police Advisors' ability to influence these developments is limited. *[FCO to advise]*

Conclusion

17. Weighing up the factors, the recommendation to Ministers is that we should maintain a civilian presence in southern Iraq after transition, but that this should be at a reduced level. Maintaining a presence at broadly existing levels would incur excessive costs in terms of staff protection and carry unacceptable safety risks to staff. A precise judgement on the main elements of reduced civilian presence would need to be confirmed in the future, subject to the success of the military transition process and political developments in Iraq. However, broadly, option a) would entail

- A UK Consulate-General in Basra
- A reduced development team based within the Consulate-General
- An end to training of the Iraqi Police Service.

Presentational Issues

18. A handling strategy is attached at the Annex.