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Foreign &  
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*From the Foreign Secretary*

8 June 2004

Douglas Alexander Esq MP  
Minister for the Cabinet Office and  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
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*Dear Douglas,*

Honouring Service in Iraq

I am writing to draw your attention to David Blunkett's letter to me of 17 May (copy enclosed), in which he argues that UK police officers and other civilians who have served in Iraq in support of Government policy should be eligible for the Iraq Campaign Medal. I support David's position.

As David argues, UK police officers are playing an essential role in reforming the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) and building security capability in Iraq. We currently have over 45 deployed in Iraq, together with 70 officers training new recruits to the IPS in Jordan. All of these officers are volunteers. We are entirely dependent on their good will – and the good will of their Chief Officers and Police Authorities – for the continued success of the policing mission. Those officers who are serving in Iraq – whether in Baghdad or Basra – are doing so at considerable risk to themselves. The recent bomb outside the Az Zubayr training academy in Basra demonstrates this clearly.

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I note the arguments advanced by the Ceremonial Secretariat in favour of restricting the campaign medal to members of the Armed Forces, but these are unconvincing in the extreme. However, the points made by David are telling ones and, in my view, decisive. Military personnel and civilians are serving side by side in Iraq in uniquely testing circumstances. The skill, dedication and good will of both groups are central to our aims and endeavours in Iraq. We should avoid treating either group preferentially.

I believe that the recognition of all personnel serving directly in support of Government policy in Iraq, whether serving in Jordan or Iraq, should be appropriately rewarded. I would, therefore, very strongly encourage you to pursue either one of the options identified in David's letter.

I am copying this letter to members of the Ministerial Group and to the Prime Minister.

Yours ever,  
Jack

JACK STRAW

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