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Iraq 2003 -2004
Domestic Lessons Identified for Police
Deployments

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Iraq 2003 – 2004: Domestic lessons identified for police deployments

1. Introduction

1.1 This report covers my assessment of the domestic arrangements for my deployment to Iraq and that of the police team that followed. It focuses on the role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), and to a small extent the oversight of UK staff provided by the UK Special Representative's Office in the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). An earlier report covers my assessment of the role of the UK police in the international setting of the CPA.

1.2 At the point of my selection in mid June 2003, and my deployment at the beginning of July, Iraq's early post war conditions included confusion and lawlessness as well as a variety of tentative steps towards recovery. There had been a Fact Finding Mission (FFM) for policing conducted by Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan in late May 2003 which had identified the potential areas where UK police could support the Coalition effort. It should also be recognised that as the months passed there were changes, developments, and upgrades to the conditions and preparation under which police and others were deployed. However, there are some areas that warrant comment either because they could have been addressed differently or because there are still issues to be addressed. This paper seeks to highlight them.

2. Pre deployment preparation

2.1 Briefings Political/ Cultural/military/PCRS

2.1.1 Time between selection and deployment was short and there was not sufficient opportunity to be fully briefed on all aspects of the Iraq scenario. The areas in which I was least sighted were the previous Saddam security and police structures, and the post conflict reconstruction strategy (PCRS).

2.1.2 In the former case prior knowledge from an informed source would have helped me make a more realistic assessment of the capability and capacity requirement for the new Iraqi police service. Assessments on the ground were often hampered by lack of accurate ministerial information, clarity on roles and responsibilities of the security infrastructure of the Saddam regime, and preponderance for Iraqi officials and senior police to personally distance themselves from the more extreme elements of the regime, and in doing so create a distorted picture of the previous organisational structure and the role that the police played within it.

2.1.3 In the latter case it became apparent that while there were individual opinions on what direction the PCRS should take, there was no overall detailed strategy on which decisions for priorities could be assessed and moved forward. This was in part caused by

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the rapid transition from ORHA to CPA with an emphasis away from humanitarian and refugee issues and a move towards acting as a temporary government and authority for the country.

2.1.4 Some military priorities seemed to have an independent existence outside of the ORHA/CPA. A particular case was the decision taken to establish as a priority the training and equipping of a new Iraqi army. The Military organisation tasked with this, the Coalition Military Advisory Training Team (CMATT) was equipped and resourced to train the first battalion of about 730 men, with trainers and support staff numbering some 400. Though the transition from military to civilian rule was acknowledged as a priority, and the remnants of the police clearly known to be in need of urgent support in training and re-equipping, the re-establishment of the army took on an identity and energy of its own, despite the remote possibility of an Iraqi army being needed to defend its country from foreign invaders in the short and medium term. Had there been involvement by police advisors at the planning stage, the appropriate priority for the re-establishment of the police, together with resource and personnel support, could have been set earlier.

2.1.5 Recommendation: (a) Pre briefing/training should include specialist information on the make up of the country's security and police apparatus.
(b) The quality of contribution to the mission would be considerably enhanced if at the earliest opportunity there had been police involvement in the pre conflict planning where a combination of military, police and civilian expertise was clearly going to be responsible for post conflict reconstruction.

2.2 Terms of Reference

2.2.1 Following selection for Iraq it was agreed that my rank would be Deputy Chief Constable and that my initial deployment would be for 6 months. While arrangements were made with my Force for the secondment, I was never given formal terms of reference. It was made clear to me that I would have to negotiate my way in to the CPA MOI senior team. I was told that an agreement for the deployment of a senior British Police Officer had been made between the Foreign Secretary and the US Secretary of State. However, this had not reached the ears of the CPA Senior Advisor, whose cool response to my presence I found later was because initially he thought I had been sent to replace him.

2.2.2 Recommendation: Generic terms of reference should be developed by FCO which could be adapted for each mission. They should include, as far as is possible, reference to the mission expectations of the Senior Police officer.

2.3 Insurance

2.3.1 For non FCO staff the arrangements for compensation on death and the facilities for extending life cover should be provided as part of the pre briefing package. I found

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that I had to ask questions from Iraq to discover that there was a standard compensation package for FCO employees killed or injured in mission and, separately, that increases to life insurance premiums applied to already existing policies would be covered by FCO. I also found that for individuals without life insurance there was a limited amount of cover, up to three hundred thousand pounds, available from a small number of brokers.

2.3.2 Recommendation: Full information about insurance, repatriation if injured, and death benefit to families should be provided to secondees, ideally prior to deployment.

2.4 Equipping

2.4.1 The equipment issued to me for deployment was relevant, of good quality and was promptly delivered. Later in the deployment lightweight trousers and desert boots were issued because of the extreme hot conditions. Unfortunately these were only available in standard sizes from suppliers and, as I am not standard size, I was unable to benefit from this development.

2.4.2 Recommendation: Suppliers should as part of their contract undertake to supply equipment that is non standard in size when requested.

2.5 Visas

2.5.1 I was provided with a multi entry visa for Kuwait prior to deployment, which was a useful forethought.

2.6 Acclimatisation

2.6.1 It is essential that an acclimatisation period is built into the deployment of new staff, particularly for those who are deployed between April and October. Understanding the realities of 40 degree plus heat in a non air conditioned environment, and the need for regular hydration and other personal care steps, needs more than just theoretical knowledge.

2.6.2 Recommendation: Secondees should spend a period of time acclimatising to the hot conditions before being fully deployed to their duties.

2.7 Support for Chief Officer

2.7.1 Having been deployed as the senior civilian police advisor, an early omission was in not providing me with support staff. Once in situ my time was in great demand for any matter that had the word 'police' in it. Strategic issues brought me into regular contact with the Administrator, Ambassador Bremner, and the Commanding General, Lt General

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Sanchez. Operational demands meant regular contact with the Generals in the major subordinate commands, particularly in Baghdad. I had no facility for taking telephone calls, making appointments or arranging meetings.

2.7.2 The situation became so acute that the senior British General, major general Viggers, gave me temporary loan of a military captain to act as my staff officer. It was not until September that a civilian secondee from the MoD was provided as an assistant, and later in the year a permanent police staff officer appointed. If chief police officers are to be deployed in these circumstances in the future the FCO and ACPO should seek to properly support them so that they can operate effectively at their level. A useful example can be drawn from the support provided to a non operational military 2 star general.

2.7.3 Recommendation: A small support team including a Staff Officer, an Admin Assistant and a Training Advisor, should be identified and deployed with the Senior Police Advisor in future missions.

2.8 Finance

2.8.1 I am aware that funding for deployments to Iraq was initially met from a number of different budgets, each with their own existing rules and priorities. This meant that there was initial uncertainty as to how the costs incurred by seconded individuals for involvement in CPA business would be met. CPA budgets could not be used by CPA personnel on matters such as hotel bills, and there was no 'pot' in the Office of the UK Special Representative, nor in the British Office Baghdad to pay for travel or hotels. I was required to pay hotel bills etc in Jordan whilst negotiating the establishment of the Jordan training academy. I also had to pay for an air fare when I traveled from Egypt to Abu Dhabi with the minister of Interior on official business. Eventually, resorting to personal credit card seemed to be the most expedient way of paying for these expenses.

2.8.2 It was not until late in 2003 that HM Treasury agreed that funding should come from the FCO Peace Keeping Budget, though the authority for incurring them in the first place remained cloudy.

2.8.3 Recommendation: Clear processes for authorising and incurring expenses should be provided by FCO to secondees.

2.9 Training

2.9.1 Pre mission training is vital. In addition to generic training for international deployments there must be training tailored to the actual country to be deployed to and the conditions as they are known. Of particular importance is briefing on relationships and protocols expected with the different coalition partners, and with sister agencies from the UK, particularly military and diplomatic, that the police are likely to work alongside.

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I am aware that pre deployment training has been developed since my initial deployment, but there is value in reviewing the content and emphasis to ensure that it continues to fit the need. Officers who have served in Iraq should be engaged in this review.

2.9.2 Iraq provided some unique conditions for the police not least being the first mission where general police secondees would be armed. The initial requirement for police advisors to undertake a full firearms course created delays in deployment. A full ACPO approved authorised firearms officer course was not required by these officers. As they were to be armed solely for self protection and did not require sophisticated offensive tactical training, a significantly scaled down course would suffice. As part of that self protection ingredient, I recommended that they should also have familiarity with the most common weapon to be found in Iraq, the Kalashnikov AK 47 assault rifle. This was because the standard of weapon handling by their Iraqi counterparts was poor and the UK police needed to know how to identify whether or not a weapon in their close proximity was 'safe'.

2.9.3 Recommendation: Pre mission training should be reviewed to ensure relevance to the mission. Police officers with previous knowledge of the mission area should be involved in the review. ACPO should also satisfy itself that the firearms training currently being provided is relevant to the needs of the mission area.

3. On Arrival in Mission

3.1 Accountability

3.1.1 Lines of accountability were fuzzy. On deployment I worked directly to the US Senior Advisor in the CPA Ministry of Interior. He reported to the Administrator Paul Bremer. However, on policing matters, the military, under the command of Lt General Sanchez, US Army, assumed direction and control of the emerging Iraqi Police Service (IPS). Despite having clear terms of reference from the US Senior Advisor for the development of the Iraqi Police Service, (these were forwarded to London and in the absence of a response assumed by me to be acceptable) this authority was not fully acknowledged by all the Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) when I was operating in their 'battle space'. This often led to contradictory advice and direction being given to the IPS and on occasions me being refused initial access to Police Stations, on one occasion at military gunpoint.

3.1.2 Over the year of my deployment as Chief Police Advisor, I sought clarity on numerous occasions as to the plan for transition from military control of police to civil control, but without success. I formed the opinion that it was in the interests of the military not to clarify this position. I was fortunate to have ready access to both John Sawers and Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the respective UK special representatives, who provided help and guidance on my decision making and policy positions on a number of occasions.

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3.1.3 Recommendation: Acknowledging the dynamic nature of a coalition mission, HMG should provide clear guidance to Senior Secondedees as to the principle person to whom they are accountable in theatre.

3.2 Tour of Duty

3.2.1 My initial deployment was for 6 months. However, it was soon clear that I should extend for at least a further 6 months. This was because of the slow progress of initiating some of the substantive projects that were aimed at getting the Iraqi Police Service back on its feet. This was agreed with ACPO and achieved without difficulty by FCO writing to the Police Authority of my home Force, South Yorkshire Police. In some cases secondees from other departments or countries were being deployed for only 4 or 6 weeks. Taking into account the time to learn the environment, the job, the security conditions, and to acclimatise to the conditions, deployments of this length were not efficient.

3.3 Expectations

3.3.1 It was often the case that expectations in London and Washington about delivery of information and decisions were unrealistic, and often did not take into account the conditions on the ground. An example was with the early demand from London for sight of a policing strategy for Iraq, despite the absence of information locally, the confusion of responsibility for the police as explained above, and an exclusive focus by the US head of MoI on meeting the demands for the recruit training program initially designed for Tazar in Hungary and subsequently negotiated with Jordan. The absence of an elaborate CPA strategy until the autumn of 2003 was also an impediment.

3.3.2 Recommendation: Greater latitude should be given on the timing for responses when demands are made of operatives working in conditions like those in Iraq.

3.4 Risk / Threat assessments/ Protection

3.4.1 Following an assessment visit to Baghdad in May 2003 by Paul Kernaghan, Chief Constable of Hampshire, it was agreed by ACPO and Home Office that conditions were such that a number of UK police could be deployed to Iraq in relative safety. However, it was a number of weeks after my deployment before a realistic assessment could be made in theatre of the risks that would be faced by UK and other coalition police advisors in undertaking their tasks. One of the outcomes of this delay was that I was not assigned a mobile protection team until some three weeks after I had arrived. This severely constrained my ability to move around Baghdad and other parts of Iraq in the early stages, which created setbacks in trying to quantify the policing situation on the ground and prioritise efforts.

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3.4.2 The security situation in Iraq was a constantly moving feast, and 'on the ground' dynamic risk and threat assessments conducted by the FCO security manager were useful compliments to the more generic assessments available from military, State Department and commercial sources.

3.4.3 As the security situation gradually deteriorated and the rules for protection increased the activities of the police advisors became difficult to support without an enlargement of the number of protection teams. A useful lesson learned was that when considering deployment of new staff or augmenting the size of a team, their working environment had to be assessed. If it required work outside of the Green Zone in Baghdad, or in other parts of Iraq considered to be high risk, then a security factor and protection team assessment had to be included.

3.4.4 Recommendation: Threat assessments and risk assessments should have both a generic component and a dynamic local component applied to the welfare and protection assessment of both the existing staff already in theatre and new staff being deployed. This is particularly important where there is consideration being given to the augmentation of numbers of staff as this will have a direct impact on the capacity to provide protection.

3.5 Accommodation

3.5.1 In Baghdad accommodation was spartan for nearly all members of the CPA. Based almost exclusively in the former Republican palace and its environs, much of the large space like banqueting rooms was given over to sleeping accommodation for both soldiers and civilians, many of whom worked shifts. For the first 2 months I was accommodated in a 14 man dormitory created in a building in the palace grounds.

3.5.2 Later, 4 person prefabricated trailers were constructed in large estates to both accommodate the expanding CPA population and also to house those who had evacuated the Al Rashid hotel, which was considered to be unsafe after sustaining mortar and rocket attacks. The trailers were protected by sandbags and subsequently by linked concrete barriers. However, because there was no roof protection they were later deemed to be unsafe against mortar attack, and the UK contingent moved to trailers in the basement car park adjacent to the National Convention Centre. I was provided with a room in the British Military Support Unit base adjacent to the British HQ in Maude House.

3.6 Tasks

3.6.1 My instructions were that I had to negotiate my tasks with the American Senior advisor. He assigned me the job of recruiting, selecting and mentoring the police chief of Baghdad. After further negotiation with him I got his written agreement for me to be responsible for creating the national infrastructure for the Iraqi police.

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3.6.2 A task that became more demanding as time went on was the requirement made specifically by Ambassador Bremer for my involvement in overseeing incidents where CPA workers had been killed or injured by insurgents or where local police had been alleged to have significantly failed in taking local leadership and responsibilities.

3.6.3 Finally a task that came to me by default was the Senior Advisor role in the Ministry of Interior. This was when Bernard Kerik the US Senior Advisor left his post at short notice at the beginning of September 2003. In the absence of any one else, I assumed the role from the beginning of September until the end of October, when the current US advisor Steve Casteel took up post. It was during this time that I worked with the newly appointed Interior Minister to design the Ministry of Interior, and where I also prepared the bids for the UN donors conference and the US Congressional Supplemental budget.

3.6.4 It was clear that whilst this post would always be filled by a US appointee there was no identified replacement for Kerik when he left. This left the overall work and strategy of the Ministry of Interior vulnerable just at the time that the first Iraqi Minister of Interior was appointed.

3.7 Reports

3.7.1 After establishing my duties I submitted a regular weekly report in addition to specific one off reports. I often felt that these reports were disappearing into a vacuum as I rarely got any feedback or advice from them. Proactive information would have been useful for instance when I was negotiating with the UAE for forensic training and they introduced Germany as a partner. My initial guidance from CPA and UK Special reps office was that this was not a welcome intervention by the Germans and I was to hold them at some distance and discourage their involvement. Subsequently, there was a change of view, originating from Washington I was later told, and the German offer was then welcomed. Though I had regularly reported my position to London I was not informed of this change of position until several weeks later. Acting on my original guidance, my continued resistance to the German involvement could have caused some confusion or embarrassment.

3.7.2 Recommendation: A single dedicated point of contact in FCO should be established to receive, action and reply to reports from the Senior Police Advisor in theatre.

3.8 Leave

3.8.1 The entitlement to 2 weeks leave every 6 weeks was appropriate, though the working conditions and the realities of the time it takes to get in and out of Iraq should be regularly reviewed. Seconded workers worked 7 days a week, and 12-14 hour days were common. Junior officers often reported to me that they had been delayed in their

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departure or return because of the irregularity of military flights into or out of Baghdad as well as the more usual security conditions closing exit or entry points to the country

3.9 Diplomatic Accreditation

3.9.1 As the date for sovereignty approached, the UK police advisors were added to the accredited list in the new British Embassy. Given the uncertainty of the effectiveness of the interim government and the need to ensure full protection for the police undertaking their tasks in various parts of Iraq, the police would benefit from diplomatic identity documents, like the diplomatic passports provided to many of their international police counterparts.

3.9.2 Recommendation: Consideration should be given to providing seconded police officers with diplomatic passports or identity documents

3.10 Staffing Missions/Succession Planning

3.10.1 There are significant lessons to be identified from Iraq in relation to staff planning and succession planning. If the UK is to be serious about playing a significant role in international peace keeping, either alone or as part of a multi national effort, then there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way that police support is provided to those missions.

3.10.2 The UK is not strategically geared to provide a trained and available Police Force for international missions. It draws its secondees through a process of requests to the Chief Officers of over 40 Home Office police Forces in England and Wales, and from the Police Service of Northern Ireland through the Northern Ireland Office. The Ministry of Defence also supports international police missions through the MoD police. Though international policing deployments are funded by FCO, many chief officers are reluctant to release officers to international missions not least because of the potential affect on the domestic policing effort, on which Chief Constables and Police Authorities are assessed.

3.10.3 The affect of the current system is that the provision of police personnel to missions is slow and fragmented. It is difficult to target police expertise and align it to mission needs, and generally the experience gained in international missions is not recognised or celebrated as adding value to the overall career profile of the seconded officers or to their Forces. In Iraq, an opportunity to affect the strategic direction and powers of the Iraqi Intelligence Service by introducing a police 'Special Branch' system was lost because the UK was unable to second an experienced Special Branch manager to put the structure in place. A similar opportunity was lost in the setting up of an HMIC type standards and inspection unit for similar reasons.

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3.10.4 A dedicated police unit permanently established for international missions would address many of the concerns and frustrations. It would provide professional expertise for mission assessment and planning, working with military, FCO, EU and UN elements to ensure appropriate interventions, timing, availability and skill sets of police secondees. As with the existing NCIS and NCS there would be the opportunity for both secondment to the international unit and also a career path to attract skilled officers and good leaders. It would have responsibility for all pre-mission training and all requests for international police support from the UK could be routed through it (the recent 'Blueprint' paper circulated by Paul Kernaghan, Chief Constable of Hampshire, expands this concept admirably).

3.10.5 It would require political will at the highest level to commit to such an undertaking but given that both the EU and the UN has acknowledged the inevitable growth in policing missions as part of global stabilisation efforts, the current method of providing UK police to international missions has a limited future.

3.10.6 Recommendation: A fundamental shift should occur in HMG's policy on the raising of police officers to support international missions. Serious consideration should be given to creating a standing reserve of police skilled, trained and equipped for international deployments in a timely manner.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Though many of the issues I have raised here have since been addressed or are in the process of being addressed it is worth considering what could be done in the future so that secondees are better prepared to serve their missions with credit.

4.2 The recent restructuring in the FCO will allow for a review of both the internal administrative strategy for ensuring successful secondments and also the wider position that the UK will wish to take in supporting international missions.

4.3 The proposal for the establishment of a dedicated police unit has merit but will have many hurdles to overcome, not least the traditional positions and views from the interested ministries and from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). It is essential that this proposal, explored much more fully in the 'Blueprint' paper referred to above, is considered at a high level if it is to stand a chance of success.

4.4 Finally, much of what I have included in this report, though based on personal experience, is not original. Numerous reports, including the seminal Brahimi report from the UN in 2000, highlight many of the same issues and make strong clear recommendations. Sadly, the lessons and recommendations are largely ignored. In the future the UK may struggle to provide smart, timely support to policing missions if the clear message from previous reports, together with the experience of current participants, is not acted on.

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4.5 I have called this report 'lessons identified', as only time will tell whether any lessons have been learned.

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