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eGram



17758/07

<b>Classification</b>	RESTRICTED	<b>Caveat</b>
<b>eGram Number</b>	17758/07	
<b>From</b>	BASRA	
<b>Date Created</b>	30/04/2007 11:04:00	
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<b>Action Immediate</b>		
<b>Action Routine</b>	eP FCO	
<b>Info Immediate</b>		
<b>Info Routine</b>	eP BAGHDAD;eP BASRA;eP WASHINGTON;eP UKMIS NEW YORK; ;eOGD CABINET OFFICE;eOGD DFID; ;ePL MIDDLE EAST POSTS;ePL MNF IRAQ POSTS	
<b>FCO Distribution Lead</b>	eDL IRAQ/KUWAIT eD IRAQ DIRECTORATE	
<b>Military Action Imm</b>		
<b>Military Action Rtn</b>		
<b>Military Info Imm</b>		
<b>Military Info Rtn</b>	PJHQ;MODUK	
<b>Subject</b>	BASRA: MOVE OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICE:Id=6599214	
<b>Summary</b>	British Embassy Office leaves Basra Palace as part of gradual coalition consolidation outside Basra City. Now operating from Basra Air Station. New FTN code:	
<b>SIC</b>	19E	

DETAIL

1. On 26 April, we handed our Basra Palace compound over to the British military as part of the process of reducing the UK and coalition presence in Basra city. Two military bases in town, the Old State Building and Shaat al-Arab Hotel, have already been handed over to the Iraqi Army. The whole Palace site (of which our compound was about a sixth) will, on present plans, be handed back to the Iraqi authorities in the late summer. We expect the local authorities to assume full security responsibility for Basra province at around the same time.
2. Over 1,200 rockets and mortars have been fired at the Palace compound since the rate of attacks increased in September 2006. In that time, our compound was hit over 70 times. We were fortunate that

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none of our staff were killed or seriously injured. (Others in other parts of the compound fared less well.) But we also made our own good fortune. Four accommodation "pods", the bar, the gym and both the main office buildings received direct hits - but because they were hardened, no serious injuries resulted. Six of the reinforced office windows were hit by shrapnel - none gave way. Mortars landed one side of "Hesco" sandbag walls, leaving people the other side unharmed. We are very grateful for the foresight of our predecessors, and for the support from colleagues in London, in ensuring our protection kept pace with the threat.

3. The British Embassy Office Basra is now operating entirely from the Basra Air Station. The rocket and mortar threat remains very real: we are racing to get levels of protection in place that are comparable to the Palace. Co-location with the multinational military commanders, British police mission and UK-US Provincial Reconstruction Team is already bringing widely recognised dividends. Our engagement with key contacts has, in the event, been uninterrupted.

4. Please cease to use all FTN numbers. The key Basra contacts are:

- 24 hour security desk:
- Consul General:
- Deputy Consul General
- Main Office:

**Sign Off**  
**Contact Name**  
**Contact Telno.**  
**Attachments**

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