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From:

Date: 1 May 2007

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To:	PS/PUS	

ISSUE

1. How to respond to the threat from increasing indirect fire attacks (IDF) on the Contingency Operating Base (COB) in Basra. Recommendation that the PUS should endorse Director Iraq's instruction that all personnel under FCO duty of care should be moved to hardened accommodation with immediate effect.

TIMING

2. Immediate.

AGREED BY

3. SED, DfID, HRD, CG Basra.

BACKGROUND & ARGUMENT

4. In his response to submission of 20 April 2007, the PUS indicated that he was not content for any member of staff at the COB to be accommodated in unhardened accommodation, and that 31 July should be the latest date for moving all staff to hardened accommodation. The past week has seen further IDF attacks on the COB, including a direct hit on 30 April on the ArmorGroup IPA office. There were no casualties because the unhardened office was not occupied at the time. (There were two AG IPA officers in the adjacent cabin but both were unharmed.) A photograph of the damaged cabin is attached.
5. Simon McDonald's assessment, on the basis of reports from the Overseas Security Manager, is that as the security situation has deteriorated to the stage where all personnel under FCO duty of care should be moved, with immediate effect, to hardened accommodation. He has issued instructions to this effect to the DHM, Rob Tinline, who

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is making the necessary arrangements. This will mean that some police officers may not have full facilities (i.e. water, electricity and air conditioning) until tomorrow (2 May) and will have to share with other colleagues. But the discomfort should be acceptable in the short term. In accordance with the Jay criteria, he has also asked Post and IPU to review the position of all personnel in Basra.

6. Rob Tinline, has already forwarded proposals, which if approved, would result in a reduction of personnel to a level that should provide adequate security and acceptable living conditions for all personnel operating from the COB, while maintaining operational effectiveness. The FCO complement will be reduced from 12 to 10 and the Control Risks security team from 32 to 24, (subject to a review by the Overseas Security Adviser, later this month). These reductions will allow the CIVPOL and AG IPA teams to remain at their current levels and to allow three members of the PRT to return to Basra and to increase their number from 11 to 14. Although the police contingent remains one of the larger components of the mission, the size of the civilian police team in Iraq has almost halved since January 2007 and the contribution of all staff to agreed strategic policing priorities is kept under constant review by IPU and the Chief Police Adviser.
7. Simon has also requested that travel around the COB should continue to be monitored by the DHM and OSM and that Post should produce a contingency plan to provide secure dining arrangements, should the level of IDF prohibit use of the unhardened military dining facility at Allenby Lines. A fully hardened dining facility for use by FCO personnel is under construction but not expected to be ready for use until mid-July.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8. None.

PARLIAMENTARY AND MEDIA

9. There is steadily growing Parliamentary interest in the threat posed to the UK military in Basra from indirect fire. In the event of a serious incident at Basra air station involving UK civilian casualties, there could be substantial media interest and questions asked around our security arrangements.

IPU

Tel

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Robert Tinline, Basra

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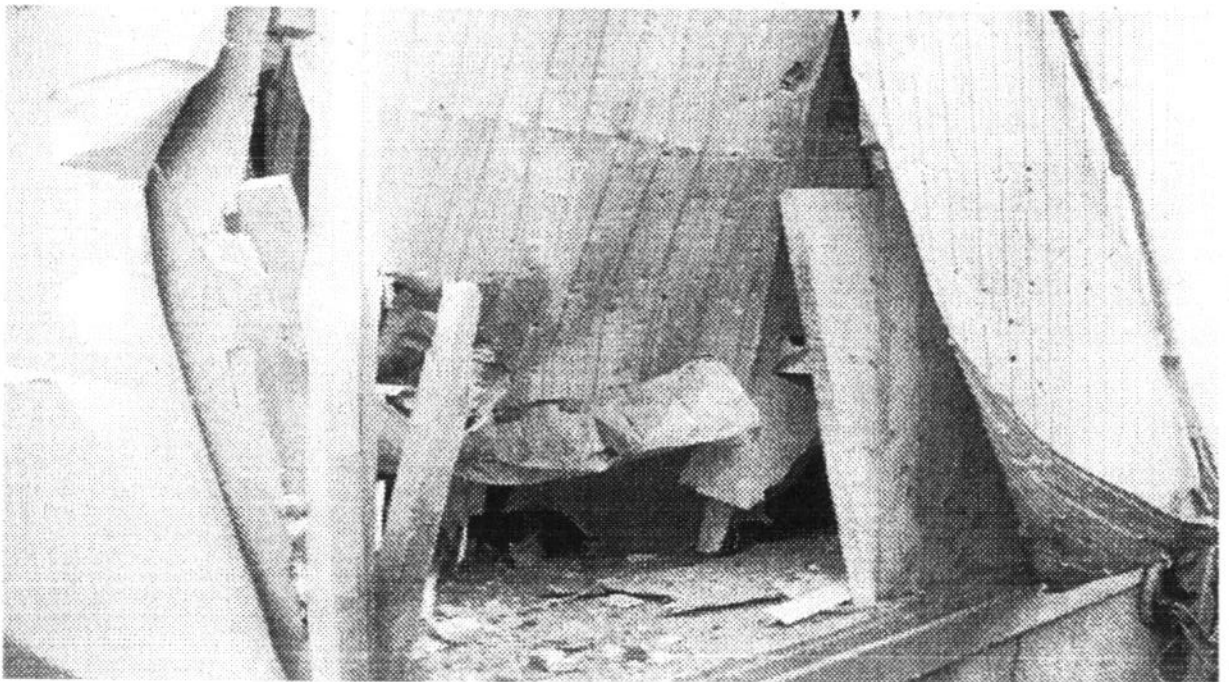
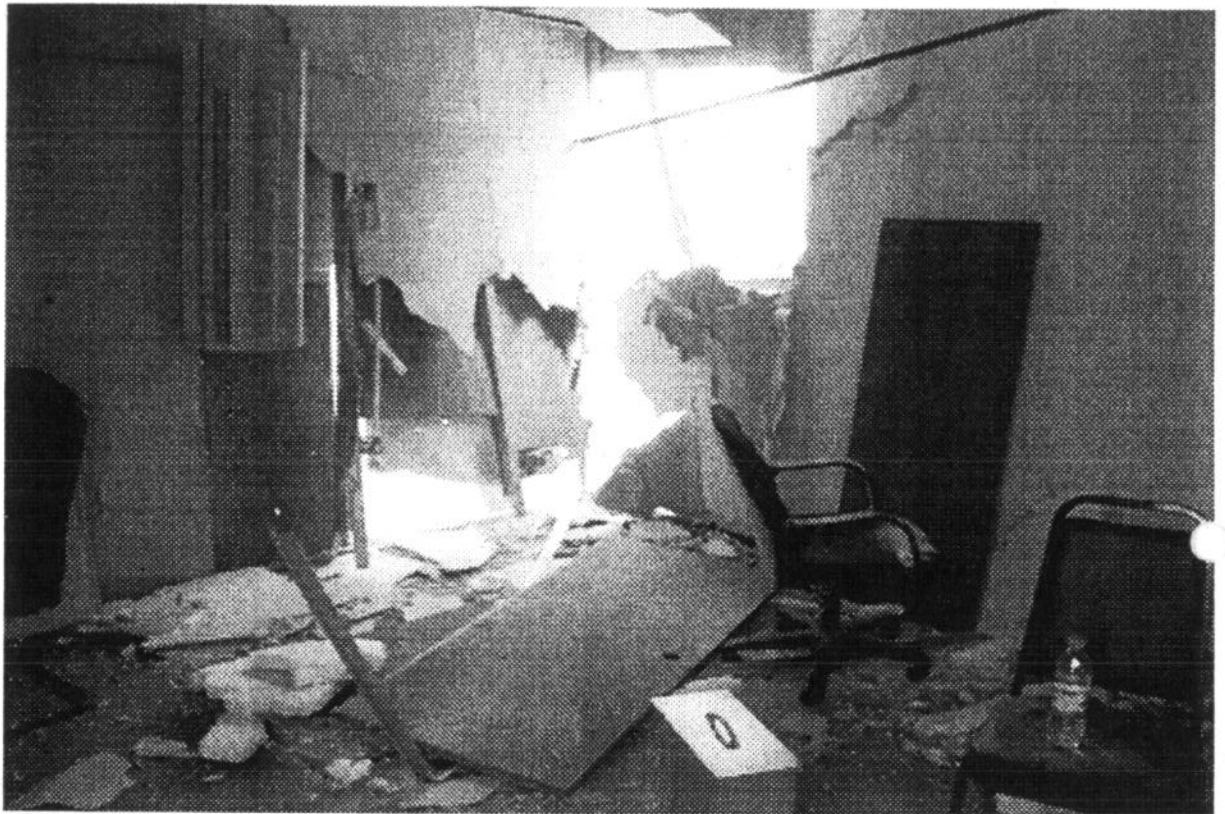
Mike Colbourne, UK Chief Police Adviser, Iraq

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Photographs



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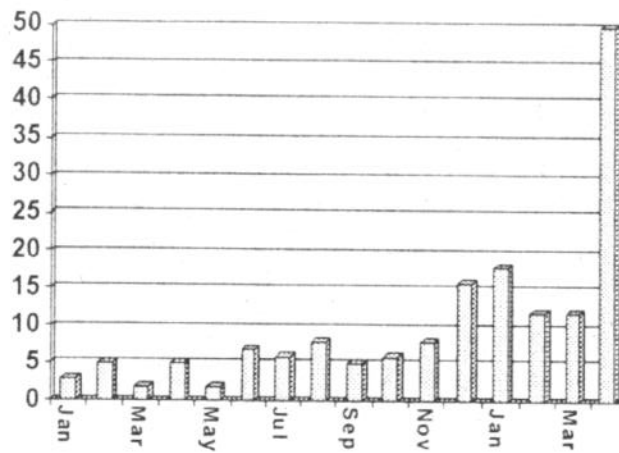
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IDF Attacks on the COB



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