



SECRETARY OF STATE

DECLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
ROOM 205, OLD WAR OFFICE BUILDING
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2EU

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

169186/03
MO 6/17/15K
23 October 2003
FWS
TAP CN 1
24/10
N/C
RP

1) ew sack

IRAQ: VISIT TO BASRA 20-21 OCTOBER 2003

Visit concentrated on UK forces, who are doing well. Progress being made on the Essential Infrastructure Programme. CPA(S) now settled into their new offices. For CPA to take forward programmes effectively across the broad range of activity required, there is now a need to replace ad-hoc military placements with professional and practical civilian expertise.

I visited Basra on the 20/21 October, accompanied by CDS. The main focus of my visit was to meet UK forces, but I also spoke with members of the Italian, Norwegian and New Zealand forces, as well as members of the Basrah Governing Council and CPA(S) staff. The forces were in good spirit, well motivated and pleased to be clearly making a difference, working well with the Essential Infrastructure Programme being pursued by CPA(S). There were some frustrations about support in other areas. For example, training and recruitment of Border Guards has stopped until vehicles can be provided to make them effective; other programmes are similarly held up by a lack of a fully comprehensive project approach.

The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

DECLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

505

DECLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

Now that CPA(S) have completed their move into new offices, potential for improvement lies in the increasing professionalism of the CPA. Currently many posts are filled on an ad-hoc basis by military personnel, including reservists who happen to have the required skills from civilian life. This is not a robust way to resource such an important body. I welcome the efforts now being made to recruit professionals who can take forward the broad range of programmes, and reinforce the need for this to be taken forward quickly as many of the reservists will be withdrawn early in November. Although I note Hilary Synnott's view that the CPA would never have any significant executive capability of their own, to complement policy officials there is a need for very practical people who can drive implementation and ensure progress.

The military have provided essential, effective and enthusiastic support in the early stages. But we need to get out of a mindset where the default position is to call on "spare" military personnel to fulfil roles for which they have not been trained. CPA(S) may well require a higher proportion of civilians than the CPA elsewhere in the country because the roles and capabilities of UK forces do not encompass all of those available within the much larger US Armed Forces. We will, of course, continue to support the overall effort in the South where we can, but the best people for the posts in CPA(S) could well come from a wider range of Whitehall departments and the civilian sector in the UK.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister and members of the Ad-Hoc Ministerial Group on Iraq.

Yours sincerely,


GEOFFREY HOON

DECLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED