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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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Ian Lee
Director General Operational Policy

19 December 2003

Dear Desmond,

IRAQ: POLICE SUPPORT FOR MND(SE)

At the ad hoc officials' group on Iraq last week some surprise was expressed at the forthcoming deployment of additional Royal Military Police to MND(SE) there was concern about MOD's alleged lack of consultation over this deployment. I did not want to stir up the meeting but I feel it is important that I put on record the reason for sending this contingent, as it goes to the heart of many of the shortcomings of our engagement in Iraq.

The RMP in theatre have been doing a magnificent job, but by their own admission they are not the right people for the job. They joined the Army to police soldiers, not civilians. For months now the MOD has been assured by the FCO and MND(SE) has been assured by the CPA that civil police were in the pipeline to provide training and mentoring for the Iraqi Police Service in the CPA(S) region. Initially a figure of some two hundred British Police was talked about. All accepted the crucial importance of standing up the IPS as rapidly as possible and thus the importance of providing proper *civil* police trainers to train *civil* police. HMG and the CPA have not, however, delivered, it appears through a combination of ACPO's inability to generate the people and the general impotence and sclerosis that characterises the CPA.

Faced with this situation and no sign of its resolution by others, MND(SE) has already effectively doubled the size of the Training academy by providing 20

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RMP and Carabinieri trainers to complement the 24 civilian police trainers at the academy and continues to try to secure the funding for the first twelve months of training. However, training alone will not give the Iraqi security organisations the initial capability and credibility required by July. The additional RMP are needed to provide mentoring to the Iraqi police in the absence of any civilian police mentors, a long recognised requirement which has been brought forward by the increased pace of transition.

As you know, we have had to deploy not just the RMP but a further battalion of infantry, because in the last analysis it is the soldiers of MND(SE) who will most immediately be faced with the consequences of inaction. The RMP and the infantry nevertheless remain a sub-optimal solution. Far better would be a proper, civilian-run, civilian-staffed police training and mentoring programme. But there is still no sign that this will be delivered. Even the police training academy - in Jordan, where there is a benign environment - is chronically behind schedule and suffering budgetary difficulties; the CPA has failed to put up a building big enough to accommodate its staff, let alone its trainee policemen.

As you will be aware, the troops we are deploying are not in any sense "spare". The infantry battalion (1 A&SH) represents 50% of our strategic reserve for Iraq and is being pulled from its place in 16AA Bde, three months after its return from Northern Ireland; a side-effect of this is that a further battalion will have to absorb 1 A&SH's previously planned deployment to Afghanistan next autumn, and in the process see its own tour interval drastically reduced. The Royal Military Police are being pulled from other duties and training. They will at least have the benefit of prior local knowledge since they are being sent back to Iraq after a previous tour of six months earlier this year; this is, as you will be aware, a significant breach of harmony rules, and not the sort of news we relish giving to any of our personnel in the run-up to Christmas.

Whether or not you or others were aware of the specific proposal to deploy an extra 50 or so RMP before it came to Chiefs is very much a side issue. The real point is that we have repeatedly stressed that we see police training as important and that it is best delivered by civil police. I suggest that the SOG should return to the question of police development - and specifically to the issue of how UK engagement is managed - in the New Year.

I am copying this to John Buck & Jim Drummond.

Merry Christmas!



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