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24 February 2003

Desmond Bowen  
Head of Overseas and Defence Secretariat  
Cabinet Office

*Dear Desmond,*

Following the Chiefs' meeting last Wednesday, I thought it would be useful if I wrote round summarising our Secretary of State's position on what DFID could do following any conflict in Iraq.

Although she would be keen for DFID to support an exemplary humanitarian effort in any UK-controlled sector, our role will be constrained by both the extent of the UN mandate and by the financial resources available to us. We have a strong commitment to supporting the humanitarian and coordination work of UN agencies, and would want to allocate significant funding to them under most scenarios. Drawing heavily on our contingency reserve and existing humanitarian aid and Iraq budget lines is unlikely to release more than £60-70m for humanitarian assistance to Iraq for 2003/4. Given our predictions of the humanitarian needs, with this level of funding we would not be able to play the exemplary role the Prime Minister has asked for, and it would be irresponsible of us to plan to do so.

The role which DFID can play in funding our usual humanitarian partners may further be constrained by perceptions of the legality of any conflict and what happens afterwards, and also by humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence. UN mandates justifying not only military force but also a continuing international presence afterwards are critical to ensuring the international humanitarian community can engage fully with the predicted enormous needs. I will be writing round separately this week with some thoughts on the humanitarian elements needed in subsequent UNSCRs.

I set out below what we think our role might be under some of the possible conflict scenarios.

i) No second UNSCR, no mandated UN humanitarian role

We would fund whichever international agencies in the region were willing to accept UK money and best placed to respond; likely to be predominantly UN agencies and ICRC/IFRC. Some agencies could have reservations about what they would do with funding from a belligerent in the absence of a clear UN mandate, and under all conflict scenarios most are unlikely to be fully operational during and immediately after conflict due to the withdrawal of international staff.

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## ii) Second UNSCR but no mandated UN humanitarian role (overall US lead)

As above, but we would also be willing to provide funding to the UK military for quick impact projects. Without additional resources, this is unlikely to exceed £5m in total. We have doubts about how much the UN would be able to do beyond immediate relief with only a thin second SCR if a US-led coalition assumed medium-term control of the country.

## iii) Second UNSCR and clear UN humanitarian mandate

We would want to be positively engaged with the UK military and the US humanitarian effort as well as the UN, and would consider bilateral operations in any UK sector. UN support and bilateral engagement could complement and inform each other well. But our commitments to supporting UN agencies across the country and the region would severely financially constrain what we could do in a UK-controlled sector with the UK military and other partners.

## iv) Second UNSCR, clear UN humanitarian mandate and additional resources

With adequate finance we would be able to play the exemplary role suggested by the Prime Minister. We can discuss in principle with the MOD in more detail what this might entail. But we cannot plan for it without more comfort on resources.

Under all circumstances, DFID staff are committed to advise the MOD and the armed forces on humanitarian issues, including the risks which we are concerned coalition forces may not have adequately prepared for. MOD-DFID links are now strong and we are intensifying them.

We are also doing further scooping work on the role we might play should there be a UN mandate. This includes training a limited number of staff, considering basing requirements in Kuwait, and further visits to the region. But we do not currently have political authority to deploy operationally, or to make substantive plans to deploy in an exemplary role (eg commissioning or prepositioning material). Our Secretary of State has made our financial position clear in two letters to the Prime Minister.

I am copying this letter to Ian Lee and Simon Webb (MOD), Peter Ricketts and William Ehrman (FCO) and Stephen Pickford (HMT).

Yours ever,  
Nicola

Nicola Brewer

bc: PS/SJS  
Simon  
Carolyn  
Alotair

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