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IRAQ SECURITY

1. I visited Baghdad and Basra last week with David Gillett (DfID) and (OSA) to review the security of HMG secondees to CPA. will produce a detailed report. This minute summarises our main findings.
2. We are failing to meet our duty of care to both FCO staff and those seconded to CPA through the FCO. The security situation is extremely dangerous and the CPA security resources are inadequate. The majority of secondees need to travel outside the secure zone where the threat is high and there is little or no control of the streets. The rules require secondees to travel in soft-skinned vehicles escorted by US military vehicles. This makes them extremely vulnerable since the US military are the target of daily attacks. The alternative to military escorts is a two-car convoy with "shooters", i.e. armed escorts. There are not enough military personnel, so UK secondees are being asked to handle weapons, which does nothing to enhance their security.

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3. The result is that the secondees are either stuck in the compound unable to do their jobs effectively, or are exposing themselves to unacceptably high risks. The situation is likely to get worse.

told us that there were various groups who wanted to attack Western civilians. They had the intent and capability to carry out attacks and it was easy for them to operate.

4. In order to enable HMG secondees to operate effectively and safely we need to:

- Introduce a structure to manage the security of UK secondees. Robert Chatterton-Dickson (IPU, visiting at the same time) has appointed one of the secondees as a UK staff co-ordinator. We need to appoint a security manager to brief new arrivals, keep them up to date on security incidents, manage security assets (vehicles, flak jackets etc) and act as a focal point for communications.
- Provide a fleet of vehicles to enable UK secondees to travel in a flexible way, either with US military escorts or independently, depending on the destination.
- Appoint a team of armed escorts to accompany them outside the secure zone. This would not be Close Protection, but a visible deterrent.
- Install a radio communications system for UK staff travelling outside the secure zone to keep in touch with the security manager.

5. To implement this package we need to:

- Agree the detail with DFID. DFID are already introducing better transport and communications for their secondees. David Gillett agrees with the approach we are advocating and that we need a common approach for all HMG secondees.
- Calculate the numbers of journeys needed per week and therefore the number of vehicles and armed escorts.
- Order the vehicles for early delivery and pursue a commercial contract for the security manager and armed escorts.
- Factor these additional costs into the Iraq reserve claim.
- Agree a script with IPU for briefing all UK secondees on security before they go.

We will pursue the necessary action as a matter of urgency.

6. We discussed these proposals with John Sawers and Bremer's Chief of Staff, Pat Kennedy. John Sawers acknowledged them as a sensible balance between efficiency and security. Kennedy was concerned about the divisive effect of the UK creating its own security package. He suggested that he might be able to buy more vehicles, but agreed that we should go ahead as pilot project.

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British Office Baghdad

7. We also visited BOB. The flatpack offices were being erected and the new Army platoon was settling in. They currently have 19 RMP close protection staff to protect John Sawers, Chris Segar and other UK-based BOB staff. This figure is probably too high and needs to be reviewed, taking account of the likely expansion of BOB staff later in the summer. An RMP officer is going to Baghdad next week to look at the current arrangement.

Basra

8. The security situation in Basra is different from Baghdad, partly because of the political context in the South and partly because UK civilians are not accompanied by military patrols. The atmosphere is more benign, but warned that it could deteriorate. CPA security is being enhanced by the active involvement of a DfID team and a commercial contract that will provide armed guards and more vehicles. A separate approach along the lines proposed for Baghdad would be damaging in a more compact office in Basra.

9. We considered the security requirements for a Consulate. We need to plan for good stand-off and armed guards (until we can have armed police we can trust). Under current threat levels, I doubt whether CP would be needed.

Staff welfare

10. We held a meeting with about 30 secondees in Baghdad and met many of those in Basra. Morale was good but they are clearly worried about security. Some also raised health and safety concerns, e.g. long working hours, fire safety at the Al Rashid hotel, wiring in the offices and sanitary arrangements. There is no alternative to these conditions in the short term.

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