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Sub 77 - 1Mc

Agree as recommended (3)
at paragraph 3.

Many thanks. Barones
Symons agrees your recommendation.
McLellan

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APS/Bress Symons 7/7

ii) cc tpo as here

From: , Bilateral Section, IPU
Date: 2 July 2003

cc: PS/SofS
PS/PUS
PS/Mullin
Peter Ricketts
Edward Chaplin
Richard Stagg
Mr Williams, Special Adviser
Mr Owen, Special Adviser
Heads: CRD, PDPD, PO,
SSU
Chris Segar, Baghdad

NRE 290/001/03	
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Action Taken	

Reference:

To: Neil Crompton, Head, IPU *I agree. A high priority. we will*
PS/Baroness Symons

SUBJECT: IRAQ: BRITISH COUNCIL PRESENCE

Issue

1. To consider whether to agree to the British Council re-establishing a presence in Iraq.

Timing

2. Immediate. The British Council Board meets on 15 July to discuss formal agreement to re-establish an operation in Iraq.

Recommendation

3. The Minister agree in principle to support the establishment of a British Council operation in Iraq. British Office Baghdad agree. FCO agreement will be sought before a final decision is taken on timing of deployment.

Argument

4. There is an urgent need to re-establish effective institutions in post-conflict Iraq, which will contribute to stability and growth in the country and the wider region. A

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British Council operation in Iraq will provide vital expertise and resources for reforming the country's institutions and capacity building of key Iraqi groups. This will be essential in building a secure and economically sound country which can play a full role in the international community. Their operation will also contribute to engaging key Iraqi players in bilateral links, new initiatives and renewing professional and educational links with the UK.

5. The British Council proposes establishing the directorate in London, but locating to Baghdad and Basrah as soon as the security situation permits. FCO agreement will be sought before a final decision is taken on deployment.
6. The FCO are keen to see a British Council presence in Iraq at an early stage. The Embassy does not have the necessary capacity or expertise to carry forward a programme of activities.

Options

7. Use British Council resources in Kuwait and/or Jordan to carry out Council work in Iraq. Whilst Kuwait/Jordan would be able to provide limited support activities in Iraq, this is not sustainable in the longer term. Iraqi institutions are developing fast. An on-the-ground presence is required to make a useful contribution to their formation and establish early networks of key players.
8. Do nothing. The UK would lose immediate opportunities to help shape and influence the development of education and culture in Iraq vital to institution-building in a post-conflict environment, neglect the instinct of many Iraqis to look to the UK for education and training and would leave the field open to the French and others already active on the ground.

Background

9. The British Council had a presence in Iraq until 1990, with offices in Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul. Until the first Iraq conflict, UK was the preferred partner for Iraq in many areas, notably in education. Large numbers of Iraqi professionals studied in the UK and took British qualifications, and Iraqi higher education was significantly influenced by links with British institutions. There was a huge demand for English language teaching, and the British Council operated a successful teaching centre in Baghdad and English language resource centres in Mosul and Basra. They also ran an active arts programme and a popular library. Since 1991 Iraqis have had virtually no overseas contact.
10. The FCO has had preliminary discussions with the British Council on re-establishing a presence. The Council has already contributed to reconstruction efforts in Iraq by recruiting an English Language consultant, who has been working with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Baghdad to develop proposals for assistance to English Language Teaching. They have also seconded Emma Sky to the CPA in Mosul. At the FCO's request the Council

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has separately begun to examine a wider bilateral strategy on education in Iraq, working with TPUK, DfES, commercial and academic sectors.

11. The British Council proposes establishing the post of British Council Director Iraq. The Director will initially be London based, but located in Iraq as soon as security and operating conditions permit. The British Council anticipate that the Director Iraq will initially be attached to the British Office in Baghdad, although they would want to establish a separate presence when possible. We have recommended that they consider beginning operations with a low key presence in a British Office in Basrah, where the security situation is likely to be more permissive.
12. The British Council are putting together an initial 3 year strategy (2003-06). The key focus will be on support for emerging academic and professional leaders in re-building institutions and networks through international links, enabling Iraqis to access information on expertise, developments and opportunities in the arts, education and other aspects of contemporary society, and supporting the development of civil society through co-operative projects.
12. The British Council are planning to carry out a full scoping mission to Iraq as soon as the security situation permits.
- Flag A 13. I attach a copy of the British Council proposal for discussion at their board meeting on 15 July.

Media and Parliament

14. The re-establishment of a British Council presence will be a public statement of the UK's long-term commitment to Iraq to UK, international and Iraqi audiences.

Resource Implications

15. None for the FCO. The British Council will fund their programme. Accommodation at the British Office in Baghdad and/or Basrah will be covered by the British Council under a Service Level Agreement.
16. The British Council have earmarked £1.25 million for their programme, which will be allocated from existing Council resources. At a future stage they will consider an internal spending review bid for additional resources in order to bring the country operation to its full potential.

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DRAFT PAPER FOR BRITISH COUNCIL BOARD – 15 JULY 2003

Re-establishment of British Council presence in Iraq

Summary

The Board is requested to approve the re-establishment of the British Council operation in Iraq. The post of Director Iraq will be established in the UK with the post holder to travel to Iraq when security conditions permit, initially with the status of Cultural Attaché in the British Office in Baghdad.

1. Background

The British Council had a directorate in Iraq until 1990. Until the first Iraq conflict, UK was the preferred partner for Iraq in many areas, notably in education. Large numbers of Iraqi professionals studied in the UK and took British qualifications, and Iraqi higher education was significantly influenced by links with British institutions. There was a huge demand for English language teaching, and the British Council operated a successful teaching centre in Baghdad and English language resource centres in Mosul and Basra. We also ran an active arts programme and a popular library.

Since the establishment of the British Office in Baghdad following the recent conflict, we have been discussing with FCO a timetable for the re-establishment of a British Council presence in Iraq. In the interim, the Council has recruited an English Language consultant, Malcolm Griffiths, who has been working with the CPA in Baghdad to develop proposals for assistance to English Language Teaching. Very recently, Emma Sky, on secondment to FCO, has taken up post with the CPA in Mosul as a consultant. *[FCO is keen that British Council should establish operations for Iraq as soon as possible, and Ministerial agreement has been given.]*

2. Proposal

To establish the post of British Council Director Iraq, working in the first instance from London, but with a view to the post holder moving to Iraq as soon as security and operating conditions permit. We anticipate that the early British Council operation will operate within the British Office in Baghdad though we shall wish to establish a separate presence when possible. In 2003/04 we shall earmark up to £500k for Iraq. Assuming that Director Iraq will be able to work from Baghdad from January 2004, staff and overhead (including set up) costs will be approximately £200k with operational funds available up to £300k. In 2004/05, staff and overhead costs including appropriate security are expected to be approximately £375k and operational funds £375k. We shall fund the new Iraq programme initially through churn, though we shall prepare a spending review bid for additional resources in order to bring the country operation to its full potential.

3. Desired Outcomes

Over a 3 year period to 2006,

- UK becomes the country of choice for partnerships particularly in Education, including English language learning, and for young Iraqis seeking overseas education
- influential networks and relationships in government, education, media, artistic and civil society institutions and communities are engaged with and value partnership with the UK
- UK expertise, experience and knowledge support the reform and development agenda, through a partnership approach with Iraqi institutions and communities, in sectors such as governance, legal reform, civil society, education and the media
- cross cultural understanding and dialogue develop between the UK and Iraq, particularly between young people.

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4. Target Groups

- Leaders, policy makers, senior administrators, senior practitioners in the sectors of education, the arts, civil society, governance, culture, the media and youth.
- Young Professionals - 18-30 year olds who are studying at degree level or above and from whom the next leadership generation will emerge.

5. Mechanisms for achieving impact

In the first instance, programmes will concentrate on re-building links especially in the Higher Education sector and with English language professionals, and on establishing opportunities for young Iraqis to come to the UK. Over a three year period, depending on the speed with which effective infrastructure and institutions are established in Iraq and resources are available to us, we shall seek to develop a programme with 3 principal themes:

- Support for emerging academic and professional leaders in re-building institutions and networks through international links, including:
 - support for University links,
 - networks of young scientists
 - a University-based ELT resource centre
 - a UK/Iraq Alumni association
 - support to professional networks
 - Chevening and other scholarship schemes
- Enabling Iraqis to access information on expertise, developments and opportunities in the arts, education and other aspects of contemporary society, including:
 - establishing a British Council information centre in Baghdad
 - development of a UK/Iraq web site in English and Arabic
 - pilot projects in the delivery of UK examinations
 - an Iraq/UK school links project
- Supporting the development of civil society through co-operative projects, including:
 - working with the British Museum on heritage conservation
 - literature projects with young people
 - support to Civil Society organisations
 - a Connecting Futures youth and community programme
 - arts links and exchanges.

6. Opportunities

As security improves in Iraq, and as durable institutions are re-established, we expect that opportunities will arise for increasing our impact through delivering projects on behalf of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and charitable foundations. As trade relationships are re-established, we shall establish partnerships with UK commercial interests with a view to expanding our impact through sponsored events and scholarships. In our 3 year planning period, we shall seek to expand our outreach within Iraq through the establishment of resource centres, focusing on English language learning and educational opportunities in the first instance, in Basra and Mosul.

7. Risks

The biggest risk in the short run is that the security situation does not improve as quickly as we, and FCO, expect, and/or that the CPA is unable to establish sustainable institutions of government. At worst, this will prevent us establishing operations within Iraq within the timescale we plan; or in a less severe situation will hamper operations once we had established a presence. Our strategy will be to seek ways of building influence in Iraq firstly through identifying appropriate partners in the country who are able to develop working partnerships even if we cannot immediately build an effective presence and outreach in Iraq itself.

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8. Timing

We propose to recruit a Director for British Council Iraq with immediate effect. The Director will be established in post in London as soon as possible in order to begin to identify UK and Iraqi partners for the programmes suggested in section 5. The timing of the Director's move to Iraq will be determined, in consultation with FCO, by the evolving security and infrastructure situation in the country.

9. Conclusion

Re-establishment of effective institutions in Iraq is an urgent need for maintaining stability in the whole Middle East region. A British Council operation in Iraq will play a crucial part in building on the strong historical relationships with UK and make an effective contribution to the establishment of an Iraq which plays a full role in the international community.

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