

Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

PRIME MINISTER

IRAQ: UK CIVIL ASSISTANCE TO ORHA

--- I attach a minute Michael Jay has put to Jack Straw on civil service secondees for ORHA. This is important and we will respond. But we will need the right collective decisions quickly if this project is to under way. This issue could be raised at tomorrow morning's meeting (which I am unable to attend).

2. ORHA wants UK help in a number of civil administration areas they have identified. DfID are also looking to see what we should do in this area. ORHA will be up and running by the first week of May. We want to be able to match their timing. We will start trawling for secondees straight after Easter.

3. There are two problems: one in Iraq and one here. In Iraq, it is not clear that ORHA has got it right in identifying what's needed, and nor is ORHA's view of its remit necessarily one we will share. DfID's own work will help, and we are applying the lessons of Kosovo. But we must expect to modify what we do and who we provide as the situation unfolds. We can do that. Whatever happens, a robust high-level dialogue with ORHA, building on collective Whitehall experience and legal advice, will help this process. So far, so good.

4. At home, we need a clear policy and related resourcing decisions. We will have a MOU with the US on ORHA. Beyond that, we need to decide on the scale, and the precise roles which UK staff will be asked to play. We also need underlying agreement as to the financing of this activity.

5. The next meeting of the Ministerial Group on Iraq is on 24 April. This provides an opportunity to get decisions on these issues. Meanwhile, we need to get the process of identifying posts and secondees started. Your meeting tomorrow should take note of the preparatory work we have underway:

- i. we will receive ORHA initial job descriptions over the weekend;
- ii. DfID's initial survey of the situation in Iraq will report, significantly improving our understanding;

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- iii. the Cabinet Office will trawl departments on Tuesday, on the basis that departments would meet the salary costs, and in-country costs would be met centrally, using the funds provided to DfID for Iraq. The Cabinet Office is also identifying key individuals who may have relevant experience and be available.
6. Funding is important. We need a collective decision that the funds made available to DfID from the reserve may be used to support activity within the ORHA structure, subject to HMG retaining control over where our secondees work, and the activities they carry out.
7. I am copying this to Michael Jay, Suma Chakrabarti and to Desmond Bowen.



ANDREW TURNBULL
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