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From:
Sent: 14 April 2003 11:19
To: 'acpo.international.affairs@hampshire.pnn.police.uk'
Cc: @acpo.pnn.police.uk'
Subject: Potential police involvement in Iraq

For urgent attention of Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan on return (on Tuesday 15 April)

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you urgently on your return to work, but in the meantime here is a precis of some developments in your absence.

Last Thursday (10 April) following a Cabinet meeting, the Home Secretary said that he wanted to be in a position to offer/or react very quickly to a request for assistance in re-establishing policing in Iraq. (This was no doubt in part prompted by widespread coverage of lawlessness and looting, first in Basra and then in Baghdad). He said he was thinking more of offering specialist advice than substantial numbers of police officers.

As you know, we would expect the FCO, who lead on the UK contribution to the policing element of international peacekeeping/crisis management operations, to initiate any request for policing assistance in Iraq. No formal approach has yet been made. But in view of the Home Secretary's keen interest, I spoke to Stephen Pattison, head of the UN Department at the FCO, to find out what their thinking was. He considers that an initial, fairly small, deployment of armed police officers to Basra would be useful in the first instance. The idea being that they would seek out credible elements of the local police force and encourage them (e.g. to act against looters etc).

To meet this requirement, the International Policing Unit was looking to recruit about 20 Ministry of Defence Police officers, after the MDP had made a short reconnaissance visit. (An MDP Superintendent and Chief Inspector went out to Iraq on Friday night for this purpose). Stephen Pattison said that he would like to see how this initiative worked out, before deciding whether to ask the HO for any assistance from other (i.e. ACPO) forces.

I reported this to the Home Secretary, (and noted that if any request for ACPO forces was made, we would rely on volunteers and the willingness of their Chief Constables to release them. I noted that ACPO was a major player, with an overarching view of whether a particular mission is one to which officers can properly be committed, taking into account the risk assessment of the situation).

However, the Home Secretary was disappointed with this response and said that he was very keen to make his own contribution (and has said so to the Prime Minister). He asked us to explore further urgently. At this point, I tried to contact you in Florida, but was unsuccessful. In the circumstances, Stephen Rimmer, Director of Policing, spoke to Chris Fox. Chris Fox said he would of course wish to support a national effort, although he noted there were issues of environment, safety and training to consider. Careful scoping would be needed and ACPO would need "a clear FCO steer".

Stephen Rimmer reported back to the Home Secretary's office and the upshot was that we were tasked with asking ACPO to name a liaison officer - either a suitably experienced person of ACPO rank or a recently retired officer - who would set the ball rolling in terms of talking to the FCO, the HO etc about how to find out what the real needs are in terms of a civilian policing requirement for Iraq. This was all a bit difficult in your absence of course, but I was asked to contact ACPO's Director of Policy. I did so on Friday (11 April) - he said, very reasonably, that he could not nominate an ACPO liaison person by the end of the day (our original request) but would identify a suitable person early this week, after he had had the opportunity of speaking to you. In the meantime, he would act as the liaison point and would be in contact with the FCO accordingly. (We were unaware of it at the time, but [redacted] had in fact already separately been in touch with the FCO at a meeting on Thursday - but with the Iraq Planning Unit there, not the UND - to ask about possible police involvement in Iraq).

I spoke to Chris Fox on Friday afternoon to fill him in on the latest position. He emphasised that ACPO would want to be very constructive and to act quickly.

So [redacted] will be contacting you as soon as you are available, to discuss action and nomination of ACPO liaison person. I'd be very glad to be kept very closely involved.

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