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CABINET OFFICE PLEASE PASS TO NO 10

BASRA TELNO 161

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN IRAQ: PUTTING CIVILIAN POLICE FIRST

SUMMARY

1. The Coalition police training effort in southern Iraq has made progress. The results in terms of Iraqi Police Service (IPS) capability are often underplayed but the policing mission has weaknesses. Through reorganisation we can resolve some of them and put civilian police, rather than the military, in the lead of police reform. However, we need help in the form of more senior police officers, flexible security rules for their deployment, less nationalist policies on behalf of MNF contributors and more specialist trainers and equipment. We will explore the latter with the EU Fact Finding Mission in Basra from 14-16 October.

DETAIL

2. I held a meeting on 11 October with my senior police advisers, SSR representatives from MND SE and 1 Mech Brigade and DCG to discuss the future structure of the policing effort in southern Iraq. The departure of 1 Brigade provides an opportunity to put

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this on a new footing with international civilian rather than MNF leadership which is desirable both for political and resource reasons. Below we give a snapshot of the current position, a description of new structures and our needs for support to make it work.

3. Perhaps understandably, the policing effort grew up piecemeal after the end of the 2003 conflict. It comprises: senior civilian police advisers at regional and governorate level (all British except for a Dutchman in Muthanna); the regional police academy at Az Zubayr (22 UK civpol trainers); military and paramilitary police of various Coalition countries; and contracted international police advisers (42 rising to over 50 funded by the UK and 20 funded by CPATT working as trainers and mentors at sub-governorate level). The regular military have made the largest input, including with logistics, escorting and training, but have now reached the limit of their professional competence.

4. The Coalition police reform effort in southern Iraq has consistently suffered from a lack of overall strategy. This was partly due to failings in the CPA but also continuing problems in the Iraqi MOI. In the absence of a more formal strategy, the Consulate will pursue three objectives: the creation of IPS capacity to dominate the street; a functioning IPS criminal investigation capacity; and the establishment of IPS legitimacy through building its links to local government, the legal system and civil society. In doing so, we must not over aspire. Our end state should be a police force of good Middle Eastern standard. We are operating from a low base; half the 25,000 police in southern Iraq are functionally illiterate. There are problems of corruption and infiltration, including by Sadrist sympathisers. Movement in some areas will be slow.

5. However, we should not underplay what has been achieved so far. Progress has been made in meeting all three objectives. The IPS in Basra Governorate are the most advanced, not only in the south but possibly in all Iraq. IPS in Maysan have seen successes but training has been held back by poor security. The Dutch have done well in Muthanna but the Italians have made less headway in Dhi Qhar. Both have been hampered by institutional divisions between military and military police.

6. On our first objective, the police's presence on the streets has improved with new uniforms and vehicles. Tactical Support Units (TSUs) and Permanent Joint Operations Centres have been established in all four governorates. The most advanced TSU, 400-strong, is in Basra and is a capable and well-regarded force. 1800 other IPS in Basra have been riot trained. Our police advisers assess the IPS in Basra capable of restoring public order in all situations where firearms are not used. But they lack the equipment necessary to take on militia or heavily armed local tribes with confidence. With some exceptions at middle rank, leadership and management remains poor. There has been a lack of will to expose the IPS to risk, particularly where it could be seen as acting on behalf of the MNF against other Iraqis, although recent fighting with the criminal Garamsha tribe (TUR) may be changing attitudes in Basra.

7. Criminal investigation is rudimentary with the IPS only just beginning to learn modern methods. But investigations and

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intelligence have been reorganised; some IPS can undertake basic detection, helped by some physical but no technical surveillance capability. Limited forensic retrieval capability is just beginning to develop in Basra, however this is of limited value without a proper regional forensic laboratory or appropriate data bases. (There has been no forensic capability to investigate eg the rocket attacks on this Consulate or the kidnap of a British journalist.) As for links to the community, security committees encompassing IPS, other security forces and political leaderships, as well as separate public oversight committees, are in place in all four governorates, if disabled in Maysan for political reasons. Separate progress has been made in Basra in forging links between the judiciary and IPS and the IPS and the community but not elsewhere.

8. There are, however, problems with the current policing organisation: a lack of direction from Baghdad; limited co-ordination for structural reasons between MND SE and brigade level; and between civilian police advisers and MND SE/Brigade; a lack of uniform training standards and courses across MND SE based on IPS requirements; duplication and wasted effort, particularly of paramilitary police; gaps in specialist training; and finally a lack of senior civilian police officers. The latter is in part a product of very generous UK police leave arrangements but also of a failure to furnish successors when officers leave post. This results in frequent gaps in coverage and continuity.

9. A number of these problems can be rectified locally. Consistent with priorities identified by Bob Davies, the new Senior UK Police Adviser in Baghdad, the senior police adviser in the south will now work more actively as the connection to policing policy in the capital. He will also spend more time at MND SE in order to provide high level policing advice as required. We will establish a police liaison cell working both to MND SE and to the UK Brigade and other Brigades at Basra Airport to improve civilian police-military co-ordination, initially by relocating the senior UK police mentor from Dhi Qhar. We will encourage the Dutch police and particularly the 300 Italian Carabinieri to take a more active role, including by providing a replacement senior police mentor in Dhi Qhar. Partly Czech and returning Danish police trainers need to be properly integrated into either the regional academy or the brigade level. Training will also move more from short remedial courses that have little impact into higher value long courses and specialist training. More IPAs will be deployed to assist training and to expand the mentoring programme. Finally we will do more to expand the capacity of the PJOCs.

10. However, there are a number of areas where we will need additional support. We need four additional senior UK police officers fully to man the police liaison cell, to fill the vacant post of crime advisor and to provide continuity. We also need prompt identification of successors for existing officers: our programme will collapse at the end of December if successors are not found for 4 slots. This will require additional funding, and Ministers to press UK forces to release senior police officers to meet a national priority. Subject to proper risk assessments, these senior police officers should be allowed to move more freely on the ground, including use of military vehicles where appropriate. Excessively rigid security rules prevent them from providing support and advice to Iraqi counterparts in crises when

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most needed. London should lobby MNF capitals for a more rational and less nationalist policy on use of paramilitary police resources. We also require a senior training co-ordinator, which could ideally be filled by another EU country, and more specialist trainers and specialist crime investigation equipment, including for a forensic science laboratory and appropriate databases. We will pursue these elements with the EU Fact Finding Mission which visits Basra on 14-16 October; this must be a multinational and not British flagged effort. Finally, we require more equipment, heavy machine guns, armoured vehicles and body armour, for special police units. I understand funding for some of this has been found in Whitehall. Supply, with sufficient regard to maintenance, should be soonest.

11. The establishment of effective Iraqi security forces, particularly of police, has correctly been identified as the best means to provide the security necessary for political and economic progress and stability as well as being the MNF exit strategy. We cannot achieve this without the additional resources and actions identified above.

12. Contact: Tom Dodd on Firecrest.

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