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From:

Date: 14 March 2005

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Reference: XQG/Baghdad/Baghdad Post File

Dominic Asquith

#### **SSU VISIT TO IRAQ**

1. (Senior Overseas Security Adviser) and I visited Basra and Baghdad last week. detailed report will issue shortly but you may welcome an overview.
2. Security arrangements at both Posts are first class. The Overseas Security Managers are well on top of their jobs and strongly supported by the Heads of Post and DHMs. They have established good working relationships with key security interlocutors and have daily meetings with, e.g. the US Embassy Regional Security teams and the British Forces Intelligence Units, to ensure they are aware of the threat level and current terrorist activity. inspected the physical security arrangements at Posts: these are in line with his earlier recommendations and are of a high standard. The Baghdad and Basra Post Security Committees meet regularly. The OSMs have developed excellent induction briefings for new arrivals. I sensed that all staff have confidence in the security arrangements which enables them to work with a reasonably comfortable feeling in a very hostile environment.
3. There are two key issues. Firstly, over 70% of IEDs( Improvised Explosive Devices) are denoted by remote control. Terrorists usually place IEDs on roads and target MNF vehicles or expatriate conveys including our own armoured Embassy and Consulate General vehicles. In a recent incident in Basra, one of our armoured vehicles was hit by what was probably a remote controlled IED. Of the four occupants, only the driver received a leg injury. Neither Baghdad nor Basra have sufficient suites of ECM (Electronic Counter

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381

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Measures), which prevent the remote controls denoting IEDs. has already ordered additional suites but more are required. We will follow up with this point with Emie.

4. Secondly, at the end of last year, we assessed the 14 kilometre Baghdad International Airport Road (BIAP) as being too dangerous to use. At that time, US forces only lightly patrolled the road and, as a consequence, a large number of IED incidents occurred on a daily basis along the route. Since the beginning of this year, US forces have substantially reinforced the patrolling of this route. Of the 65 terrorist incidents, which occur everyday in and around Baghdad, only very few happen on the BIAP. Tim Torlot will let you have further details but, provided the number of incidents along BIAP continue to remain low over the next four to six weeks, Post might be able to re-assess whether this route can be used again.

5. I should like to add that while we were in Iraq, we met the FCO Services team who are installing CCTV systems at Basra and Baghdad. It rained heavily in Iraq for much our stay and conditions in both compounds were awful. To their great credit, the conditions did not deter the team. Despite the mud and rain and working waist high in water, the team got on with its work. It was impressive stuff.

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