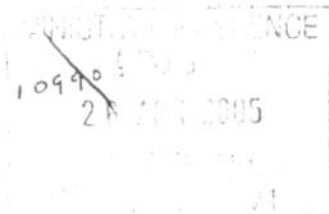


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Personnel Director

Main Building

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D/Personnel Dir/6/1/7 (225/05)

25 April 2005

Deborah Loudon

Copy to:

Will Jessett
Martin Howard

VISIT TO IRAQ

1. I had a very interesting and useful visit to Iraq last week. I saw almost all the civilians in theatre, including those in Baghdad. They are in good heart, doing important work in difficult conditions and much appreciated by their military colleagues. I made a point of repeating the same message of appreciation in PUS' name.
2. There were a few grumbles but these were largely about traditional subjects and pretty minor (e.g. the perceived small differential between the allowance for Bosnia and that for Iraq). I do not think that anyone I spoke to regretted deploying and many were talking about willingness to do a second tour and/or commenting that slightly long tours would be more effective (although that is much more difficult to sell to people – and partners and families – before deployment.) The visit did, however, throw up a number of practical and HR issues for us to think about in conjunction with PJHQ.

Tour lengths and volunteers

3. I have already touched on this. There might be advantages in offering back to back tours (with a reasonable break in between) for those who are interested, particularly for jobs where continuity, local knowledge is at a premium. This might also slightly reduce the HR burden to the extent that it reduces the number of volunteers we need to find and thus the consequential admin. It might also help with planning back-filling and posting on return. I would, however, be reluctant to do this Baghdad posts at present given the greater dangers and restrictions. We might also think about sending people out for short spells to help cover R & R breaks or to do specific projects. PJHQ are already doing this a bit from their home team. I recognise that there is a danger that this may not be practical for many posts

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because of the learning curve but it is worth looking at. It would be a good way of "blooding" people on operations and might whet the appetite volunteer for a full tour in Iraq or elsewhere later. In general, I think we should try to adopt a slightly more "mix and match" approach about tour patterns, taking account both of the individual's circumstances/desires and the nature of the post. I think we also need to make more active use of operational veterans to sell the prospect of a deployed tour to potential volunteers – their enthusiasm is catching and they are well placed to supply answers about both the real and imaginary concerns people may have about what is involved.

Pre- and post-tour briefing

4. Dstl and DIS (and perhaps Fire Service) people do not seem to be getting the very good pre-deployment pack provided by PJHQ and more generally appear to be relying on such support as they can get from their own HR staffs. We need to connect them into the PJHQ service and the DGCP focal point.

5. The Chilwell course does not seem to be working. Apart from the cultural brief, hardly a good word was said about it. To be fair, it was not designed for civil servants. As a result of my discussions with our Ambassador, I think the solution might be to join in with the FCO who have their own preparatory course. The Ambassador and I both thought that this could be mutually beneficial. The Ambassador was also interested in our arrangements for debriefing – which at present it seems that the FCO do not do. I suspect that we need to be a bit more systematic here, too. Debriefing is therapeutic as well as potentially informative – and may also help to identify any individuals with aftercare needs. I am not sure whether this would cost any more than Chilwell but even if it is a bit more expensive, it seems a good investment and can presumably be charged separately as a TELIC cost.

2m/ke 6. Although it is not an HR issue, I hope PJHQ will get some to look again at the requirement for pre-tour NBC training (and not just for civilians). It seems anachronistic in the current environment to put it mildly (and must cost considerable sums, given the kit that is issued).

In theatre admin

7. Some people seemed to be having difficulty in getting pay slips to theatre, although most people seemed to be getting them via their previous branch with a slight delay. We ought to run the rule over this but I doubt if there is any foolproof system and most people seemed to think that relying on the previous branch was the least error prone approach.

8. Unsurprisingly, people feel cut off from information about what is going on back in the MOD. Paperclips and Focus were particularly mentioned although I suspect that people are not actually missing out on much real news, but they are very conscious that a lot is due to change (and jobs due to disappear) over the next few years. Talking to Will Jessett and Ian Wallace in theatre, it might be worth seeing whether we can do something to improve the flow of information. If we can ensure we can get material to theatre (probably via PJHQ) in e-form promptly, we

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can leave them to find the best way of disseminating in Iraq. I wonder if a monthly one page digest of Personnel News might be worth thinking about.

9. A particular issue was information about posts, especially JOBs – and the supply of the JOB application forms (although I said that anybody in Iraq who could not get a JOB form would have my full backing if they simply applied by letter, explaining their circumstances). Funnily enough, although many people raised the question whether there would be a job for them on return, in almost all cases this did not seem anything more than a very slight worry. I said that almost all cases where there had been a significant delay in placing someone had been due to special personal circumstances e.g. geographic preference and that we recognised that we needed to support those who had volunteered to deploy on operations when they returned and that this would continue under the HR system.

RICHARD HATFIELD

Agreed and sent in his absence

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