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25 July 2003

Dear Andrew,

IRAQ: UK SUPPORT FOR RECONSTRUCTION

1. Much has happened since I wrote to you on 22 April setting out the need for volunteers to help in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq, supporting what was then the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) and subsequently became the Coalition Provisional Administration (CPA). I want to take the opportunity before the summer break to give an update on the collective support we have been able to provide, thank you and Permanent Secretary colleagues for making good staff available and outline our thinking on next steps.
2. We received a very strong response from across the public service to the initial call for volunteers. I am very grateful to departments for allowing their staff to come forward and making them available. In all we have been able to train and deploy a total of over 100 civilian staff from sixteen different branches of government – an exercise which I believe has no modern precedent. We now have 65 UK public servants working in the CPA Headquarters in Baghdad, and nearly 30 in the CPA South East Office in Basra, where the Coalition reconstruction effort is closely aligned with that of UK military forces. Small numbers are also working in the CPA regional offices in central and northern Iraq.
3. Despite some unfavourable headlines, the CPA has made solid progress since the arrival of Paul Bremer as Coalition Provisional Administrator in May. The key Ministries have been re-established, public employees – including over 30,000 policemen – have returned to work, and the new Governing Council has begun to develop a credible Iraqi-led political process. UK secondees have contributed to the work of the CPA in areas as

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varied as the reconstruction of the health system in Baghdad and Basra, the resurrection of the National Museum in Baghdad, the introduction of a modern telecommunications structure, the development of trade and economic policy and the re-establishment of policing, prison and justice systems.

4. In all this, the UK contingent have distinguished themselves by their energetic, flexible and practical approach, and their ability to work effectively in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. They have also had to cope with constant change within the CPA as the organisation has adjusted to take account of the magnitude of the post-war reconstruction task. Overall, it has been a fine performance, and one which has been appreciated both by the US Administration and in No 10.

Next steps

5. We are now looking at how we build on this successful first stage. Ministers have agreed that we should maintain approximately the current level of overall commitment. They have also decided that as the CPA matures we should focus our efforts in Baghdad on Security Sector Reform, the economic ministries and the oil sector, all of which are vital to achieving the Prime Minister's vision of a democratic and peaceful Iraq. We will also go on providing key enablers to the CPA at the centre (especially in the legal and press offices). Outside Baghdad, we are taking a stronger lead in the CPA South East in Basra (and are about to send Hilary Synnott, late High Commissioner in Islamabad as Head of the regional office). We will also be leading four of the Governorate Teams (GTs) which from September will extend the work of the CPA to the eighteen provinces of Iraq.
6. To manage this effort we have established a liaison office working to our Special Representative in Baghdad (now John Sawers, Jeremy Greenstock from September). This reports in to a new CPA Operations Team within cross-Governmental Iraq Policy Unit based in the FCO. Operations Team is led by _____, supported by _____, and _____. These arrangements should allow us to put our secondments on a focussed and sustainable basis, and provide secondees with the appropriate support for service in what will remain a difficult and unpredictable environment. In doing so, we are ensuring we debrief the first group of secondees as they return to ensure we learn the right lessons from their experiences on the ground.
7. The reconstruction of Iraq will remain a high national priority in the medium term. We will continue to need to provide good human resources if the CPA is to succeed. As reconstruction proceeds we expect more of this requirement to be met with staff engaged under contract from outside

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HMG. But we will continue to have a need to second staff with specialist skills from our own public service. The new machinery in Baghdad and the IPU will enable us to match requirements and resources more exactly. I am grateful to home departments for bearing the salary costs for seconded officials and sympathise with the pressures this has put on your own resources: we will continue to meet additional costs from funds provided centrally.

8. Finally, I should say a word about security, which has become a major concern, especially in Baghdad, as attacks on Coalition forces have increased. I addressed this point in my letter of 10 July to . We are now implementing the new security arrangements recommended by the joint FCO/DFID security advisory team. The safety of our people and fulfilment of our duty of care towards them will remain of prime importance.
9. I am copying this to Wednesday morning colleagues.

Yours ever,

Michael

Michael Jay

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