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From: MED
Date: 17 February 2003

cc: Peter Ricketts
Edward Oakden
Dominick Chilcott
Charles Gray
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NC/IW/GB - IPU

To: William Ehrman

**SUBJECT: IRAQ: GENERAL PIGGOTT'S MEETING: SECTORISATION
AND UN INVOLVEMENT**

1. General Piggott's meeting tomorrow will, I understand, consider "Day After" issues, including humanitarian issues and sectorisation. By agreement with General Piggott's office, you, Dominick Chilcott, Charles Gray and I will attend (Satellite DCMS, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue - those of us without MOD passes should be there at 1225).
2. I have no particular additional material on humanitarian issues. I attach the briefing we gave the Secretary of State for a pre-Cabinet discussion last week.
3. The attached MOD draft submission covers both sectorisation and, to some extent, UN authorisation. I am not sure how much of this Gen Piggott's meeting will cover, but attach both a paper on sectorisation (by the Iraq Planning Unit, with input - so far - from UND and Legal Advisers), and draft advice for Number 10 on the UN role (which has to be with Number 10 by 1200 tomorrow, Tuesday). MOD have already commented, and I await DFID and HMT input.

4. I think key objectives for Gen Piggott's meeting are to agree that:
- We shall need express international authorisation of any coalition occupation of Iraq (ie a "third" Security Council resolution)
 - We shall need an early move from a coalition military occupation to a UN interim administration: we need to make clear to the US that we shall not be prepared to stay at all long (60 days?) under a US / coalition administration. If there is an early move to a UN interim administration, we should be prepared to be "lead nation" for a sector. It would be useful to discuss what this might mean in practice. A lead on security and willingness to take a lead role in UN discussions?

(Note: There is a slight difference here between our draft advice to Number 10 and the MOD draft letter from Mr Hoon to the PM. We say we should take the lead on security in a sector only if there is a UN interim administration. MOD appear willing to contemplate taking on a rather greater burden in a sector so long as there is a UN-authorised coalition/US administration. I shall discuss this with MOD early tomorrow.)

- Handling: There is no reason for us to resist Hoon minuting the PM, though he might copy in the Foreign Secretary, Chancellor and ?Clare Short. Trust MOD will agree that we should send our paper on sectorisation to Number 10. (The advice on the UN role should have been sent before the meeting.)

Iraq Planning Unit

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A UK GEOGRAPHICAL SECTOR OF IRAQ?

This paper takes as given that under any military plan UK forces will secure an area of southern Iraq. In this sense, there will be a "UK sector".

The questions then are:

- how long should UK forces remain?
- should other UK civilians / administrators be in Iraq?
- what should be their task?
- which area should they be in?

Options range:

- from occupying as small an area as possible (initial plans were for around 1600 sq km around Basrah and Umm Qasr) for as short a time as possible (until we can hand over to someone else, or simply withdraw without leaving a bloodbath)
- to occupying a large area of south-eastern Iraq and administering it as occupying power for perhaps 2-3 years, until an Iraqi administration takes over.

Constraints

The longer coalition forces remain in Iraq without a UN mandate, the more debatable (and debated) the legality of an occupation will become.

We shall remain responsible under international law for the conduct of our actions in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and Hague Regulations, which could cause problems if the US have a different interpretation

Large scale forces will be committed initially. Reduction must begin by July/August, to achieve reduction to medium scale by October/November.

Financing. Military alone will cost £2.5 bn. (MOD: is this known to Treasury?) Limits to the extent to which we could use oil revenues.

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Issues

Sectorisation: pros and cons

Pros

International profile (though this could be negative)

Ability to make a real difference: exemplary administration of a sector, setting the standard for others operating elsewhere.

Control: less dependent on others (US in particular)

Cons

Exposure: the former colonial power again administering Iraq. Possible resentment, even resistance. Much would depend on the international environment.

Expense. Long-term commitment / military overstretch / drain on other human resources (NHS staff, armed policemen).

We want a united (albeit federal) Iraq. Lengthy occupation of sectors by different power would mean different systems of administration, and make a united Iraq more difficult to achieve. (? Bosnia)

Tentative conclusion

In any foreseeable circumstances, the UK has the capacity to secure and occupy for [6] months the area initially envisages: the area ("1600 square km", though we think it is in fact rather larger than that) around Basrah and Umm Qasr. Within this area we could take on a wide range of tasks.

The larger the sector, the shorter the time we could administer it.

The stronger the US hold, the less attractive would be having a sector: we shall be subject to US instructions, and less able to demonstrate exemplary administration.

We need to make clear to the US that **we are unwilling to take responsibility for a sector for more than [60 days] unless our presence is clearly and expressly authorised by the UN, and there is to be an early move to a UN transitional administration.** So we can operate as "lead nation" (ensuring security) within a UN transitional administration, but are

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not willing to take on medium-term (2 year) administration on our own, under a US occupation of Iraq which lacks UN authorisation. We should tell the US that, were we to find ourselves in that position, we would want to hand over to them [at the end of 60 days]. And they would find it extremely difficult to find anyone to share the burden.

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