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From: Nigel Casey, IPU

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cc: (see end)

Simon McDonald [agreed in draft]
PS/PUS

IRAQ: POST SECURITY ISSUES

1. The Senior Overseas Security Adviser, visited Iraq in late January to review security in Baghdad and Basra. I attach his report.
2. I chaired a meeting with Andrew Noble & Estates Group on 23 February to consider the main issues raised by his report, and the implications for our operations in Iraq.

Basra Palace

3. We agreed that the continuing rise in IDF against the Palace and other sites in the city reinforced our decision to move the Consulate to the Air Station (now known as the COB) as quickly as possible. March already looks set to be the worst month for IDF on record, and there are no realistic grounds to expect a decrease as long as we occupy the site.
4. Almost all staff have now left the Palace, and we remain on track to complete the move by the end of March. The Kroll Guard Force & KBR life support team will leave in April, to help ensure a smooth hand over of the site's perimeter security to MND(SE).
5. confirmed he was content that - for as long as the UK military remain at the Palace (on current plans, until 1 August) - the CG and other staff (eg Police Advisers) should be able to make periodic visits to conduct mission critical meetings which cannot be held at the COB.

Contingency Operating Base (COB)

6. We discussed security arrangements at the COB. The build of hardened office & accommodation is on target. We agreed on the need to get a hardened dining & recreation facility in place as quickly as possible (on current plans we will achieve this in April). In the meantime, in the absence of a practical alternative, the OSM was content for our staff to

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use military dining facilities. But we would keep this under close review in the light of developments in the IDF threat to the COB.

Warren

7. We looked at security arrangements at the PJCC ('the Warren') site, where a number of our Armour Group contracted International Police Advisers (IPAs) were based, and would remain after the closure of Basra Palace. was content with arrangements as they stood, but we agreed that we would need to keep this under close review, given our concerns about the site's viability and its Iraqi Police co-occupants.

Skylink – IPAs' accommodation

8. We also covered the issue of the accommodation at the COB of the Armour Group IPAs. Because there is insufficient space in our new facilities, the AG IPAs will continue to live in a separate compound at the COB (known as Skylink). This compound has been strengthened laterally, but has a lower standard of overhead protection than our own accommodation, which for structural reasons cannot be improved.
9. We have satisfied ourselves through Legal Advisers that this is viable in terms of our duty of care obligations, subject to a written agreement with the company, which we expect to conclude in the next few days. We will submit to the PUS on this issue shortly with a fuller explanation to seek his confirmation that he is content with this arrangement.

Movements

10. confirmed that in his judgement that the use of **helicopters** by our staff remained an acceptable risk – notwithstanding the recent downing of a number of US helicopters in Baghdad, and a recent attempt to bring down a UK helicopter in Maysan. All these attacks had all been in daylight, against helicopters engaged in operations, rather than the straightforward passenger movements used by our staff. The measures taken to mitigate the threat, especially in Basra, continued to mean that the risks to staff were kept to an acceptable level.
11. We also looked at the risks involved in **road movements in Basra**, in the light of the recent piercing of a Warrior carrying UK troops by an EFP. We noted that the UK military were working to address the vulnerability exploited in that EFP attack - though the threat was likely to continue to become more sophisticated in response. For the time

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being, conclusion, shared by the OSM in Basra, is that the use of Warriors for mission critical road moves remained an acceptable risk.

Baghdad

12. report raised a number of issues in respect of our Embassy in **Baghdad**. In discussion, we reached the following key conclusions:
- a) Security conditions have markedly deteriorated in the rest of the city. But this has not yet significantly impacted on conditions in the International Zone, where our staff do almost all their work;
 - b) The implications for Post security of the Iraqi-isation of the International Zone remain severe. It is strongly in our interests to see this process delayed for as long as possible, and we should be fully engaged in discussions in Baghdad on the IZ's future to that end. It is welcome news that the US has apparently decided to delay Iraqi-isation until at least summer 2008;
 - c) In the meantime, we need to get on promptly with the various security enhancements to the Embassy site recommended in report. Iraq Directorate fully supports Estates' submission to the Investment Committee for the additional funding required. Further work is needed on costs, planning and project management arrangements.

Erbil

13. did not visit Erbil on this trip. But Andrew Noble reminded us that SMD had agreed to the move of our Embassy Office to the Khanzad Hotel on the basis that this was a temporary solution, pending a decision on more suitable long-term premises. It was agreed that a joint SMD/Estates visit would take place in April to pursue this.
14. If the PUS would find it useful to hold a further office meeting to over these or other issues, to satisfy himself about our arrangements and plans in Iraq, we and SMD would be very happy to do so.

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