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CABINET

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY

SUB-COMMITTEE ON IRAQ

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IRAQ: MEDIUM TERM PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Note by the Secretaries

The attached memorandum by the Officials of Whitehall is circulated to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on Thursday 12 October 2006. The meeting will be chaired by the Foreign and Defence Secretaries.

Signed

M ALDRED

Cabinet Office  
10 October 2006

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IRAQ: MEDIUM TERM PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The attached paper by officials provides a detailed assessment of prospects in Iraq over the period 2007-8 and the likely implications for our military, political and economic engagement over that period. The key conclusions reached in the paper are as follows:

a. Our existing goal for Iraq defined, as

*'A democratic, stable, united and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, posing no threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations and providing effective, representative and inclusive government for all its people.'*

is unlikely to be achieved. The best outcome that is likely to be achievable would be *an Iraq which can govern and sustain itself nationally and provincially, and where sectarian and other violence is contained short of the point where it would overwhelm Iraq's institutions and precipitate chaos and/or civil war* (para 3-5).

b. The key to achieving this lies primarily in the hands of the Iraqi government. Our ability to influence their behaviour and decision-making, and thus change the situation on the ground in a sustainable way, will continue to decline (para 6).

c. Nevertheless the coalition's current strategy of direct support combined with building Iraqi capacity remains the only credible way for us to influence the outcome. Iraqi Ministerial and security force capacity and capability is the most important campaign success factor that we can influence (para 7-16).

d. Notwithstanding our best efforts, it is possible to envisage a scenario where the Iraqi government is unable or unwilling to take the necessary political security and economic steps; where Iraq's institutions (particularly the security forces) are overwhelmed and supplemented by sectarian or extremist militia groups; where Iraq threatens to fragment; and where the malign influence of Iran and Syria becomes more significant (paras 17-19).

e. We are therefore at a critical period during which we will need to reach judgements about whether the Iraqi government is able or willing to take the necessary steps to achieve a minimum level of stability and security. The outcome of the major joint security operations currently under way in Baghdad and Basra and, in particular, the ability of the

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Iraqis to assume full responsibility and sustain any success, will be crucial tests of this (paras 5 and 20).

2. Ministers will need to decide whether:

- a. they agree with the analysis in the attached paper as summarised above;
- b. they agree with keeping the existing goal but recognise that the best outcome we are likely to achieve will fall short of this;
- c. if they agree, we should plan to deliver a more realistic outcome which would continue to imply:
  - (1) continuing progressive force reductions in MND(SE) as transition to Iraqi control proceeds, to a steady state during 2007 and into 2008 of around 4,500 if we retain an in-theatre capability to re-intervene in support of the Iraqi security force, and of a size closer to 3,000 if we do not – although this would entail taking risk against agreed coalition plans.
  - (2) political engagement at broadly current levels with a significant presence in both Baghdad and Basra, security conditions permitting.
  - (3) reconstruction and development continuing, but increasingly in support of multi-national institutions and building central governance capacity.
- d. in view of the risk that the Iraqi government may prove unable or unwilling to tackle the key challenges, to invite officials to do further work on the implication of the malign scenario summarised in 1d above, particularly in respect of military engagement.
- e. to invite officials to draw up appropriate strategies to deal with both benign and malign scenarios.
- f. we should share this thinking with the US government.

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IRAQ: MEDIUM TERM PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Paper by Officials

October 2006

Issue

1. What is now the realistic interim end-state for Iraq? What are the critical success factors, how achievable are they and how can we influence them? What are the implications for UK military and other engagement in Iraq?

Recommendations

2. Ministers should:

- a. note that Iraq has reached a critical juncture. We had hoped that by now the new Iraqi Government would have generated greater political momentum, reduced violence, and started to deliver improvements in public services. Instead violence has risen to its highest ever level; Maliki's National Reconciliation initiative has yet to make real headway; and public services remain in a parlous state. Coalition and Iraqi forces are engaged in a critical battle to restore security in Baghdad and, although not on the same magnitude, we face a similar challenge in Basra;
- b. note that the existing Ministerially endorsed end-state, as set out in para 3, is now likely to be the best case outcome, and is unlikely to be achievable in full. Nevertheless, provided the Iraqi government proves willing and able to play its part in tackling the key political, security and economic challenges, our judgement is that the current broad coalition strategy of direct support combined with building Iraqi capacity remains the only credible way of at least going some way towards achieving this end state in the shape of an Iraq which can govern itself and where violence is contained short of the point at which it would overwhelm Iraqi institutions.
- c. accordingly agree that, whilst we should continue the process of withdrawing forces as we progressively handover security responsibility to the Iraqi Government, we should (assuming continued Iraqi Government consent) plan on a continuing UK military commitment focussed on SE Iraq for 2007 and at least part of 2008. Under current agreed coalition plans this would involve a substantial combat force (unlikely to be less than 4500 strong) capable of re-intervention if required by the Iraqi Government, and able to carry out a number of tasks on a routine basis. If at some point in 2007 or 2008 we were to decide not to retain an in-theatre capability to allow us to re-intervene (on the assumption that the Iraqi government would be unlikely to request it) and fulfil other agreed tasks, force levels could be reduced further to closer to 3,000. It should be noted, however, that these tasks are part of the UK's agreed commitment to the MNF-I, and taking risk on any one of them could have serious ramifications for our relations with the US. Political engagement would continue broadly as now with a significant UK presence in Baghdad and

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Basra, security conditions permitting. Reconstruction and development engagement would increasingly be in support of multinational institutions and building central governance capacity.

d. note that should the Iraqi government prove unable, or unwilling, to tackle the key challenges, our strategy will fail to deliver its objectives. In such circumstances there will be little further we can realistically hope to achieve by maintaining UK forces in their present configuration and we would be faced with an unpalatable set of options, ranging from significantly increasing our military commitment to accelerated withdrawal.

e. agree that we should continue to plan on the basis of the scenario set out in 2b and c, but do further work on the implications of the scenario summarised in 2d, sharing our plans, assessments and concerns with US interlocutors at all levels.

### Background

3. Our existing goal, endorsed by Ministers, is to help create:

*'A democratic, stable, united and law-abiding Iraq, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, posing no threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations and providing effective, representative and inclusive government for all its people.'*

**This now represents the absolute best-case scenario and is unlikely to be achievable in full.** Following last December's elections, and after a protracted period of political wrangling, Iraq has had a Government of National Unity, elected under a permanent constitution, for five months. We had hoped that this new Government would by now have begun to transform Iraqi politics: entrenching a culture of genuine power-sharing; bringing in those hitherto outside the political process; undercutting the insurgency; and isolating Al Qaeda and other rejectionists. We had hoped that as a consequence of this positive political dynamic, and the gradual strengthening of the Iraqi security forces, we would have seen levels of violence decreasing across Iraq. And we had hoped to have seen greater progress in delivering improved basic services to the Iraqi people.

4. Instead we have seen violence rising, to an unprecedented level. Since the bombing of the Al Askari mosque in Samarra in February, the weekly tally of attacks has more than doubled. The violence remains concentrated in Baghdad and the surrounding provinces of Anbar, Diyala and Salah-ad-Din. The anti-Government and anti-Coalition insurgency remains strong despite successful operations against Al-Qaeda. Sectarian violence has also grown dramatically, in a spiral of retaliatory attacks which threaten to overwhelm the state's ability to provide a basic level of security to ordinary Iraqis.

5. The Coalition and Iraqi security forces have mounted a major operation in Baghdad in the last two months to try to arrest this cycle of violence. This is widely seen as a defining struggle in the wider Iraq effort. We have just embarked on a similarly wide-ranging effort to improve security in Basra. In the six months ahead the success or failure of these operations, coupled with the progress Iraq's politicians make on key issues (the

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future of the Oil industry; Federalism; the Constitutional Review; the National Reconciliation Plan) will largely determine whether our goals in Iraq can or cannot be achieved. In this period, our ability to influence Iraqi decision-making will continue to decline - as we always expected following the installation of a fully legitimate, permanent Iraqi Government. Against all this background the best we can probably hope for is *an Iraq which can govern itself nationally and provincially and where sectarian and other violence is contained short of the point where it would overwhelm Iraqi institutions and generate chaos and potentially civil war.*

6. Influencing the Outcome. The emerging situation in Iraq requires a shift in expectation rather than a bold adjustment to coalition strategy. While achieving an acceptable end-state, in large part, depends on the Iraqis, there are critical success factors that we should aim to influence. The extent to which we achieve this will have an effect on the outcome, with implications for UK political, military and economic engagement in Iraq. The security, political and economic factors are interdependent, and must be tackled as such, both at a national and regional level. Iraqi Ministerial and security force capacity and capability is the most important shared critical campaign success factor.

### Security

7. Critical Success Factors. Development of national command and control and logistic capabilities will be key to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) achieving the capability to take over from the Multi-National Forces (MNF), with the Joint Committee for Achieving Iraqi Self-Reliance (JCAISR) ultimately determining the conditions for MNF withdrawal. As the centre of political power, stabilisation of Baghdad is critically important; the Government of Iraq must soon take on the responsibility for building on the progress of the largely US-led Baghdad Security Plan. On current planning assumptions, this could be the last occasion on which the US will have the capacity to mass military force in Iraq in this way. The timing and execution of the multi-agency Basra Security Plan needs to be carefully synchronised with events in Baghdad if it is to achieve its aim of eroding the influence of the Shia militias and improving the security in Basra. It will include focused reconstruction effort, Iraqi Police training and potentially political outreach to engage certain armed groups with the aim of creating the conditions that will enable the ISF to assume full security responsibility. More generally, the threat posed by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) must also be contained if the ISF are successfully to maintain domestic stability, allowing the process of transition to progress. Iraqi willingness to allow coalition forces to pursue security objectives effectively is absolutely critical. PM Maliki has already curtailed important aspects of the Basra and Baghdad security plans. In the case of the Basra Security Plan (the military elements of which are known as Op SALAMANCA), whilst we still judge this is worthwhile undertaking, it is unlikely to deliver the decisive breakthrough in Basra we are seeking. If this trend continues it may, ultimately, call into question the value of the continued presence of coalition forces in Iraq, at least at current levels and configuration.

8. Coalition and International Strategy. US transition plans are conditions-based and the following timelines represent a current assessment. Implicit in their assumption about their future security relationship with Iraq is that Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) will exist throughout the country by the end of 2007, but that a longer overt US military commitment will continue until at least the end of 2008. Both before and after PIC, the ISF will regularly

require direct military support until they overmatch the strength of the insurgency and militia groups. In the short-term, their performance will be contingent on training and mentoring, and assistance with equipment and logistics. In the medium-term, the command and control and security governance structures will need to be effective and resilient, and in due course the ISF may need to be restructured to meet external, as well as internal security threats. The US assumption is that the UK will maintain a force in MND(SE) to guarantee security and continue some work mentoring the ISF there.

9. Implications for UK Engagement. We have an enduring national interest in a stable and secure Iraq, as part of the wider regional security situation, and our medium and long term civil and military engagement should reflect this. A move directly from a force consolidated at Basra, to a UK out-of-country posture, cannot be made without risking operational and strategic failure. In any case such a step would need to be carefully co-ordinated with the US (see paragraphs 21 and 22). A period of operational in-country monitoring and mentoring will be required before such an out-of-country posture can be adopted. Re-posturing is unlikely to be complete before mid-2007 either as a result of successful PIC or (possibly) a conclusion post SALAMANCA that no further purpose can usefully be served by staying in our current posture in Basra. We should, therefore, plan on a continuing UK military presence in the area that for 2007, and at least part of 2008, would (at least in its initial stages) include a substantial combat force – a Brigade comprising of four Battlegroups (unlikely to be less than 4500 troops). This represents the minimum military force needed to maintain freedom of military action, protect itself and, if necessary, re-intervene at the behest of the Government of Iraq. The force would also be engaged in routine duties such as: mentoring and training ISF in MND(SE); provision of security for civil political and reconstruction / capacity building activity; support to demanding ISF operations; and support to broader coalition activity, such as the protection of logistic and commercial supply routes. Further detail on the composition, tasks and requirements of this force are at Annex A. These tasks are part of the UK's agreed commitment to the MNF campaign plan, and taking risk on any one of them could have serious ramifications for our relations with the US as a result. Indeed the UK's ability to re-intervene is one of the Joint Committee for the Transfer of Security Responsibility's (JCTSR) conditions for authorisation of PIC. Notwithstanding this, if the decision were to be made that taking a degree of risk on a number of those tasks (e.g. by not retaining an in-theatre capacity to re-intervene), in order to reduce the UK's continuing commitment, was acceptable, then it might be possible to reduce force levels to closer to 3,000 (centred around two rather than four battlegroups) at some point in the second half of 2007 or 2008 (perhaps earlier).

#### Political

10. Critical Success Factors. Consolidation of Maliki's UIA-led government, which performs at least to its current level and hopefully improves its capacity and ability to deliver, is vital for medium to long term Iraqi development. The Iraqi government will increasingly need to take the lead on key decisions to tackle security and other challenges; a renewal of the existing UNSCR mandate to the end of 2007 will allow ongoing US/UK/MNF support. The Iraqi government must engage with a wide range of relevant groups and take action on key contentious issues that contribute to violence (e.g. deBaathification, detainees, militias) to make tangible progress on national reconciliation and the promotion of national unity. They also will need to manage key issues such as the

requirement to review the constitution and the debate on developing federalism in a way which minimises the negative impact on the performance of the government and national unity. These will be difficult, but are possible. The provincial elections, which perhaps will be held by mid-2007, must produce more representative and better quality provincial councils that make a more positive contribution to security and essential services. Agreement on a new Hydrocarbons Law would allow more effective management and development of the oil industry, encourage investment and promote national unity.

11. Coalition and International Strategy. Coalition partners will face increased domestic pressure in 2007 to reconsider their contributions as Iraq assumes greater security responsibility. These are likely to increase if we do not have some form of UN "cover" for any future Coalition presence in Iraq beyond 2007. If their presence cannot be maintained we should press them to participate in alternative roles, including:

- a. Reconstruction and other forms of aid identified under the International Compact for Iraq.
- b. Capacity building for Government Ministries.
- c. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

Such engagement is not guaranteed. We must also ensure that Coalition partners do not use these opportunities to undermine the international commitment to troop contributions for Iraq.

12. Implications for UK Engagement. Political engagement with Iraq and other nations is likely to remain at or near current levels during 2007/8. In practical terms this will mean:

- a. Regular visits by the Defence, Foreign and Development Secretary to Iraq.
- b. Regular Prime Ministerial contact with PM Maliki.
- c. Inward visits by key Iraqis to the UK.

We will maintain the Embassy site in Baghdad, possibly enlarging it to absorb the presence of the UK military currently accommodated at Maude House (which is to be handed over to the Iraqis in 2007). In Basra, our plan is to maintain a Consulate at the Basra Palace Compound. This assumes that Op SALAMANCA is able to reverse the consistent increase in attacks on the Compound. If not, we, including the PRT, may have to relocate to the Basra Air Station.

### Economic Development

13. Critical Success Factors. Since the end of sanctions in 2003, high oil prices have made Iraq's finances viable, but despite oil wealth, there is slow growth in the private sector and employment. Job creation and diversification should be an outcome of successful economic reform that addresses corruption and wasteful public spending, while dampening the effect of volatile oil markets. Because economic success depends on oil production and export, investment in failing oil infrastructure is fundamental to this. The



Iraqi budget should be based on a sensible fiscal framework, matched with appropriate measures to restrict inflation (which is reaching 60% per annum). Breaking the culture of state subsidies would release revenue for investment, while tackling corruption, smuggling and theft would relieve supply problems and therefore negate the black market. Tighter management of public expenditure should release Iraq's formidable oil wealth, enabling development, provided that the funds allocated are adequately invested.

14. Coalition and International Strategy. Economic success depends on the policies and actions of the Iraqi authorities, more than the backing of the international community. The Iraqi Government (IG) needs assistance with managing its economy, bringing about structural reforms, and unblocking domestic investment to improve public services. This requires a broad multilateral approach, utilising the International Compact to encourage new partners and focus assistance and expertise on the areas in which it is most needed, particularly in key ministries. Where ministries are weak and political capital in limited supply, Iraqis will need support to follow through on a small number of essential reforms rather than launching ambitious plans to change the entire country at once.

15. Implications for UK Engagement. The UK civilian reconstruction effort in Basra should be channelled as far as possible through the Basra PRT, which may need to continue work into 2008 given the ongoing and planned military effort. Departments are currently discussing how the PRT should be supported beyond [March 2007] and for how long. Increasingly DFID's programme will be directed at enabling the Government of Iraq to tackle key challenges at the centre, including reconciliation, economic management, and critical capacity deficits.

#### Regional Factors

16. Prospects in Iraq are inextricably linked to regional factors, and the role of Iran is particularly significant. We will need to monitor, and where possible contain, Iranian activities in southeast Iraq in the interests of national unity. Iran may risk increased instability to secure an early withdrawal of coalition troops from Iraq, and their tolerance to the resultant instability may be greater than previously thought. This will need to be managed in the context of our wider policy for Iran, which may in turn differ from the US approach and remains a key risk to our strategy. Events in Lebanon will continue to, at least in part, shape Iraqi perceptions of the coalition and increasingly the UN, affecting the Iraqi appetite for multilateral engagement at home. Likewise, the progress of the Middle East Peace Process will colour Iraqi relations with the international community, as is the case in other Arab States. Regional stability will depend on developments in Iraq, and so the Gulf States should be encouraged to contribute to a successful outcome through the International Compact, encouraging Iraqi reconciliation and political settlements of key constitutional questions (federalism, etc).

#### Options if the Situation Deteriorates

17. There are a number of factors that could lead to a complete breakdown of security or full scale civil war. If the ISF does not become gradually more effective, violence (particularly sectarian) will escalate further. In this environment, militias would dominate as civil society fractured along ethno-sectarian lines. AQI and other external groups would exploit this lawlessness to pursue their own objectives in Iraq. The malign influence of Iran

and Syria would be expected to increase. Other regional States ( ) remain nervous about the situation in Iraq and some have been formulating national contingency plans should the situation deteriorate further. In these circumstances the military options open to the coalition would be:

- a. To increase massively the military presence in Iraq with the aim of restoring order and governance. This looks to be virtually unachievable in terms of the availability of military resource and likely political and public opposition.
- b. Accelerate the process of withdrawal, given the probability that existing force levels could do little or nothing to influence events and would, in effect, become a target for violence. But this would amount to strategic failure and would have very significant political and security fall out.
- c. Retain force levels broadly as they are, with the associated risks to UK personnel, attempting perhaps to curtail the worst of the violence and counter the AQ-I threat in the hope that internal and external political and other pressures can re-establish Iraqi governance and institutions.

None of these look palatable, but further work should be done to explore the implications in more detail.

18. Key political indicators of a deteriorating situation would include:

- a. PM Maliki unable to make real headway with his Reconciliation Initiative and sectarian divisions harden.
- b. Political parties fail to reach agreement on key issues (a new Hydrocarbons Law, tackling Militias, handling Federalism debate and Constitutional Review, de-Ba'athification).
- c. Key groups leave the Government.
- d. Kurds, Shias press ahead with policies likely to lead towards de facto partition.

19. Economic reform could be expected to stall in a worsening situation. Without essential investment in the sector, oil production and export will decline as infrastructure falters or falls victim to sabotage. Subsidies would continue to dominate Government spending, whilst fluctuating supplies would fuel criminality and racketeering. IMF targets would not be met as defence expenditure outstrips economic growth, and burgeoning unemployment drives the talented out of Iraq, while driving many others towards the material and physical security offered by the militias. It is hard to see how any UK programme of development or reconstruction support could continue effectively in such circumstances.

What next?

20. A deteriorating situation along the lines set out in paragraph 17-19 is not inevitable. The broad coalition strategy of providing direct security support where necessary, while building Iraqi capacity remains sound in principle and can work provided the Iraqi government and institutions are able, and willing, to play their part. For now, therefore, we should continue with our broad policy against the aim of achieving as much as possible of the end state set out in paragraph 3, while carrying out the more detailed work on a malign scenario as set out in paragraphs 17-19. But the next 6 months are crucial. Key things we will need to assess over that period include:

- a. The willingness and ability of the Maliki government to pursue a genuinely inclusive national political and economic programme.
- b. The sustainability and Iraqi ownership of any successes achieved in the Baghdad and Basra security plans.
- c. The extent to which malign Iranian or Syrian influence can be contained.

Consultation with US

21. US policy for longer-term engagement in Iraq is developing and foresees a Department of Defence-led multinational assistance mission, the Office for Security Cooperation - Iraq (OSC-I), now due to be established by 2008 – later than originally envisaged (mid-2007) and evolving from the existing coalition ISF equipping, training and mentoring efforts run by the Multinational Security Transition Command (MNSTC-I). Consultation is already underway in Baghdad and Washington, and we should continue to share our thinking on this with US political and military interlocutors as part of a comprehensive handling strategy. The US remains concerned about UK intentions in Iraq and we should start the process of engagement on details of our plans for 2007/08 as soon as possible, both in Baghdad and Washington. If the decision were to be made that taking a degree of risk on a number of those tasks (e.g. by not retaining an in-theatre capacity to re-intervene), in order to reduce the UK's continuing commitment, we will need to present our plans carefully to partners, especially the US, as it will deviate from the UK's agreed commitment to the MNF campaign plan.

22. US plans are conditions based and the following timelines represent a current assessment and assume that the Iraqi Government (at least MOD and MOI) and ISF will be capable and effective by 2008 and that they will be in a position for a normalised relationship by 2009, or soon thereafter. President Bush, when talking about current US force levels, has said that continuing US support to Iraq is conditional on the Iraqi Government taking necessary tough decisions and General Abizaid has made it clear to his staff that military support should not be allowed to result in Iraqi dependency on the US for their security to continue indefinitely. US future strategy for Iraq is being developed on this basis: we should keep abreast of this work and alert to any changes in approach which will have implications for UK plans, recognising that US policy will be coloured by domestic politics such as Mid-term and Presidential elections approach. The Iranian question will increasingly colour their policy too.

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Handling

23. Public and other handling of these issues will need to be taken in stages. The first priority will be to devise a handling strategy attuned to public and media expectations in accordance with our assessment of our ability to achieve the end-state in paragraph 3. Officials could be invited to draw up such a strategy. The medium-term task in the benign scenario is to convince all audiences that progress is being made. The current Iraq information strategy is based on this broad assumption. Ministers and officials would need to re-visit this and devise a new strategy if it appeared that the malign scenario looked like becoming a reality.

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## DETAIL ON OPERATIONAL OVERWATCH MILITARY REQUIREMENTS

1. Operational Overwatch. The term 'operational overwatch' refers to the military posture post-PIC in which MNF no longer have responsibility for security, but provide a supporting role, from a consolidated base at Basra, to the ISF and are able to assist and re-intervene if necessary at the behest of the Gol. Because any contingency would need to be fulfilled rapidly to ensure useful support to the ISF during their initial vulnerable period of provincial lead, operational overwatch must be carried out from within Iraq.
2. Tasks. After PIC has been achieved across MND(SE) provinces, UK forces would primarily be engaged in the following activities: mentoring and training ISF; force protection, maintenance of situational awareness, provision of security for civilian capacity building activity through the provisional reconstruction team; support to demanding ISF operations; and support to broader coalition activity, such as the protection of logistic and commercial supply routes in southern Iraq. Strategically, the force would also contribute to the protection of Iraqi territorial sovereignty from external aggression. The role would gradually diminish over time to emphasise self-reliance and reduce dependency.
3. Force Package. This engagement would include a substantial combat force consisting of a battle group (approximately 700 troops) to fulfil 'overwatch' tasks for each of the Eastern, Western and City areas of the MND(SE) Area of Operations (AO). In addition to these overwatch tasks, there would still be a requirement to maintain a Rear Operations Battle Group to ensure freedom of movement throughout the AO and a Reserve Battle Group to deal with contingencies, although these may be able to be achieved more economically. This liability translates into a requirement for four UK battle groups as an enduring commitment, assuming the Australians continue to provide a battle group to overwatch Muthanna and Dhi Qar Provinces. In addition to these combat forces, further personnel would be required to provide the logistic, life support and air transport requirements of the force. A small force taken from the Rear Operations Battle Group will also be required to provide force protection in Baghdad.
4. Force Levels. Such a force is unlikely to be less than 4500 strong and will ensure the ability to re-intervene, at the behest of the Iraqi Government in support of the ISF, if required.

A more precise figure cannot be posited at this stage, as the situation within the MND(SE) provinces, and the degree of support that the ISF would require (based on their capacity) is unknown, but will become clearer nearer the time. However, militarily it does represent a realistic, minimum commitment of a brigade, which is required to maintain the level of military freedom of action commensurate with being able to assist the ISF in a meaningful way and makes our ongoing commitment to Iraq and the Coalition clear.