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From: Robert Chatterton Dickson, SecPol
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cc: PS/ PUS
Peter Ricketts
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Reference: //2003

Foreign Secretary

To: ~~Private~~ Secretary

SUBJECT: IRAQ: ORHA: SECURITY FOR UK SECONDEES

1. The Foreign Secretary may wish to be aware that the issue of security for UK secondees in ORHA is likely to arise during the Ad Hoc Ministerial meeting tomorrow.
2. The Cabinet Office steering brief says:

'DFID has postponed sending new contractors to ORHA as their security and evacuation guidance is currently inadequate to meet operational and insurance needs. An urgent DFID security assessment should provide such advice and enable the contractors to leave for Iraq next week. The advice will be shared with other departments. Security arrangements for our staff in ORHA have been discussed with ORHA itself and senior UK officials therein. UK secondees have been given security briefings, protective equipment and training in its use'.

3. I submit a brief.

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IRAQ: AD HOC MINISTERIAL GROUP, 15 MAY

ORHA SECONDEES: SECURITY

Points to make

- Grateful for good response to call for volunteers from across the public service to contribute to reconstruction of Iraq. Total of 42 now serving with ORHA, with more to follow;
- Security a key concern. We have discussed extensively with senior UK representatives in Baghdad, including General Tim Cross and John Sawers, and seen copies of local security arrangements;
- US military are committed to providing ORHA's overall security and evacuation arrangements. Extensive secure area around ORHA's living and working accommodation and established procedures for movement around Baghdad to protect against random violence and criminality;
- ORHA does not yet have detailed evacuation plan. But advice to us from theatre is that the issue in Baghdad is protection rather than evacuation;
- We have accepted the judgement of those on the ground that the arrangements in place adequately provide security for our secondees;
- Pre-deployment briefing has stressed that Baghdad is an insecure environment. Security guidelines must be followed at all times. All secondees provided with protective equipment including body armour, helmets and NBC suits and associated training;
- Agree that would be useful to have more detailed contingency plans in place. Grateful to DFID for sending advisers to Baghdad. Their work could form the basis for a security plan covering all UK secondees.

Background

1. Since ORHA deployed to Kuwait we have been trying to obtain assurances from the Americans, both in theatre and in Washington, about the precise terms on which our contribution is being provided. So far, despite a good deal of pressing, we have not been successful – though there has been no suggestion from the US side that we will be asked to make any contribution beyond meeting the salary and allowances costs for embedded secondees.

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2. Security for our secondees is a key concern. We have this discussed extensively with senior UK representatives in Baghdad, including General Tim Cross and John Sawers and seen copies of local security arrangements. The US military are committed to providing ORHA's overall security and evacuation arrangements. They have established an extensive secure area around ORHA's living and working accommodation and there are set procedures for movement around Baghdad to protect against random violence and criminality. ORHA does not yet have a detailed evacuation plan, but the advice from theatre is that the key issue in Baghdad is protection rather than evacuation.
3. DFID have told us that they will require a more detailed security plan to be in place before they can fulfil the contractual obligations to staff sent to Iraq under contract by Crown Agents. They have therefore sent security advisers to Baghdad to work up a fuller plan and will not proceed with further deployments until this is available.
4. Our own judgement, including that of Security Strategy Unit, has been to accept the view of those on the ground that the US military arrangements in place adequately provide security for our secondees. The UK civilians currently in ORHA, including from the FCO, have told us that they are content with the way the US arrangements work in practice – though they are cumbersome to operate and have made the task of working with the Iraqi ministries more difficult than expected. We have therefore proceeded with the deployment of additional secondees, and the first group of 22 departed for Iraq on 14 May.

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