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*see my
comments. Also
still don't think there
are proper plans in place
esp. for media*

PRIME MINISTER

*for Iraqi intelligence
How do we get this
programmed properly?*

From: Nigel Sheinwald
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cc: Jonathan Powell
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Matthew Rycroft
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VISIT TO IRAQ

With General Rob Fry and Nick Cannon, I visited Iraq on 7-9 November. I saw Bremer, Sanchez, the nine senior members of the Governing Council, David Kay, the Governor of Basra, and British military commanders and officials.

It would be helpful to have early comments on my recommendations (starting on p4 below) to feed into eg Jack Straw's visit to Washington this week.

Policy

Bremer has adopted a **strategic plan** with clear time lines. , but at least there is now a single framework. Civilian/military co-ordination in Baghdad looked generally OK. Relationships between the British military and Brit-dominated CPA (South) have been scratchy, but are improving.

There are two big problems on the political side:

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(i) the failure of the **Governing Council** until now to (a) get a grip and (b) develop a political profile. This may be starting to change. An effective CPA/Governing Council relationship is essential to deliver a workable political timetable for the transfer of power, elections and constitution drafting (see below);

(ii) **continued CPA civilian weaknesses**. There have been successes on infrastructure; but I met a number of Brits who felt they were not doing worthwhile jobs; and **strategic communications** remains a serious problem: //

No clear picture of the **enemy** exists.

The nexus of relations between ex-regime supporters, international terrorist and freelance jihadis is much discussed, but with little hard intelligence. As Jeremy Greenstock puts it, the enemy is mutating faster than our (rapidly evolving) security structures can keep up. The facade of the Rashid Hotel, with nine rocket holes visible from an attack when it was fully booked with internationals, is a sobering indication of the enemy's capability.

There is no lack of **intelligence**; but it's not having a decisive impact, and there are problems of processing and coordination.

On security,

we have to put

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our faith in a combination of (a) Iraqisation and (b) better intelligence leading to more pre-emption of attacks. On the first, there is now an ambitious scheme for all parts of the security structure. But ICDC training will not be complete until the spring; and even then trainees will need mentoring and monitoring.

There is a bad need for Iraqi police on the streets to deal with basic crime – this, not terrorism, is the main concern for ordinary Iraqis. **The situation will remain very fragile, with continuing casualties.**

Meanwhile Sanchez is planning an operation in **Fallujah** – the tribal chiefs have been given a two week deadline to control the terrorists or face a heavy US response. **This could turn ugly**, but it would be wrong to question the need to get the initiative back.

The CPA and the US military, with valued British input, are working hard on a joined-up approach to the **Sunnis**. But this community, with its privileged position reduced to at best a minority role vis-a-vis the Shias and at most marginalisation, is acutely resentful of its changed circumstances. Much of the terrorism seems to arise from resentment of their changed circumstances, and there are plenty to egg them on.

At the street level, there is substantial **economic activity**, with a retail boom caused by the CPA paying public sector salaries at rates never seen before in Iraq. There are lots of cars on the road in Basra; less in Baghdad. But the economy is expected to contract by 20% in 2004, with consequent job losses; this and the ending of free power and water supplies, and the demise of the food rationing system, will need careful handling to avoid social unrest.

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I put down some markers about the pace of privatisation, and the impact on Iraqi politics in 2004 – accepted by Bremer.

Personalities

is there evidence of that

Operations

By any account our UK military operation in the south east has gone extremely well. General Lamb has managed to retrieve the situation after the August riots and pursue a hearts and minds operation, but with the capacity to “hold off” terrorist elements using good intelligence.

Recommendations

Political timetable: There are at present three timetables: Bremer’s (seven steps in a year); the Governing Council’s (maybe two/three years, but there must be elections before a constitution is drafted); and the military (drawing down in

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three phases – spring 2004; August 2004 and spring 2005, depending on the pace of Iraqisation).

My main conclusion is that we are unlikely by spring 2004 to have made the advances necessary, particularly on security, for a wholesale transfer to a provisional government. We should keep this option (the one favoured in the recent FCO paper) up our sleeves in case the security situation forces us to advance more quickly.

Meanwhile Governing Council opinion is starting to come to a compromise. Jeremy Greenstock and I think we could emerge with something like the following:

- **Now to Spring 2004:**

- Strengthen executive side of Governing Council and transfer further power to it
- Expand Governing Council so that it can take adequate soundings before enacting a **Basic Law**, perhaps with clear constitutional principles

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- September 2004:

- Direct elections on this basis to an **Assembly** which would **appoint**
a transitional government.

- Power and formal sovereignty would then be transferred from the
CPA to this government.

- There would be a **census and election of a constitutional assembly**
which would adopt a constitution. Then

- In ?2006 there would be final elections under the new constitution to the
definitive, new, assembly and sovereign Iraqi Government.

✓
Are you happy with this emerging scenario? If so, I will discuss with Condi

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Media: We are pressing ahead with modest UK funding to help the Iraqi media. But I am convinced that the immediate task now is to increase the CPA's own capacity to get its message across. At present there are only six press officers (including two Brits) doing this for the whole of the CPA.

Do you agree that I should ask the FCO/MOD and others to second a proper public affairs team to Iraq to help project to Iraqi and international media, and manage what should be an increased programme of visits by Parliamentarians and journalists? Yes. And yet the Iraqi media sorted.

The CPA (South) itself has come a long way since the summer, but needs military support. Do you agree that I should say that you hope there will be continued close co-operation between the military and civilian CPA staff? ✓

We also need a specifically **British office in Basra** to handle trade contacts, culture and visitors. Do you agree that I should ask the FCO to get going on this (it had been envisaged, but fell by the wayside in the summer)? ✓

ISG: David Kay believes that the Congressional Committees will expect him to report again in February/March. He hopes to have further specific evidence of programmes; but the basic story will be as before.

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Is there anything further you would like us to say to David

Kay

? Just keep me informed as to what he is finding; & surely we must have heard what happened to him. What do our pre-war contacts say?

Impressions

- Visiting Iraq is a rather intense experience. People live and breathe their work. It is an inward-looking and pressurised environment in which the Brits continue to perform with distinction. But we are a small minority: 7% of the troops; 10% of the CPA; less than 2% of the aid.
- _____ told the new Iraqi Foreign Minister last week that there were three priorities: dealing with crime against the person; keeping public salary levels up; and having a single media message and sticking to it. *put in charge of media*
- Basra and Baghdad do not feel like cities under military occupation. Not a single US soldier outside the bus garage in Baghdad. Of course there are convoys going up and down the roads, but the souks are full, and there are lots of high value goods available (flat screen TVs, fridges, computers).
- The green zone in Baghdad (four miles square) is extraordinary. It is a micro-economy with around 1000 people in substantive CPA/military jobs living/working in Saddam regime palaces and being guarded, fed, housed and watered by around 5000 soldiers, private sector contractors, cooks and bottle-washers. The zone itself is ramshackle, with large areas inside not searched

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on a regular basis; and parkland and other area outside from which terrorists can operate.

- The Brits are making the best of a bad job; but with many moving under security advice from insecure trailers to hard-skin accommodation, there is a great deal of improvisation. 27 people slept at the British Office house the night we were there; David Richmond sleeps on a camp bed in the office he shares with Jeremy Greenstock.
- Nevertheless the prevailing attitude is one of commitment and excitement. In particular, there are a number of young civilian staff relishing the opportunity to get stuck in. General Lamb said that this group of Brits understand and like playing the Great Game.

Conclusion

A visit like this brings home the fact that from four square miles of ex-Saddam palaces, behind high walls, a beleaguered administration is trying to run a country of 25 million people. We are dealing with _____, whose political, social and economic landmarks were swept away by the dictatorship. Our position rests largely on intangible Iraqi perceptions of credibility and consent. Most Iraqis are at best confused: they don't want Saddam back, but want the occupation to end. *// 5 then right?*

This is an immense task: we have, at last, the right policies in place; but there is a sense of a race against time, with Iraqisation benefits not able to kick in properly until the spring and continuing doubt about the CPA's ability to get the

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practical jobs done. Meanwhile the immediate task is to agree the political timetable on which the latest news is more promising.

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