

DECLASSIFIED

From:
Sent: 07 January 2004 10:48
To: Perm Sec, Action
Cc: Cunliffe, Jon, Stern, Nick, Macpherson, Nicholas, Douglas, Hilary, Pickford, Stephen, Nell, Jacob, Dodds, John, Stephens, Jonathan, Twiddy, Edward, Price, William,
Subject: Iraq secondees
Gus

Please see a note on the issue of secondees to Iraq, attached. I am grateful to Edward Twiddy for his contribution on this.



Iraqsecondees2004
0106.doc

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

IRAQ: secondees

Background

Since the rocket attack on the Rashid hotel, which injured Jacob Nell, and subsequent incidents and security threats the contingent of UK economists from HMT (and the Bank of England) seconded to the CPA has withdrawn from Iraq. In part this reflects concerns about the status of the accommodation on offer to secondees to the CPA but, in some cases, it also reflects family wishes in the light of the difficult security situation.

With the Rashid no longer available, the alternatives have been dormitory-style accommodation inside the Presidential Palace or more private accommodation in trailer units. However, the trailer units offer very little protection in the event of a mortar or rocket attack and UK staff have been advised against using them.

Current position

Following a multi-departmental review of security and accommodation in Baghdad, the FCO has initiated a building program that will create dedicated living quarters in converted trailer units fitted under the hard roof of a covered car park. This site is still within the protected 'Green Zone'. Completion of this work is within sight and the new units should be available by the end of this month.

In the interim HMT and Bank of England have, through the FCO, received an offer of accommodation for a small number (up to three) of economists to billet with the officers of the UK's military deployment to the command and control operation in Baghdad. This accommodation is in 'Maude House', a large villa-type building which is also within the Green Zone. Maude House offers a solid roof and very good 'point' security. Just recently, however, Sir Jeremy Greenstock has expressed some reservations about creating divisions among the UK secondee community. He will be here later this week and we can discuss these concerns with him.

The offer from the UK military is a direct result of the recognition by General Figgers, the most senior UK military officer in Baghdad, of the central role that economists play in post-conflict reconstruction. His desire to see UK economists back in Baghdad is matched by

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

that of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, and a similar message was relayed

Christmas. It has always been widely recognised that the contribution of HMT and Bank secondees has been critically important in getting the Iraqi economy back towards stability and normality. It is now acknowledged that gaps are becoming apparent within the team presently in Baghdad, some of which the UK could usefully fill.

We are looking at the question of volunteers and will update you separately on this.

Issues that remain

Security issues remain for volunteers who wish to spend time in Baghdad. It will be necessary to make these risks very clear to anyone considering volunteering.

- The Green Zone and other CPA compounds in the regions remain areas that are singled out by terrorists. That will continue to present real risks. The number of missile and mortar attacks on the Green Zone has decreased since the capture of Saddam Hussein and related military operations in and around Baghdad. However it is too early to say if the trend is downward and while there may be fewer attacks there are concerns they may become bigger or more targeted against the British. The JIC is addressing these issues this week.
- Travel from the Green Zone to Ministries and Central Bank is an important part of effective working in Baghdad. Although all journeys are undertaken in convoys of armoured vehicles there are still risks involved with travel to and from the Ministries.
- All public buildings in Iraq are targets for attack by car or lorry bombs (so-called vehicle-based improvised explosive devices or VBIEDs). The Central Bank and Ministry of Finance, in common with other ministries, are protected from attack by suitably placed concrete barriers but are still potential targets for attack.

The second line of this page may not be clearly readable. It reads: "... to [name redacted] in his calls during a visit to Washington before ...".

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

Options and timetable

The offer of accommodation in Maude House until the new trailer units are available provides many of the reassurances on the safety and quality of accommodation that were lacking during November and December. From this point forward, we can offer volunteers the reassurance of a solid roof above their heads.

However, in addition to the continuing risks outlined above there are other reasons why deployment of any new volunteers will be delayed until at least the 28th January even if you are content for HMT staff to travel to Baghdad. The requirements for training and briefing before secondment demand attendance at a dedicated hostile environment course.

The next such course is on 18th January. Beyond that, there is a course on 1st February. If new volunteers are to be sent to Baghdad before the middle of February they must attend the 18th January course. Places are available, but need to be booked as soon as possible. Attendance on this course need not necessarily lead to immediate deployment.

Do you agree that volunteers who are fully aware of the risks and have been identified as holding skills useful to the future success of the CPA should be permitted to attend this course and be seconded to Baghdad if their line manager agrees?

For any members of staff who would be returning to Baghdad following a period working in London, there is no reason related to concerns about accommodation for their return to be delayed beyond an appraisal of the ongoing security risks outlined above.

Do you agree that anyone volunteering to return to Baghdad and who is fully aware of the security risks should be allowed to make arrangements for their return?

DECLASSIFIED