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30 September 2004

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Dear David

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Thank you for your letter of 28 September in which you asked for further advice on some of the issues raised in the Secretary of State's letter of 27 September – in particular details of the proposal to boost the capability of the Iraqi National Guard (ING).

I understand that you met with General Fry yesterday and discussed the broader context of Prime Minister Allawi's concerns: he wants a serious Iraqi Security Force (ISF) to enable him to tackle the insurgency without relying on the MNF and is frustrated by progress to date. His proposal to reconstruct mechanised divisions from the former Iraqi Army would help with outreach to the Sunni community, with the possibility of undermining part of the insurgency, but it is not required for counter-insurgency operations and has the potential to create a force that may not be aligned with the government. It may also divert attention away from our goal of building capable ISF to replace our own.

In part, Allawi's frustration with progress is justified. Initially, the ISF were developed piecemeal and an overarching strategy has only recently been completed. So, progress could have been more rapid. However, a process is now in place which will deliver trained and equipped ISF to meet Iraq's needs, including specialised counter-insurgency forces (the Iraqi Army Intervention Force). Much of this will be place in time for the elections in January, including nine battalions of the Intervention Force, but MNF support will still be needed to deal with insurgents in the areas of greatest resistance, eg. any action against Fallujah.

Our judgement is that the Petraeus plan will deliver the required capability and does not need a radical overhaul. Indeed, to do so would stall momentum and delay the progress which Allawi desires. Indeed, we run the risk of a 'new plan' causing confusion within the existing plan.

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However, General Fry has identified that there is more that can be done. The ING – effectively a gendarmerie – need more firepower, mobility and logistic support to enable them to take the fight to the insurgents and compliment the other intervention forces. This will deliver more capable forces faster than currently planned and ease Allawi's concerns. To take forward these proposals in MND(SE) we need:

- to equip and train the existing ING for urban and counterinsurgency operations - 72 armoured fighting vehicles and mechanised vehicles, 120 light transport vehicles, urban assault equipment, night vision goggles, assault ammunition and weapons – total cost \$52.9 million.
- An ING battle school for leadership development and specific training in urban operations – infrastructure and ranges, protective equipment, weapons and ammunition – total cost \$9.5 million.
- to develop robust command and control. The ING are spread too thinly across MND(SE) to be truly effective without an effective headquarters. In time, the MNSTC-I will provide a divisional headquarters to command the area, but not until September 2005. There is an urgent need to accelerate the development of the headquarters – total cost \$1.15 million.

We have also identified further areas where we could boost the capability of the ISF:

- The existing six battalions of ING in MND(SE) are insufficient to project an effective presence across the region. A further four battalions are included in the Petraeus plan but they will not be fully capable until 2006. We could accelerate the development of these extra battalions at a cost of \$11.4 million.
- Increase the capability of the Iraqi Police Service. Leadership training and development of Tactical Support Units across MND(SE). Infrastructure, specialist vehicles, uniforms and protective equipment, weapons and ammunition, communications equipment – total cost \$24 million.
- Develop the Department for Border Enforcement to police the border effectively. Infrastructure and logistic equipment, weapons and ammunition, personal equipment, transport, communications, and surveillance equipment – total cost \$8 million.

These proposals would accelerate the development of capable ISF but they are costly and unfunded, with no provision or headroom in the Defence budget; a claim on the Reserve would be required. Were a decision to be taken to proceed, we would need to develop thoroughly costed proposals, but procurement and delivery of some essential equipment could occur within weeks. Building infrastructure and training personnel will take months and will lead to an incremental development of capability over the course of 2005. The provision of manpower for this intensive training would also need work.

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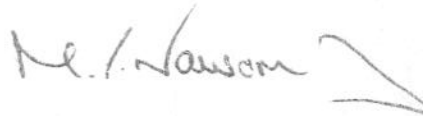
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In the time available since your meeting yesterday, we have not been able to identify costs for taking these proposals forward across Iraq. However, General McColl will discuss our proposals with his US counterparts in the coming days. You will also be interested to know that since Prime Minister Allawi's visit last week, work has started in Baghdad to review the programmes of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and ensure that they are synchronised with the Petraeus plan. This is likely to lead to a force structure conference in the next few weeks. General McColl will inject our ideas into the process and identify any areas for further bilateral assistance to the Ministries.

This work will be a natural precursor for the meeting of senior officials in Baghdad. Sir Kevin Tebbit has already spoken with Paul Wolfowitz and they will discuss again either before or when they meet next week. Sir Kevin also met Prime Minister Allawi today and explained how we hoped to proceed. Our officials in Baghdad are working on the detailed arrangements and will take the initiative forward with Allawi when he returns to Iraq.

Finally, it is worth making the point that even if all this is done, the impact on Iraqi capability for high end counterinsurgency operations before elections will remain very limited – especially if the US and Allawi decide to focus on an operation in Fallujah in that timescale. What it will do, by increasing the quantity and quality of the ING, and their ability to conduct framework operations, is help give a highly visible Iraqi face to such operations which would be at least as important in perception terms as the military effect achieved.

I am copying this to Kara Owen (FCO), Moazzam Malik (DfID),
(Treasury), PS/C, and (Cabinet Office).



M P NAWORYNSKY
Private Secretary

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