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PERMANENT SECRETARY

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6 May 2005

**Secretary of State**

Copy to:

Minister for the Armed Forces  
Minister for Defence Procurement  
Under Secretary of State  
Chief of Defence Staff

**WELCOME**

Welcome to the Ministry of Defence. My colleagues and I will work to help in making your time here rewarding, productive and enjoyable.

2.

**IMMEDIATE ISSUES**

3. There is a range of issues to which you will need to give early thought. The background is set out in the introductory pack, but specific submissions setting out the issues in more detail and inviting decisions will follow. There are some I should highlight here:

- a. Operations. Our Departmental contribution is only one (significant) part of the overall Government effort to build peace and security and act as a force for good. You will no doubt wish to have early discussions with the Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for International Development about overall strategy. Internally, your immediate focus will be on Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, the US-led coalition's main effort will this year shift from providing direct security to building the capability and capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces. Although the role and posture of the coalition forces is likely to change as the Iraqi Security Forces increasingly take the lead in providing security, significant reductions in coalition force levels (including UK forces) are unlikely to be possible until 2006. This is 6-12 months later than our initial hopes. It inevitably has knock-on consequences for the

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next planned increase in our military effort – expanded stabilisation operations in Afghanistan - and the size of our force there.

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