

From Major General J B Dutton CBE



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Dear CJO,

JUNE TO DECEMBER 2005 - HAULDOWN REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1.

SECURITY

2. IEDs. Although SE Iraq remains at the lower end of any table of security incidents, the dominant feature of the last 4 months of my 6-month tour has been the victim-initiated passive infrared explosively formed projectile. This weapon, which has now proliferated throughout Iraq, has radically affected our freedom of manoeuvre and consequently inhibited our Security Sector Reform (SSR) and CIMIC effort. There is a straight trade-off here: if troops are doing force protection, they cannot be doing SSR. We are taking direct action against perpetrators to break up the cells, constantly amending our TTPs and there is huge scientific effort to produce counter measures. We will never entirely defeat this threat, but it is manageable and I do not believe that it has a significant deleterious effect on morale in this AO.

3. Helicopters. Helicopters have always been important in this area, half the size of England and Wales, but the EFP threat has made them essential. I have been grateful for the readiness to support us with extra when required

and we have reciprocated by readily agreeing to a reduction when the immediate crisis is passed. However, this should not disguise the national lack of helicopters to service the operations that we are now conducting. Massaging airframes and hours can only go so far: the simple fact is that we need more helicopters (and aircrew) urgently.

4. SSR. The restriction on freedom of manoeuvre caused by the IED threat has meant that military resources have had to be applied to security and stability operations and self-protection, with commensurately less to the Main Effort – SSR. Even so, we are making progress:

a. The Iraqi Army. The development of the Iraqi Army is the 'jewel in the crown' of our SSR effort and we must not let up now. The MiTT system has been a great success and I recommend that we plan now for a MiTT 3 for May 06: their contribution to the 'conceptual' and 'moral' development of 10 Div has been enormous. But, we must not underestimate the 'physical' element of our work in rebuilding the Iraqi Army: whereas British soldiers will 'get by' and 'make it work', Iraqi soldiers need to have barracks, uniforms, weapons etc. MNSTC-I funding, topped up by UK money, has made an excellent start but sustainability and depth is wafer thin and the money seems to be running out fast. I acknowledge the desire to shift responsibility to the Iraqis themselves to prevent over-dependence, but the structure is built on 'foundations of sand' and will require support for some time yet. We simply cannot allow failure, especially of the iconic projects such as the Basic Training Centre at Tallil or the newly built battalion barracks.

b. The Iraqi Police Service. I have written more than enough on this. I believe that, over time, the IPS can be reformed to an acceptable level, but there is no simple quick solution, which is, I sense, what London wants. In fact, it will be a long hard slog and will need unwavering commitment. The one critical point I must stress is that the UK should never again expect to be able to undertake police restructuring and reform in this sort of environment using UK police: they do not have the institutional structure or expertise to cope, nor can they be compulsorily deployed. If we wish to be able to conduct expeditionary policing, then we need to establish a force specifically for this purpose, trained and available for deployment as required.

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FCO AND OGD

13. I have worked to develop my relationship with the Consul General in Basra Palace and I believe that it is now as good as it can be, given the circumstances of the geographical separation of our HQs. For proper unity of command, we need to be collocated but I recognise the impossibility of that at this stage in the campaign. The in-country DfID team is also well integrated with my J9: we each recognise our respective roles, strengths and weaknesses and form a good team. As I leave there is mounting evidence of a desire by DfID to get much closer to the Military.

ON TRACK - OR NOT?

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17. In Basra Province, there is still much work to be done, (in particular with the Police), but we are going to remain in Basra for the longest time. I

continue to believe that we can assist in an internal reformation of the Basra Police if we really want to. I very much welcome the renewed interest and engagement from Baghdad and London. This is a crucially important element of the plan, which will need to be combined with hard work and effort on the ground in Basra. In the end the Iraqis have to do this themselves – any unilateral solution we impose will collapse the moment we leave – but they need our assistance to set themselves on the right path and our continued support to maintain progress along it. The more resources we can apply, the quicker they can be ready to take control themselves.

18. I am not sufficiently well informed about the pan-Iraq situation to offer overall judgement or make predictions: here in the SE we are making progress, but whether it is sufficient to enable ultimate success is a difficult call. A country with plentiful water, the second largest oil reserves in the World and a well-educated and hardworking population must surely succeed. But set against that: unknown Iranian intentions, a Shia majority downtrodden for centuries and now determined to 'get its own back', the complexity of linkages with the Global War on Terrorism and the threat from AQ and the Islamist global *jihad*, geographically placed in the midst of the World's most volatile region, and the outcome is not so clear-cut. Despite that, I am optimistic – you have to be: nobody has got a better plan!

As ever,

Jim

Information:

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