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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister,
and Head of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat

23 May 2006

Dear Peter,

IRAQ

We have discussed with the Prime Minister the follow-up to his visit to Iraq.

The Prime Minister was impressed by the drive and determination of Maliki, and his government's sense of mission. But the visit reinforced his sense that effective support to the new Iraqi government in key areas will be essential over the coming two to three months.

The Prime Minister judges that the priority areas of work are:

- Drawing up a **timetable with conditions** setting out the potential path to MNF withdrawal. This should address the desire of Iraqis for clarity over two issues: that the MNF will stay until Iraqi security forces are capable of acting independently; and that the MNF will go once that has been achieved. Any timetable should include dates, but each one should be conditional on ISF build-up of capability and overall violence levels. We should ensure that Casey's work with the Iraqi government on a 'roadmap' adopts this sort of approach. **Action: The Prime Minister will discuss with President Bush in Washington. Thereafter MOD/BE Baghdad/FCO.**
- To ensure improved **ISF build-up**. We need to make sure that Iraqi forces really are capable of dealing with the threat, including from AQ, by mounting complex operations of the type currently undertaken by the Coalition. The Prime Minister heard a number of disquieting comments on this score from Iraqis and others. We therefore need a candid analysis of the gap between current capabilities and future requirements, also covering **equipment** issues; and a **plan** for closing the gap. **Action: MOD.**

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- Backing the Baghdad security and electricity plans. As the PM set out to Maliki, the new Iraqi government will need to show early progress on these priority issues. Action: MOD/DFID.
- Turning around the situation in Basra, following the Prime Minister's private conversation with Maliki. This will require:
 - a political understanding with parties representing the spectrum of political opinion there;
 - a package of UK and international reconstruction assistance;
 - a larger role and presence for the Iraqi forces, working alongside UK forces.

The Prime Minister has asked that a senior individual be tasked with taking this process forward in Basra, working with designated interlocutors from the Iraqi government. Action: FCO/MOD/DFID/BCG Basra. The Prime Minister hopes that the Defence Secretary will personally supervise the military aspects of this.

- Promoting international support for the new government. We should support and help to shape ideas for the international conference, led by the UN, in the Autumn. I have spoken to Mark Malloch Brown about this - we will need to secure support from Annan for this proposal soon. Action: FCO. The Prime Minister would like the Foreign Secretary to personally direct this work and liaise with Iraqi, US and EU colleagues and the UN.
- Ensuring that Arab countries respond positively to requests for assistance from the new Iraqi government. We will need a strategy for doing so, together with advice on who should lead this effort for HMG. The Prime Minister asked whether a Special Envoy figure would be useful. Action: FCO.
- Stepping up our outreach activities to both Sunni and Shia militants, to ensure that they are given opportunity and incentives to participate in the political process. Action: FCO.
- Capacity building for Iraqi ministries. We need a paper setting out our and the US's current assistance to them, in terms both of advisers and equipment, and a plan for addressing additional gaps. The Prime Minister

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would like us to respond positively to Maliki's request for help on secure IT and communications. During our visit, we were also asked for specific assistance in the areas of agriculture, and promoting investment by oil companies. I would welcome advice on both. Action: DFID/FCO/DTI/DEFRA.

The Prime Minister is likely to use DOP(I) on Thursday to set out the requirements, and for an initial discussion of these issues.

I am copying this letter to Margaret Aldred and Tim Dowse (Cabinet Office), "C", Ian Forber (MOD), Howard Taylor (DFID), Philippa Lloyd (DTI), Gavin Ross (DEFRA), Sir David Manning (Washington), William Patey and General Sir Robert Fry (Baghdad), Robin Lamb and General John Cooper (Basra), and Sir Emyr Jones Parry (UKMis New York).

*Yours,
Nigel*

NIGEL SHEINWALD

Peter Hayes
FCO

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