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From the Private Secretary

14 November 2006

Dear Irfan,

IRAQ

The Prime Minister discussed Iraq policy yesterday at a meeting with CDS, Nigel Sheinwald, Simon McDonald, "C", Nick Beadle, Margaret Aldred, Jonathan Powell, David Hill and I.

The Prime Minister said that the major challenge was ensuring that Maliki had an effective government apparatus around him, underpinned by capable security forces.

CDS said that the US had given a lot of thought to the latter point. They had a coherent plan for training Iraqi Security Forces, and were considering a further radical extension of their mentoring effort. The greatest weakness was in logistics, but again, there was a renewed emphasis on training and mentoring in that area. Nick Beadle noted that there were particular gaps in the civilian side of the security Ministries, which would have to be filled by mentors and training teams. The Prime Minister agreed that we should explore this.

The Prime Minister accepted this, but felt that we had to use our leverage with the Iraqis (derived from their desire that we not leave precipitately), to push Maliki in putting together a political compact and doing what was necessary on the army and government capacity. We should encourage more effective outreach, and a genuinely non-sectarian agenda – we would not be able to retain troops in place if they ended up supporting a sectarian government. We should accept that, once we had successfully implemented Operation Sinbad, we would move into a support role.

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We should now put together a plan, to be launched shortly after the Iraq Study Group had reported, for which we would have to secure Iraqi, US and wider international support. There could well be a role for the UN. The plan should set out the detail underpinning the Prime Minister's four point strategy for Iraq, together with a clear sense of who would be responsible for operationalising each element. He asked Nigel to coordinate this work, with departments contributing expertise in specific areas.

I am copying this letter to Sir Richard Mottram, Margaret Aldred and Tim Dowse (Cabinet Office), Sir Peter Ricketts and John Sawers (FCO), and CDS (MOD), Sir David Manning (Washington), and Dominic Asquith (Baghdad).

Yours ever,



NICK BANNER

Irfan Siddiq, FCO

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