

Statement of: **Geoffrey Lyndon Cooper**

UK Chief Police Advisor to Iraq 18th March 2008 to 7th April 2009.

My appointment followed a selection process which concluded in January 2008. At that time I was a Chief Superintendent serving with South Wales Police and was therefore seconded to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) for the above period having been temporarily promoted to the rank of Assistant Chief Constable.

Following my selection and prior to my deployment I received a day's briefing at the FCO on the Iraqi political situation from members of the FCO Iraq Group and Department for International Development (DFID). In addition I was briefed by Mr Paul Kernaghan, the then Chief Constable of Hampshire and Head of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) International Affairs.

As Chief Police Advisor-Iraq, I had command responsibility for the 13 UK police officers serving in Baghdad and Basra. I was tasked with the provision of strategic policing advice to Foreign Office personnel, US/UK military General Staff, Iraqi counterparts and other organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

I was also appointed as team leader for the recently-designed project which combined and built upon the previously distinct work developing the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI), led by DFID, and the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), led by the FCO. This work was merged into the UK MoI/IPS Project, for which I also had command responsibility.

The project's purpose was 'to enable Iraqi authorities to deliver stability, security and justice for all Iraqi citizens' and its goal to build 'an effective and accountable IPS with strengthened civilian oversight and management from the MoI'.

In addition to the aforementioned police personnel the project team consisted of 9 Institutional Development Consultants and 10 Forensic Science Consultants. I believe the overall project budget was £9m including staff and security costs.

As the Chief Police Advisor-Iraq, I reported monthly to the FCO International Secondments Unit (ISU) regarding policing issues and as the Team Leader monthly and quarterly to a cross-Whitehall project management group at the FCO. Locally the project reported to the First Secretary, Security and Justice Sector Reform (SJSR), British Embassy, Baghdad. In order to capture progress against outcomes the project monthly and quarterly reports detailed performance against previously agreed milestones. A Project Completion Report was submitted to FCO in September 2009 at the end of the UK's support to the MoI.

The project plan was determined through consultation with representatives of the FCO based in London and Iraq, and other Whitehall departments including the Ministry of Defence and DFID. The project set out objectives for UK support to the development of the Iraqi MOI and the IPS and was focused on the following work streams:

Police Capacity Building

- Enhanced national forensic capability supporting the move towards an evidence based judicial system
- Enhanced serious crime investigative capability
- Enhanced understanding of the concept of community based policing

Leadership Development

- Officer development strategy based on human resource needs
- Improved officer development curricula
- Improved training and instructor base
- Wider regional and international support for MOI leadership development

Internal Governance

- Initial implementation of the MOI internal disciplinary system
- Assistance to Department of Internal Affairs

Strengthening Institutional Functions

- Improved strategic planning and resource allocation processes within the Ministry
- Improved ability to develop and execute annual plans at national and provincial level
- Improved financial planning, monitoring and budget execution
- Improved procurement processes
- Enhanced human resource management

These objectives were developed in consultation with Iraqi counterparts, and were themselves a continuation of work which had already been running since 2004/05. The project was overseen by a Programme Management Board consisting of senior Iraqi representatives of each part of the MOI and IPS with which the project had substantive dealings. This Board met regularly, though its meetings were not as frequent as the project team wanted or as had been anticipated at the start of the project, often due to the unavailability of members and the difficulties posed by security restrictions.

Overall Police Planning

Although the project objectives were developed with Iraqi MoI and IPS counterparts, it would be a mistake to believe that there was an 'overall plan for policing in Iraq'. There had been several attempts, led by the US military, in some cases with UK military assistance, to produce a MoI Strategic Plan. However these documents were largely written by coalition military planners, and did not gain ownership or acceptance by the MoI itself. A number of key issues complicated attempts to produce coherent MoI plans:

- a. The MoI was and remains an institution characterised by deeply-engrained political and factional interests. The idea of a single, coherent strategy ran counter to the imperative to establish political equilibrium in the organisation by ensuring power was divided internally in a way acceptable to a number of elements;
- b. The MoI is responsible for much more than policing. It also has responsibility for: border security, identify cards, traffic management, civil defence (e.g. fire service), tribal affairs, traffic management, vehicle registration, and a host of other functions. MoI planning is therefore a highly complicated undertaking without any equivalent in the UK or US administrative systems;
- c. The general level of competence was low. There were some able technocrats, but years of isolation meant that systems, behaviours and attitudes were ineffective, and the organisation was at times paralysed by an unwillingness to take responsibility for decisions. It had been run by 5 ministers in 4 years, and there was little or no continuity at policy level;
- d. The confusion between central and provincial authority and poor communication between the MoI and the provinces made any idea of a national policing plan unrealistic.

Under these circumstances there was no overall plan for policing. The US military had devised certain goals and milestones, based mainly around rapid force generation. However coalition military commanders, perhaps naturally, considered the primary role of the IPS to be *security provision*, and as a result envisaged (and trained) the IPS largely as a paramilitary force. The primary role of policing in stabilised environments is not security but *provision of criminal justice*. The complex of capabilities and capacities needed to ensure the provision of justice to citizens was not well understood by all military commanders. What police plans existed, therefore, were not really police plans at all – more contributions to wider Iraq security planning and of which I was unsighted.

The UK contribution to the development of Iraqi police capability was, given the team's capacity, focused very much at the strategic level, and was implemented alongside the US who were dominant across the security development agenda. The US input principally took the form of the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) based in Baghdad, whose significant resource and funding levels enabled them to engage on such large-scale issues as force generation, national training and tactical 'on the ground training'. Much of this work was carried out by DynCorp, a US defence contractor brought in to undertake police training, funded through a contract with the US Department of Defense. It is

debatable, though outside the scope of this statement, as to the capability of some Dyncorp staff to deliver such a product.

The UK project team developed good working relationships with the CPATT General Staff who were very receptive to UK support and the specialist skills that we brought to the table, for example forensic specialists, criminal investigators, strategic policing advice and institutional and management development of the MOI. In essence we set out to influence rather than control the agenda.

This partnership enabled the specialist staff from both countries to work alongside each other in a number of business areas such as the development of Iraqi leadership training capacity and the MOI strategic planning. One result of this partnership was that the US frequently funded activity initiated and led by the UK, for example the funding of the nationwide Iraqi forensics strategy (construction and equipment of laboratories). Other donors also supported UK efforts, for example the funding of forensic training in Australia by the Australian Government.

The development of Iraqi capability in forensic science was designed to have an impact on moving the Iraqi criminal justice system away from a confessional towards an evidence based system. Convincing anecdotal evidence suggests that this is increasingly being achieved however measurement was hampered by the lack of reliable baseline data on case processing. In addition, improved technical forensics capacity was not initially matched by the capacity of the Iraqi court system to process forensics evidence in the resolution of cases. This required legislative as well as attitudinal change in the justice system. The Iraqi response to this problem, in close partnership with the UK, was the establishment of an Evidence Steering Group. There are indications that this is now bearing fruit in terms of processing of evidence (as opposed to confession) based cases.

It became apparent to me that whilst this work was progressing there was a gap between the recovery of such evidence and its subsequent presentation in court. Therefore the UK proposed the creation of investigative training to the IPS, which was subsequently developed by the Iraqi's with UK and US support.

Basra objectives and priorities

My role required me primarily to be based at the British Embassy, Baghdad. However given my command responsibility I also frequently attended and resided at Basra.

At that time there were 6 police officers stationed at the Contingency Operating Base (COB) whose principle objectives were linked to the project plan. The police contingent benefited from being in close working proximity to military colleagues, which enabled them under strict duty of care arrangements, (which will be discussed in more depth later) to travel into the city and spend limited time alongside Iraqi counterparts.

Basra-based officers developed excellent working relationships with Iraqi counterparts, which enabled team members to offer support and guidance on such issues as community policing.

This style of policing was much sought after by the IPS and team members were keen to assist the IPS in designing a style which suited Iraq and not the UK. Through good networking the project team succeeded in influencing the development by the UNDP of a Japanese Government funded community policing project in Basra. This led UK police officers from the project to accompany Iraqi counterparts and UNDP representatives to Abu Dhabi in a UNDP funded visit to observe the Emirates community policing programme. Consequently offers were made to train IPS personnel in this aspect of policing and the UNDP requested support from UK personnel to this work on the ground in Basra.

Community policing in such post conflict environments may raise eyebrows and clearly is dependent on prevailing security conditions; however this was Iraqi initiated and if implemented correctly can be an important step towards improving police and community relations.

The Basra project team also significantly benefited from the excellent support of the Consul General, his staff and Major General Salmon, the General Officer Commanding that region. In addition, close partnerships existed with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and the US military police. The latter significantly increased their capacity over time (in particular after the Iraqi 'Charge of the Knights' campaign) and were embedded in the city centre to work alongside the IPS. They welcomed civilian police advice from project personnel.

Delivery

The central theme of our work was sustainability. We adopted a facilitative rather than prescriptive approach, meaning that although the pace of development was sometimes frustrating (for us and our coalition partners) the results had a greater level of Iraqi ownership and hence chance of being fully assimilated into Iraqi procedure.

An example was our work on leadership development which did not involve the delivery of training, but the painstaking development, with a team of Iraqi trainers, of a three-tier leadership curriculum. The contents of this curriculum, whilst based on 'international best practice' were unique to Iraq and its governmental and social context. A cadre of Iraqi leadership trainers was developed, and the courses have now been incorporated into the core curriculum of the Higher Institute (the officers' training college), and have run through several iterations without ongoing coalition support.

A similar approach was adopted in our Institutional Development work within the Ministry. A team of consultants worked alongside Iraqi planners and finance managers to develop systems and processes, based on existing administrative structures and methods, for planning and budgeting across the Iraqi security forces. This programme was paralleled by management and skills training, including US-funded courses in support of the UK-led programme.

We also facilitated the development and implementation of the MOI internal disciplinary system, leading to the institutionalisation of 4 regional courts processing allegations of corruption, abuse of power and malpractice. Empirical data is available on the numbers of cases processed however again there is a lack of baseline data on corruption in the MOI on which to base an evaluation of impact.

Whilst successes were achieved, there were also several factors which impacted on the team's ability to deliver against targets. Perhaps the most significant of these was restricted movement due to the prevailing security situation. In brief, travel both outside the green zone in Baghdad and Basra COB was only permitted under strict conditions, with limited meeting frequencies and lengths. This involved significant personal protection measures, and the project was naturally competing for resources with other parts of the UK effort. We were not able to engage as intensively as we wanted, and this had a negative impact on our ability to deliver

For example, a move to the MOI in Baghdad required multiple vehicles and personnel from Control Risks Group (CRG) the organisation employed by the FCO to provide personal protection to its employees. In Basra such movement required both military and CRG support, though as the security situation improved in Basra then movement did become easier and only involved CRG staff.

My personal interaction with Iraqis was restricted in Baghdad primarily to the Iraqi Chief of Police and whilst he was very receptive to civilian police advice the vast majority of his time was taken up by his US military advisors. That fact coupled with the security restrictions on movement resulted in limited face to face time with him.

In Basra, however, due to the ability to move more easily I developed a very good working relationship with the Provincial Director of Policing (PDoP) for the city. During monthly visits I was able to offer support and guidance regarding his command responsibilities. The PDoP was an impressive person who although having a military background was quite visionary in his approach to policing and acted as a role model to his staff. This relationship benefited all the organisations based at the COB as the PDoP whilst being his own person was very keen to support coalition efforts. Many of the other project team members developed similarly close and productive working arrangements with key Iraqi interlocutors.

My overall view of the efficiency of the Iraqi Police is somewhat limited to those areas I observed. What I can say is that whilst allegations of corruption, lack of professionalism and general purpose existed I also observed some green shoots for the future. Specifically a desire from some to become more engaged with their communities, a commitment to embracing leadership development and in Basra a desire for the police to work towards taking over the primacy of security of their city from the Iraqi Army.

There is however undoubtedly some way to go but I do believe that we should be mindful of applying western standards as the benchmark in comparison to what is acceptable to Iraq and its neighbours, also bearing in mind the position from which the IPS were starting their development process.

The legacy of UK involvement in developing the Iraqi Police and MoI is a difficult question to answer given that it spans a 7 year period and covers times of varying security levels. I am also not fully sighted on past efforts and given my personal involvement in part of the process it may be felt that such a judgement needs to be reached from an independent source.

What I can say however is that if the Iraqis in some way continue to develop towards an evidence based criminal justice system, operated by trained investigators, continue to move towards greater community engagement and the Ministry increases its ability to hold the Iraqi police to account, then this is partly down to the UK contribution.

As noted above, there is a problem with impact assessment, in the absence of baseline data or measurement methodologies which would be available in more secure environments. Likewise, in a space crowded with international actors, and with the US dwarfing other interventions, the attribution of improvement to the UK effort can be difficult to ascertain.

Lessons Learned

It may not be possible to employ 'conventional' development assessment models in a conflict environment where little information is available. A 'do our best', or at least 'do no harm' philosophy may be more practical. However on reflection I believe that greater attention could have been paid during project design to the capture and processing of data, and to the development of empirical performance indicators.

I also believe that more detailed pre-deployment preparation would be beneficial. This should deal with local culture, previous project work highlighting success and failure, and give a more enhanced understanding of the political situation and key interlocutors.

It is also important to consider what type of policing advice is most appropriate. Some will argue that a Gendarmerie is better equipped to train local police in survivability/paramilitary skills during the initial stages of post conflict environments. But as a country moves from conflict, the demand for security becomes less pressing than the demand for criminal justice. Eventually paramilitary units must be supported or succeeded by other policing methods relevant to the improving security situation. It is a question of critical timing as to when the development of these more complex and difficult capabilities commence.

The question of deploying Home Office police force personnel into conflict/post conflict areas given the incumbent duty of care restrictions and inherent costs will always create debate, unlike European Gendarmerie and Ministry of Defence Police personnel who are able to provide self protection. That said if civilian policing advice is required then generally speaking the requisite skills and abilities will emanate from Home Office police force personnel.

In my opinion operations such as Iraq need to be heavily influenced by police thinking at an early stage and focused in placement against an agreed set of desired skills. A suitably qualified police commander could develop key networks with both coalition and local interlocutors whilst having significant influence in the early design and development of strategies which impact on policing.

It is I believe vitally important that a senior civilian police voice is established at a strategic level as early as possible, the challenge being to ensure that such a voice is both recognised and accepted as a major contributor to policy formulation.

The UK embedded 1-star military and civilian MOD personnel into US (CPATT) structures and command chain. It would be worth considering doing the same with civilian policing, Home Office and Ministry of Justice personnel equipped to assist the development of criminal justice as a country emerges from conflict. It is my opinion that there are significant advantages to working within, rather than separate from, the coalition system and command chain.

Whilst accepting that there may be opposing views, it is my experience that UK civilian police advice is much sought after on the international stage. This was never more striking than during a meeting I attended with colleagues hosted by US General Staff involving the Iraqi Chief of Police regarding the future development of the IPS. In response to a question the latter acknowledged the military assistance his country had received but then looked over to our small group and commented that we were his friends and the future as far as policing development was concerned.

In conclusion I can say that it was a privilege and pleasure to witness the commitment and professionalism of a small team of people who strove to deliver outcomes in difficult circumstances.