

The British contribution to the development of Iraqi police capabilities, 2004-6

Written statement by Dominic Asquith, FCO Director of Iraq Sept 2004-July 2006

1. The Iraq Police Service (IPS) was confronted by its first serious challenge in April 2004 when attacked by the Jaish al Mahdi militia loyal to Shia leader Muqtada al Sadr. The majority of IPS deserted their posts, exposing failures in recruitment, training and loyalty as a result of the CPA's focus on rapidly building up and deploying numbers without adequately preparing personnel for their task.
2. When I took over as FCO Director for Iraq in September 2004, the FCO led on the UK's contribution to developing the IPS. There was a clear recognition that establishing adequate levels of security was essential for achieving political and economic order and therefore the eventual draw down of Coalition forces. However, it was also agreed that we had to maintain a balance between the short term (combating the insurgency) and the long term (building security forces which respected the rule of law and human rights). Nevertheless, a persistent constraint on achieving our objectives remained the extreme danger of the operating environment. The failure to take full account of this constraint gave rise to unrealistic expectations both about the level of and timetable for delivery of capability.
3. By September 2004, the British contribution to developing the IPS, funded from the Global Conflict Prevention Programme (GCPP), was focused on the following areas, as set out in papers circulated to the Iraq Senior Officials' Committee under Cabinet Office Chairmanship, with the first two areas of operation under the supervision in Iraq of a serving DCC.
 - **Four Southern Provinces** overseen by MND(SE) – Basra, Maysan, Muthanna (under the UK) and Dhi Qar (under the Italians):
 - 23 serving or retired UK civilian trainers (based at Az-Zubayr Regional Police Academy near Basra): £1.9m pa
 - Six senior and middle-ranking officers from Home Office forces, MOD police and PSNI mentoring Iraqi Chiefs of Police and developing criminal investigation capabilities: £0.5m pa
 - 40 contract International Police Advisers (IPA) from Armorgroup (recently retired British officers, predominantly former RUC) providing specialist training and mentoring to the IPS in local police stations. They were not subject to the same security regime mandated by ACPO for serving police officers: £4.8m pa
 - **Baghdad**, focused on developing central capabilities (e.g. intelligence and forensic), operational planning and responding to kidnaps, working under the direction of the US-led Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT):

- 12 officers variously training at the Police Academy, helping to establish a Police Criminal Intelligence Service, including a senior Civilian Police Adviser mentoring senior IPS at the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and providing assistance to the Minister of Interior and Deputy Ministers: £0.9m pa
- From April 2005, DFID funded a 15-month programme designed to support the MOI developing its organisational capabilities and implementing changes: £2.3m.

- **Jordan:**

- 55 (rising to 58 by May 2005) UK officers providing basic training at the Jordanian International Police Training Centre (JIPTC) – the largest non-US contingent: £5m pa

4. In addition, since August 2004 the UK had been running from Basra a Prison Advisory programme under a UK Justice Adviser whose objectives were to establish prisons in each of the four southern Provinces, transfer prisoners from IPS cells to prisons, establish an Iraqi Correctional Services (ICS) training school at Az-Zubayr, establish an independent monitoring team at the Ministry of Human Rights. This programme (regularly reviewed) was considered a success in improving the standards of detention despite an increase in the prison population. By September 2005, prisons had been opened in all four provinces, all prisoners had been transferred from IPS cells to prisons and more than 1000 ICS personnel had been trained.
5. A further element was the EUJUSTLEX programme, agreed in principle at the European Council in June 2004 and established on the ground in July 2005. This was a niche programme, with headquarters in Brussels and a coordinating office in Baghdad (located at the British Embassy), delivering training in Europe (including France, Italy and the UK). The aim was an integrated rule of law and police training mission, for around 700 IPS, judiciary and penitentiary officials in middle and senior management positions.
6. In early 2005, a US mission headed by General Luck reviewed the state of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Iraq and concluded that SSR should be the main effort for 2005, with particular focus on the IPS given its weakness. The review emphasised the need for mentoring by Police Assistance Teams (PAT) embedded with police forces and for training and equipping the IPS, to continue until mid-2006. This developed into a Partnership for Policing Plan (P3) under a MNF-I dominated CPATT whose essence was to embed mixed teams of military, civilian and international police advisers with IPS in Baghdad and the provinces and selected towns deemed to be critical in security terms, to build capacity at national and provincial level. The increase in US resources (particularly military) devoted to IPS development after the Luck review and the inability of the UK to fill identified resource gaps diminished the influence of the UK civilian police contingent.

7. In February 2005, an FCO-drafted paper on future activity was submitted to Senior Officials in Whitehall in an uncertain context relating to funds (funding for IPS programmes had been reduced for FY05/06 to £13.5m against a FY 04/05 budget of £19m) and politics (a new government in Iraq following the January elections had yet to be agreed and the priorities of incoming Ministers were therefore unclear). The paper argued that the focus of British effort should be on the MND(SE) area of operations, but that we should also seek to influence the development of national strategies in Baghdad, where US advisers dominated, to address deficiencies in areas such as leadership, absenteeism, training syllabi, recruitment, politicisation, intelligence, forensics, crime scene and equipment. In addition, we should look for ways to internationalise the effort (e.g. in developing gendarmerie style capabilities, in which the UK had no expertise), but were not in favour of Gen Luck's proposal to establish PATs given the vulnerability to which this exposed police officers embedded with Iraqi units. To that end, it was proposed to continue the IPA (Armorgroup) contract until at least August 2005 (in the event, it was continued thereafter), to increase the number of Police Advisers in Baghdad to support MOI management capabilities and to encourage EU contributions through the EUJUSTLEX programme.
8. This was put to Ministers in March, drawing attention to the constraints on:
 - a) UK action (staffing levels were limited by the space available at the Embassy and had to be balanced against other priorities set by HMG; British police forces were reluctant to release serving officers and contractors were more expensive; security conditions both increased costs and reduced the ability of staff to deploy to training sites);
 - b) resources (to fund programmes for the IPS additional to those already planned would require from the GCPP £3.7m over that for which budgetary provision had been made)
9. At Ministerial direction, the plans were further discussed with the US, which revealed a lower urgency which the US placed on developing a national police strategy and a continuing difference in views between the UK, US and Iraqis on the relationship between the police and the military.
10. In May 2005 the FCO requested Paul Kernaghan, Chief Constable of the Hampshire Constabulary, to visit Iraq and review the UK's police effort against plans to move two of the four southern provinces in MNDSE) to Iraqi control. He was accompanied by Sir Ronnie Flanagan (HMCIC), Hugh Orde (PSNI) and Colin Cramphorn (W Yorks). The review argued that the initial concept of creating a community policing force (on an Anglo-American model) was unrealistic in the prevailing security conditions and that efforts should be focused on establishing an effective force able to defend itself and its police stations, including the usage of European-style gendarmerie. It identified a lack of coordination between the US-run CPATT operation in Baghdad and the programme in MND(SE), recommending the relocation of the senior police commander from Basra to Baghdad. In the case of the MND(SE) operation, it underlined the need for UK military support and training assistance

for a prolonged period. It also pointed to the need for career development plans among British police forces that recognised the value of international assignments.

11. The newly arrived British Chief Police Adviser, Colin Smith, also identified in a report submitted in May 2005 the need for additional specialised expertise such as a senior Home Office civil servant with experience in police strategic development and structure, senior experienced Special Branch officers, crime analysts and IT systems advisers. He also identified a number of other deficiencies.
12. In June 2005, a cross-Whitehall IPS strategy was elaborated with the goal of establishing an efficient, effective and community-supported police service, with an integrated Whitehall committee to prioritise and coordinate activity. In August 2005 a British development strategy for the IPS in southern Iraq was agreed, whose purpose was to prepare the IPS for staged transition to Iraqi control. The strategy set out the requirement for close coordination between MND(SE) and CPATT/MOI in Baghdad and other donors/partners. Priorities included an IPS with civilian oversight, accountability, strategic planning (particularly establishment, recruitment and selection; command and control), intelligence and operational capability. Targets for training, intelligence, command and control capabilities and equipment were established and reviewed regularly against a background of acknowledged and well-documented deficiencies in the IPS.
13. Those deficiencies, including the inability or unwillingness of the MOI, Chief of Police and Governor to assert control over corrupt elements in the IPS, were exposed starkly in Basra on 19 September 2005 when two UK servicemen were detained by the IPS and militia elements. MND(SE) military force was required to resolve the incident. Following a further review of the implications for our policing strategy, the British Prime Minister decided that the Secretary of State for Defence should take over ownership of the overall policing strategy and that Sir Ronnie Flanagan should visit Iraq and assess the UK's contribution to policing in Iraq.
14. Sir Ronnie Flanagan reported on 31 January 2006 (a year designated by MNF-I as The Year of the Police), with a number of recommendations. He acknowledged that the challenges were severe, though believed that they appeared more daunting from the London end given the difficulty of grasping the contextual factors. A key conclusion was that there needed to be an overarching strategic plan to establish the role of policing in a democratic Iraq, which he believed that CPATT had recognised and would work on in coordination with the Iraqi government. In the absence of such a blueprint, function would continue to follow form. The focus on measuring quantitative inputs rather than qualitative outcomes had encouraged the creation of what were called "pop-up" battalions of IPS and rogue elements (such as in the Basra intelligence agencies) which operated outside the IPS system and in some provinces outnumbered the regular IPS. To address this, there was a need for an effective recruiting, training and vetting system with Coalition support. The basic recruit training programme at JIPTC needed to be proofed against the conditions in Iraq. Sir Ronnie

also concluded that there was insufficient clarity over the definition of success, which he suggested should be the creation of an IPS fit for purpose, which respected human rights and democracy and bore favourable comparison with peers in the region.

15. The transfer to MOD of overall control of the whole SSR programme, including policing, coincided with the establishment of a cross-Whitehall SSR group (under MOD chairmanship) in November 2005, whose remit included the development of measures of effect designed to permit a strategic assessment of progress. The FCO retained responsibility for managing the contracts with IPAs and recruiting civilian officers. Funding remained a problem with £12.5m allocated for FY 2006/7 from GCPP funds against a bid of £20m.

16. Lessons

- Establish a clear **national police strategy** at the outset (so form follows function). The focus remained for too long the establishment of numbers, rather than an overall blueprint. The relationship between the police service and its government and community has to be clarified and enforced. The national government has to be involved in the process at the first practicable stage. In the case of Iraq, the policy vacuum at the centre created a disconnect between Baghdad and Basra.
- All elements of the **rule of law chain** need to be brought together – Justice Sector Reform, Prisons and Governors as well as Ministries and police.
- Effective **recruitment, training and vetting** procedures must be in place from the outset. There was no clarity about the actual size of the IPS (against an MNF-I target of 135,000, the real figure was anything between 115,000 and 230,000). Loyalty to the state rather than individuals, militia leaders or parties must be enforced, if necessary through a robust legal system and regular high-level political intervention by international partners. Impartial and accountable intelligence agencies need to be established at the outset. Training needs to reflect and adapt to the reality on the ground, i.e. the conditions in which the recruits will be operating. International partners delivering the training need to have effective intelligence (e.g. understanding the local power structures).
- If Coalition partners have **differing police traditions** (e.g. provincial vs national; conditions in which detainees can be held), there must be clear agreement how to reconcile them.
- For those conducting the training, the **division between military and civilian authority** must be clearly articulated, particularly in conditions where the military will be relied upon to protect civilian police trainers/mentors on the ground. If the purpose is to create a civilian police force, does it make sense to entrust this to military officers? On the other hand, if the deployment of civilian police trainers is dependent on military protection, then the capacity of civilian police to deliver their training is in practice subject to decisions by the military commander. Embedding of senior civilian police in national or regional command HQs to advise on mission planning and execution might also be considered.

- The effect of **differing deployment constraints between military and civilian** colleagues need to be factored into the training strategy.
- In the case of individual donor governments, **clear Departmental allocation of responsibility** for delivering the outcome needs to be established, with an effective inter-departmental coordinating mechanism and regularly (and robustly) reviewed targets.
- Effective post-conflict reconstruction requires an ability to draw on **relevant policing expertise** (national strategies; generalists vs specialists; senior/middle vs lower ranks). The FCO's International Security Directorate established a Strategic Task Force on International Policing in mid-2004, designed to contribute to this aim, but was unable to direct British police forces (still less Home Office civil servants) to provide personnel. The inability of the UK to provide niche expertise resulted in the progressive erosion of influence over national policing strategy and ability to deliver improved performance of the IPS. To a large extent this was a natural consequence of the requirement for those in government service to volunteer for service in Iraq. However, consideration might be given to establishing a cadre of experts by creating incentives for officials to develop such expertise through their career.
- **Funding requirements** need to be recognised from the outset, in particular the high security overheads of operating in hostile conditions – for example, security constituted 60% of personnel costs of DFID's £2.3m MOI project. Limited resources will not deliver the expected outcomes.

Dominic Asquith

11 July 2010