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D/CGS/51/9/4

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CGS VISIT TO OP TELIC 15-18 JAN 04

GENERAL

1. I have just returned from a visit to Iraq. I was initially hosted by 101 (US) Air Assault Division in Mosul, in the north. In Baghdad I met the deputy to Ambassador Bremer, Ambassador Jones; Comd CJTF, Lt Gen Rick Sanchez; the Deputy to Sir Jeremy Greenstock, David Richmond; the head of the Security Assessment Team, MG Karl Eikenberry; the National Security Advisor, David Gompert, and,

. In the south I was hosted by GOC MND (SE), visiting units from 20 Armd Bde and Sir Hilary Synnott at CPA(S).

2. I gained a rather different feel to that from my last visit in mid- September. There is a real sense of improvement in all areas and especially in security. Whilst there is still much to play out, particularly in the political piece, the impression is that the Coalition has turned a very significant corner.

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3. Notwithstanding the most recent and large VBIED attack on the day of our departure, there has been a significant downturn in incidents against the coalition and progress in a wider sense, a fact reported to by 101 AA Div in Mosul and supported in Baghdad and in MND(SE). There appear to be a number of reasons: Firstly, one senses that the capture of Saddam in early December has had a real effect on Iraqi perceptions, when reinforced with the substantial efforts in reconstruction, and this has led to greater co-operation and consent, more contempt for FRE, and thereby an increase in passage of information from the Iraqi people against the aggressors. Secondly, the switch of our intelligence main effort from WMD to Counter Terrorism (CT) has made significant improvement to intelligence gathering. Thirdly, the creation of the impressive and very joined up Intelligence Fusion and Targeting Cell (IFC) at CJTF level, permitting rapid exploitation of information from every available source and subsequent targeting, has proved most fruitful. Their continued success in the capture of information and suspects is creating an ever-expanding web of information in a virtuous circle.

4. The main effort, Security Sector Reform (SSR), appears to be making significant progress at the operational level. There remains some way to go in the fine detail required for SSR post 1 Jul. Police training is going well, whilst the early gains of the ICDC are contributing significantly to security. There also seems to be good progress on the emerging legal and reform system. The intent to train a total of six battalions of ICDC in MND(SE) is progressing well with an IOC of 1 Apr<sup>1</sup>, and the possibility of a FOC on 30 Jun 04. The initial intent of only using the ICDC on a very temporary basis to fill the police-gap has generally been substituted with the plan to retain the ICDC as a 'third force' supporting the Coalition, and subsequently the police, until such a time as they are no longer required. Indeed, the emergence and training of battalion commanders, and in due course brigade commanders and staff, will permit the simple meshing and corresponding liaison with coalition and police levels of command – ultimately the ICDC will be in a position to take more responsibility for security, allowing the drawdown, overtime, of coalition troops.

5. The New Iraqi Army (NIA) remains embryonic and I fear it will be a long way from functioning at anything above company level by the end of the year, and then only as light single-arm infantry. It will take considerable time to develop their capability and create effective all-arms groupings that can operate at the battalion and brigade level, and counter any external threats. It is important that perceptions of those unaccustomed to the provision of combat power are not seduced into believing that the NIA will be an effective guarantor in the short term.

<sup>1</sup> Envisages Coy Level capability integrated into Coalition Forces activity.

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6. I met briefly with MG Eikenberry, who is conducting a Security Assessment within the CPA and CJTF. The results of this assessment will contribute to forming security sector plans post transition of authority to ITA.

### TRANSITION OF AUTHORITY

7. I was a little surprised at just how immature the plans for transition of authority on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004 remain, with much political process ongoing to establish the most appropriate way to elect the ITA and formulate the Coalition's position thereafter. There was considerable discussion of Sistani's influence on the process of elections, which I suspect will be significant. David Richmond commented that regardless of the election method, it was unlikely that Sistani could obtain an overall majority in the ITA.

8. In discussing the future structures and the relationship between the ITA and the Coalition, the National Security Advisor, David Gompert, envisaged an alliance or partnership between the ITA and a senior contact group in order to influence and advise the ITA. There was also a view that US elements within the CPA would transform into the US Embassy. Sir Hilary Synnott expressed the view that CPA(S) should initially maintain its bilateral functionality, gradually transferring more and more control to the Iraqi Ministries and local/regional government. Ultimately, he felt it should become the British Consulate. The governate teams of CPA(S) remain populated with mainly military personnel and continue to undertake a critical task; many of the CPA(S) projects have yet to bear significant fruit, but are in place and he is optimistic that they will reap substantial dividends between now and the summer.

9. In all my discussions it was evident that any partnership between the Coalition and the ITA should, in effect, make Iraq 'part of the Coalition'. In doing so it should enable the effective integration of military and civil forces at all levels during the transition process, whilst not relinquishing complete control. Such an alliance should permit the easier creation of a military/security agreement and SOFA. Once the overarching principles of the transfer of authority to, and relationship with, the ITA have been established, I believe it would be most useful to develop a comprehensive roadmap showing the transition. We must also ensure that Iraqis understand our intent and maintain their consent at all levels through an effective information operation.

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