



DECLASSIFIED **DFID** Department for
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From the Principal Private Secretary

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25 March 2003

Dear Matthew

**IRAQ: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE
CONFLICT**

COBR has asked DFID to prepare a paper setting out humanitarian needs and possible response during the initial period of the conflict. I attach a paper for discussion at the War Cabinet meeting tomorrow morning. This has been prepared in consultation with other government departments.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries of the Deputy Prime Minister, Chancellor, Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Party Chair, 'C', and to Sir Andrew Turnbull.

*Yours
Anna*

Anna Bewes
Principal Private Secretary

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IRAQ: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CONFLICT¹

Summary

1. Planning horizons assume that a permissive security environment can be established within 30 days, though this will vary across the country. Until a permissive environment is established, the main humanitarian providers will be the military, Red Cross, and local staff working for the UN and NGOs. Acute humanitarian needs will arise from damage to infrastructure and/or the movement of people. Access to food is not expected to be a significant problem in the first 30 days.
2. There is some capability to respond to low intensity humanitarian needs. However, this will prove to be inadequate in the event of a protracted conflict (particularly around Baghdad or the North), significant damage to infrastructure and/or large scale movements of people. The threat or use of CBW could trigger a humanitarian disaster.
3. A list of action points is set out at the end of the paper. In summary, we need to:
 - a.
 - b. Urgently address the risk posed by chemical and biological weapons (CBW) to Iraqi civilians, and assess the scope for UK support in case of a CBW attack.
 - c. Continue discussions with the US, UN and others to ensure that we are able to respond adequately to various humanitarian scenarios.
 - d. Finalise decisions on humanitarian funding for Iraq based on further discussions between DFID and HMT.

A permissive environment

4. This paper considers the provision of humanitarian assistance during the initial phase of the conflict, before a permissive security environment can be established for civilian humanitarian agencies. In an insecure Centre/South Iraq, humanitarian assistance can only be provided by the UK military and US military. The Red Cross, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNOPS may provide support to internally displaced people (IDPs) in secure border areas; UNHCR and neighbouring national governments will support refugees inside or

¹ This paper is based on DFID assessments as well as discussions with FCO, MOD and CO colleagues.

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on their own borders. UN agencies' local staff and international NGOs are still functioning in Northern Iraq.

5. Planning horizons assume that a permissive security environment will be established within 30 days of the start of conflict. In many parts of the country, a permissive environment may be established more quickly – UN security assessment teams are expected to follow close behind the military. Equally, however, areas controlled by coalition forces may remain insecure during and after the 30 day period if pockets of resistance remain and there is continuing threat of aerial CBW attack. Humanitarian assistance requires that a permissive environment is established quickly. *It is also essential that humanitarian workers are clearly distinguishable from coalition forces and seen to be neutral and independent.*

Needs

6. The high level of pre-conflict vulnerability, especially in Centre/South Iraq must be kept in mind. The situation is evolving fast. Humanitarian needs can only really be assessed on the ground.

7. Food is not expected to be a major problem in this initial phase. Most Iraqi households have built up some stocks, and should be able to cope for the first 30 days. Acute humanitarian needs will arise from damage to water and power infrastructure, and from the movement of people.

8. Further, it is possible to define three broad humanitarian scenarios:

- a. Low impact: a swift conflict, limited civilian casualties, limited damage to Iraqi infrastructure, minimal movement of people, general access achieved quickly, UN-managed successor to OFF back on track quickly.
- b. Medium impact: protracted conflict in South/Centre, Turkish/Kurd conflict in the North, heavy fighting around Baghdad, significant damage to infrastructure, and significant movements of people. Limited access for humanitarian agencies. No early UN mandate for a successor to OFF.
- c. High impact: as above but with the use of CBW against either coalition forces or Iraqi civilians.

Preparedness

9. UK military: reasonable preparations made for a humanitarian role focusing on restoring/providing power, water, some limited food and very limited medical supplies. Sir Galahad due to arrive within days carrying supplies. Need to continue planning, linking in with DFID advisers and UN system. Overall, capability is strictly limited, and subject to first call by the military itself.

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10. US military: some 2000 civil affairs officers will deploy with frontline troops, carrying 10,000 daily humanitarian rations, with a further 2 million rations positioned in the region. Overall, reasonable capability to address localised food/water needs but limited by transport/logistics. Need to liaise further to ensure that US capability can join up with other providers.
11. International Red Cross Movement: experienced with good local staff, a few international staff still in Iraq, and others positioned regionally. Critical role to play as humanitarian provider of first resort, able to operate in conflict environment. Resource constrained. Appealed for US\$160m – DFID has committed £30m.
12. IOM/UNOPS: clear mandate to support IDPs in Centre/South and North respectively, but very limited capability and mixed track record. Constrained by funding – appealed for US\$69m, so far attracted \$1.6m – and technical skills.
13. UNHCR: adequate plans to cater for up to 300,000 refugees moving east into Iran, and more limited numbers into Syria, Jordan, and Kuwait. Also underfunded. Turkish plans to hold refugees within Iraqi territory.
14. Other UN agencies and NGOs: dependant on local staff and existing supplies already positioned in Iraq. Very limited capability at present, but could gear up and work with others when a permissive environment is established.

Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW)

15. Use of CBW could set off a humanitarian disaster. The risk is two fold: first, the threat or use of CBW could trigger large scale movements of people; second, the use of CBW could itself lead to casualties and, or in the case of biological weapons, a medical emergency. The impact would be exacerbated by the withdrawal of humanitarian agencies, who have almost no capacity to operate in a CBW environment.
16. At present, there is no significant preparation underway to inform Iraqi civilians or Iraqi medics of precautions or mitigating measures that they may take in the event of a CBW attack; or to position medical supplies and specialists to deal with a civilian emergency. MOD has set out options for a range of scenarios. UK action, for example, to make available large quantities of antibiotics, could save thousands of lives under some CBW scenarios, and minimise the risk of a CBW attack becoming a humanitarian and presentational disaster which could severely jeopardise campaign objectives.

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Action Points

17. We need to:
 - a. Secure and maintain a permissive environment as soon as possible. (Action: MOD/Coalition Forces)
 - b. Maintain UK military humanitarian planning and preparations, and liaise further with the US military. (Action: MOD, DFID)
 - c.
 - d. Address funding and constraints for humanitarian agencies, including the International Red Cross Movement, International Organisation for Migration and UNOPs. (Action: DFID and HMT to conclude discussions on overall humanitarian funding).
 - e. Urgently address the risk posed by CBW to Iraqi civilians. Coalition forces are likely to be the only people with operational response capacity, albeit strictly limited. We need to assess the scope for UK support in the event of a CBW attack. (Action: MOD, DFID, DOH to discuss options set out by MOD).
 - f. Stand ready to protect and restore power and water supplies to prevent a health-based disaster. (Action: MoD, DFID).
 - g. Maintain preparations for the broader humanitarian phase working with the UN system and NGOs, and secure a UN resolution to modify the OFF Programme. (Action: DFID, FCO).

Department for International Development
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