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\*by e-mail

From: Anna Bewes  
Private Secretary  
Ext.:  
Date: 19 February 2003  
cc. PS/PUSS\*  
PS/Suma Chakrabarti\*  
Nicola Brewer\*  
Michael Mosselmans\*  
Mark Lowcock\*  
Carolyn Miller\*  
Alistair Fernie\*

Kevin Sparkhall\*

Special Advisers\*

#### IRAQ CONTINGENCY PLANNING: UPDATE

The Secretary of State held a meeting on 18 February to discuss your submission of 17 February on contingency planning for Iraq, which set out a proposed deployment plan in preparation for any humanitarian action we might undertake in Iraq. The meeting was attended by Nicola Brewer, Carolyn Miller, Alistair Fernie, Michael Mosselmans,

and you. I outline below the key points and conclusions of the meeting.

#### General

2. The Secretary of State was concerned that much of what was proposed in your submission pre-supposed the financial comfort we had so far failed to receive from the Treasury. She was unwilling without a clear financial package to plan do more than support the UN, key international agencies, and perhaps provide some financial assistance to the UK military for Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). The Secretary of State pointed out that she had made repeatedly clear in various fora (to the Prime Minister in writing and verbally; on the floor of the House) that DFID did not have the financial resources available to play a major role. We could not move beyond this without the assurances we needed.

#### Specific proposals

3. On the specific proposals in your minute, and within the constraints outlined above, the Secretary of State was content for you to open discussions about possible support to **NGOs not as yet involved in Iraq**, but with specific technical expertise (such as Oxfam on water and sanitation), so as to plug potential gaps in response capability. She agreed that we should otherwise discourage NGOs without

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experience of Iraq from becoming engaged at this point. The Secretary of State was content with the idea of **working closely with the US** on a humanitarian response if there was an overarching UN mandate (and financial cover), but not without.

4. The Secretary of State did not agree that the Department should set up a **forward base in Kuwait**. This would imply that military action was now a certainty. She agreed that scoping missions could visit the region, and that the Department could arrange for vehicles and other items to be ready for transportation to the region, but was not happy for these to be pre-positioned. She accepted that this would mean that DFID would not be prepared for an immediate response in the event of military action or a humanitarian crisis on the ground. She suggested that we should consider providing more funds to ICRC, who were undertaking similar preparations to those recommended in your submission; responded that ICRC had limited capacity to increase their work in this area. The Secretary of State did not agree the proposals for people to begin work in **Amman and Larnica**, as this again pre-supposed a significant role for DFID, which as yet we were unable to promise.

5. The Secretary of State was content in principle for money to be made available to the **UK military for QIPs**. However, this would need to be re-examined if there was no UN mandate and the UK military was working under a US lead. We should also be very clear to the military that without additional financial comfort this money would be limited. We should consider what was made available to the military in East Timor, and work along those lines (figures mentioned of around £3 – 5m, possibly with a technical adviser). The majority of our money under these circumstances would go through the UN and international agencies.

Next steps

6. It was agreed that the Department should work through the range of different scenarios within which we might have to act, and in each case consider how we would respond in terms of financial support and the channels through which it would be provided. The meeting considered a few:

a. US/UK bilateral action; no second Security Council Resolution (SCR); US military governor without UN mandate:

DFID would work through whichever international agencies were willing to engage: the UN, Red Cross, and others.

b. Second SCR but overall US lead:

DFID would provide funding to UK military for QIPs; and work through the UN, Red Cross and others.

c. Second SCR with UN mandate:

DFID would wish to be positively engaged – exactly how would depend on financial package available.

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7. Each of the above scenarios and variations on them would need to be considered in the light of the amount of finance made available, working closely with Mark Lowcock and Finance Department in discussing access to DFID's contingency reserve. The Secretary of State made clear that without additional resources we would not be able to take up the exemplary role, working with the UK military, that the PM had asked us to. We should ensure that all those with whom we were engaged in discussions were very clear on this.

8. It was agreed that, following the Chiefs of Defence Staff meeting on 19 February, the Department would put together a clear and factual paper along the lines outlined above for circulation to key Whitehall interlocutors at senior official level. **Action: MENAD/CHAD with Finance Dept involvement**

9. The Secretary of State asked that the Department should carefully think through what it would be happy to do and under what scenarios, bearing in mind key humanitarian principles under which we and the international community worked. We should be prepared to stick firmly to these, and refer to them in the paper above. **Action: CHAD/MENAD**

10. The Secretary of State agreed that the Department should work up, and discuss in Whitehall, language on a UN mandate/lead, the need to prioritise humanitarian considerations, and other key issues which we would wish to see included in a further SCR. **Action: MENAD/CHAD**

Other points

11. The Secretary of State made clear that she was content for the Department to continue to engage in 'in principle' discussions within Whitehall and the international system on the range of possible scenarios and DFID interventions.

12. The Secretary of State noted and accepted the likely human resource constraint under which CHAD/ERT would be operating, even under the proposals outlined in your submission.

13. The Secretary of State asked the Department to reconsider the wording currently being proposed in draft replies to Parliamentary Questions, along the lines of "DFID has well established systems for responding to humanitarian crises", as this was a very different scenario from those in which we had been previously engaged. **Action: CHAD**

Anna Bewes  
Private Secretary