

# **Statement of Colin FW Smith QPM, Assistant Chief Constable (Ret'd) to the Iraq Inquiry.**

[25<sup>th</sup> June 2010]

## Introduction.

This statement covers my involvement in the United Kingdom [UK] development of the Iraqi Police Service [IPS] from January 2005 to April 2006. This took part in 3 phases, all through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO], as a seconded serving senior police officer in the rank of Deputy Chief Constable. Firstly, in January 2005 as part of a US Assessment team set up by [then] US Secretary of Defence Donald RUMSFELD. Secondly, from February to May 2005 as UK Senior Police Advisor [SPA] Iraq Multi National Division SE [MND SE] in Basra and thirdly from May 2005 to April 2006 as UK Chief Police Advisor [CPA] [Iraq]. I subsequently returned to Iraq in October 2009 as a private consultant developing an EU funded project at the Higher Institute, Baghdad Police College [not referred to further in this statement].

This statement is furnished not as a historic record but rather a reflection and an 'informed commentary' on a number of key issues. My thanks go to all those – police, military, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office – who were involved in supporting me both in Iraq and London. They worked to the highest professional level in hostile, difficult and frequently changing conditions. Many of them go largely unrecognised, subject to criticism not praise. I make no criticism of any individual. I pay a similar tribute to all my Iraqi and Coalition colleagues, civilian, military and police, in Iraq, many of whom were sadly killed.

## UK Development of Iraqi Police 2005-2006

Any Mission needs clear direction and purpose. Much unfavourable comment was made about the lack of an Iraqi National Police Strategy or Plan from the Ministry of Interior

[MOI]. The same argument could be leveled at both the Coalition and UK in respect of developing the Iraqi Police.

On arrival in MND [SE] in January 2005 there appeared to be a number of competing plans including Security Sector Reform (SSR) with police training at Az Zubayr [AZ] and in Basra, Maysan and Al Muthanna and that ubiquitous term 'mentoring'. Civilian Contractors, funded by the UK, largely worked under their own direction and command structure. The only apparent link to any pan-Iraq Coalition Strategy was through the US International Police Liaison Officers IPLO's]. These were private contractors employed by the Coalition on a similar basis to those employed by the FCO. They were deployed in small numbers to the 4 Southern Provinces. Their links to the UK presence, military and UK Civilian Police [CivPol], was tenuous and mainly through a monthly meeting held at Divisional HQ MND South East under the Chairmanship of the UK Military Provost Marshal. Their training work concentrated on 'hard edge' policing – Tactical Support Unit [TSU] and Special Weapons and Tactics [SWAT] – and compiling records and assessments of Iraqi capability and equipment [something which featured prominently in US thinking across Iraq throughout my posting].

An attempt was made to develop, following extensive consultation with national and international stakeholders, an integrated '12 Month Iraqi Police Service [IPS] Development Strategy'. 12 months being seen, at that time, in early 2005, as the likely duration of UK Training in Iraq. The 12-Month Plan acknowledged that the military should play a key role in 'generic' policing areas [infrastructure, equipment, non-specialist training etc], leaving CivPol to concentrate on enhancing specialist capability. Whilst the 5 Key areas – Training, Operational Capability, Intelligence Capability, Public Support and Police Support Infrastructure – became the focus of successive plans this strategy did not become, in the long run, the driver in MND [SE]. Why? Perhaps lack of adequate consultation and explanation with the military, the changing situation on the ground or the military expectation that as the main provider of resources etc they had

the better understanding of the issues. Attempts to support a strategic aim of 'developing an efficient, effective, credible and community-based, accountable police service' rapidly became subsumed within military operational and logistic plans.

In the absence of an agreed strategy, plans were driven on the ground by successive '6 month' military and staff rotations and changes in security and political expectations. The latter involved a redrafting in midsummer 2005 to encompass a 'conditions based transition' [the 'Rupert JOY' Report), then a further revision post 19 September Al Jamiat Incident in Basra and a late attempt to embrace the US CPATT [Civilian Police Advisory Training Team] driven 'PTT' [Police Training Team] Strategy.

The absence of any visible common strategy between CPATT and MND [SE] meant that the latter lost substantial potential resources and UK influence in Baghdad on policing development was weakened.

Throughout my secondment there was little clarity in Baghdad over Coalition [i.e. US] plans to develop the Iraqi Police Service. The key concentration was on quantitative not qualitative measures, particularly 'recruit numbers'. Plans, generally constructed on PowerPoint, changed almost monthly.

'Command' was a defining issue throughout my posting, not only in MND [SE] but also in Baghdad. 'Police Primacy' was a much used phrase but in reality this was a military mission. As the security situation deteriorated this became increasingly so. The Coalition failed, from the beginning in post-war Iraq, to properly resource the CivPol input. It must be said there was no queue of international police officers, serving, retired or on contract rushing to serve in Iraq. The civilian police [CivPol] attempt 'to influence' developments was doomed to failure with neither the number nor resources to become a lead player.

A key difference, and a pointer for future deployments, rests on the interpretation of 'command, which is central to military philosophy, doctrine and planning. The UK Police Service used to be in the same mindset – a disciplined, rigidly structured, crime focused and independent organisation. It has, since the 1990's, and particularly since the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, become accustomed to 'partnership' working. This is the coming together of different agencies, marshalling of disparate resources and working together towards an agreed strategy and plan. This often involves pooling of funding resources. Chairmanship and 'lead' resides with the person with the greatest knowledge and professional expertise. This was never the case in Iraq. Here, the motto was akin to *'He who pays the piper calls the tune'*. This was generally, in relation to numbers deployed and financial resources, a US and military preserve.

The concept of 'co-ordinated operations' was woefully lacking in Iraqi security operations and planning. One of the successes of UK operations in Northern Ireland was that of 'Military Aid to Civil Power' [MACP]. On the ground this translated into operations at a tactical level being co-ordinated through 'Territorial Co-Ordination Groups [TCG's] and at an operational level both 'Police Primacy' and the military providing specialist support to the police. In essence both partners doing what they were good at and not trying to turn policemen into soldiers and conversely soldiers into policemen. In Iraq the police and military operated in separate 'silos'.

In Baghdad civilian inputs in police development diminished in late 2005 with Department of State (IRMO) staff replaced by Department of Defence (MNF-I). An increasing number of posts occupied by US CivPol officers were replaced by military. The policy of using 'military' reservists with police backgrounds was, at best, a poor compromise. I detected a weakening morale among IPLO colleagues as military encroachment increased. I attended the Baghdad Police College on 9th January 2006 for the launch of '2006 – Year of the Police'. This was the new priority 'emanating' from

MNF-I. Whilst a positive step, the 'strap line' that *'Just enough is good enough'* was, whilst probably realistic, not particularly encouraging.

MND (SE) reflected a different slant. In February 2005 an offer was made by the then General Officer Commanding [GOC] Major General Jonathan RILEY, for the SPA to work from Divisional HQ. This was not pursued (with hindsight a debatable decision) as CivPol was a civilian FCO-led initiative. The latter could only really have been achieved in a benign environment which much greater resources. The 19th September 2005 'Al Jamiat' incident confirmed already identified weaknesses in the IPS, not in training, but Iraqi command and political direction, and ultimately widespread infiltration by militias. A key development took place following this incident with the decision taken in London for the Ministerial 'lead' on the development of the IPS to move from Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to Ministry of Defence (MOD).

In any future Mission the line of command must be agreed and clarified at an early stage. This would, above all, have been helpful in an environment where command was regularly changed. During my secondment in Iraq I worked with 3 successive GOC's in Basra. Each brought a different perspective and priorities. Two of the three were openly dismissive of UK policing input, supporting the concept of a third nation [Italy] assisting in police reform [i.e. paramilitary].

Defining the role of the police in Iraq was another failure. It appeared, certainly from the US perspective, that the police were seen as the 'frontline' in confronting dissident elements in what was effectively an 'insurgency'. It is certainly recorded that the Iraqi police bore the overwhelming fatalities compared to their military. Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson, as Head of CPATT in 2005-6 and the top American police trainer in Iraq, noted through his spokesperson, that 1,497 Iraqi police officers were killed and 3,256 wounded in 2005. <sup>[a]</sup>

This disparity was not born out in prioritising resources or reconstruction. Overwhelming resource input went to the Iraqi Military. It was not until mid 2005 that the woeful failings within the MOI were recognised and a similar level of resources and training that had gone in to the MOD in the previous 2 years acknowledged.

A constant aim of many in the coalition, faced by a growing level of insurgency, was to turn to a paramilitary style of policing, much admired by the military. Paramilitary police units, typified by the Italian Carabinieri or French Gendarmerie, are generally 'trained police officers acting in military formations'. They operate as police with additional military training and equipment to provide an enhanced state capability to deal with large-scale public disorder, organized crime and increasingly counter-terrorist duties. The key criteria is that they receive a high level of police training and generally carry police powers of arrest, detention etc.

In Iraq this took two distinct forms. In Baghdad, and later replicated in other areas of Iraq, the creation of Iraqi Special Police Commandos. Largely recruited from the ex-Iraqi military [Republican Guard, Special Forces etc]. They had no, or at best limited, police training and were in effect a 'third force' working to the Minister of Interior. These were re-designated as 'Wolf Brigades' and then later as the 'Iraqi National Police'.

In MND [SE] both CivPol, IPLOs and military trained 'Tactical Support Units' in each Province, with 500 alone in Basra. They were trained police officers, responsible to the Provincial Chief of Police [COP] carrying out public order, security and counter terrorist duties. They included enhanced SWAT capability and surveillance support.

UK resource inputs in terms of personnel deployed was not insignificant. In comparison to US 'CivPol' inputs which varied in 2005/6 between 500-700, the UK deployed up to 250 personnel to police development in Iraq. This comprised, in late 2005, 55 police trainers at JIPTIC, 17 police trainers at Az Zubayr [Shaibah wef 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005], 20

advisors in Baghdad, 10 advisors in MND [SE] and 145 civilian contractors [including a large number funded through the Government of Japan]. It simply though, in terms of the challenge, was not sufficient to insure swift achievement of transition goals.

In reality the deterioration in the security situation across Iraq, but noticeably on the ground in MND [SE], post summer 2005 meant that a military lead in MND [SE] became inevitable. I proposed and supported, in April 2006, the move of my successor, ACC Dick BARTON to Divisional HQ, Basra Airport.

The 'deteriorating' security situation had a major influence on ability to progress development plans. As attacks increased in MND [SE] movement became difficult. On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2005 a roadside IED detonated whilst a Control Risk [CRG] convoy travelling from AZ to Basra Palace was passing. The two occupants (CRG) in the front vehicle were both killed despite the protection of an armoured vehicle. A secondary device seriously injured two Iraqi children who had tried to help. Chief Inspector Ian ELDER (Head of Training at AZ) was travelling in the second vehicle en route to a meeting. Differing security and 'duty of care' between CivPol [and civilian contractors] and UK military personnel was a major disconnect with the GOC's. One indicated that unless civilian contractors agreed to be carried in 'Snatch' landrovers their contracts should be terminated. Movement of CivPol became a further issue. As security deteriorated CivPol officers needed increasingly to be escorted by substantial military resources [Warrior Armoured Vehicles and helicopters]. Their priority however was increasingly lowered by the military. For example, at the beginning of December 2005, the military announced a change in the way helicopter flights operated which meant that there were at least 40% less available flights in Basra Province. Helicopters were flying from Basra Palace four days a week rather than seven. This caused serious difficulties in moving between sites to attend meetings with staff often stranded overnight in various locations without transport. It was not uncommon for officers to

spend 2 or 3 days at the Basra APOD awaiting movement. Similar problems existed in Baghdad with an FCO 'fly only' policy supported by insufficient helicopter resources.

I do not criticise the military for this situation. As security and 'war fighting' became a greater priority, movement of civilians became a lesser priority.

With limited resources it was, and is, important to identify those areas where such resources should be deployed. This must be flexible. Iraq was a rapidly changing environment. This presented challenges and opportunities.

In January 2005, in respect of policing development, the UK had two priority areas – in MND (SE) an operational training and mentoring role and in Baghdad a strategic role. Attempts to balance the 2 were not always successful. Both suffered from lack of resources. In Baghdad the UK was, in May 2005, a 'small player'. By April 2006 a number of key posts in CPATT – advisor to the Deputy Minister of Police, Training and Intelligence - were occupied by UK CivPol officers. The move into CPATT should have taken place much earlier, probably in mid-2004, when the UK CivPol had the opportunity of taking a 'Deputy' post subsequently occupied by the UK military [Brigadier General]. CPATT was always a military organisation.

Since it was clear that the UK was never in terms of numbers and resources going to be a 'major player in Iraqi police development, where could the UK CivPol have 'value added' in Iraq in areas the UK both had recognised expertise and the ability to deploy? This was assessed by me to be in four distinct areas or 'niches' - training, intelligence, strategic development and major crime/forensics.

Basic Police Training [BRT] was from late 2003 a core concentration of UK resources across MND [SE]. All those involved in the Training Academy at Az Zubayr [AZ] and its successor the Joint Training Academy [JTA] Shaibah [adjacent to the MOD Shaibah



Logistics Camp] can be proud of their achievements. More so in that, with frequent changes of direction from CPATT and the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad, it changed from a UK based [and funded] initiative to a CPATT Academy. Perhaps it should have done so earlier. I refer to previous comments about disconnect between MND [SE] and CPATT. There was also a disconnect between Coalition and Iraqis over training locations and recruit numbers. Basic Recruit Training was carried out at various times in Jordan at the Jordan International Police Training Centre [JIPTC], the Baghdad Police Academy and Regional Academies [including Az Zubayr and Shaibah]

The UK training role in Baghdad was more difficult to assess. In early May 2005 UK influence had almost totally waned. Influence increased through the appointment of a suitably skilled officer who went on to become, in October 2005, lead Deputy Director given overall management responsibility for the Iraqi Police Senior Command Course at the Baghdad Police College. This was an excellent opportunity to influence police management training at a very senior level.

Another officer assumed a Deputy Training Officer role in CPATT HQ at Adnon Palace. Resources deployed, were significantly lower, than those at either AZ or at JIPTC in Amman, Jordan. It is a question of judgment as to where resources achieved most effect but the UK can be proud that it had representation across all the key areas.

Criminal Intelligence was identified as a UK strategic priority in 2004. The Coalition failure to adequately and quickly develop a Criminal Intelligence System (CIS) in Iraq was a major failing. The reason? Rivalry between different intelligence agencies, both Coalition and Iraqi, and an attempt, despite UK advice, to seek a military led, FBI based project. This would be high on cost, long to develop and low on deliverables in Iraq. There was never any doubt amongst Coalition partners that the UK police were best placed professionally to lead on criminal intelligence. However, as a senior US advisor succinctly put it *'Colin, we know you have the knowledge and experience but since the*

*US is putting 95% of the staff and funding in, there is no way this is going to be led by the Brits'.*

UK led in developing the Northern Ireland concept of a 'Confidential Telephone' service, called 'TIPs', in Baghdad and Basra and showed what could be achieved with the right skilled individuals. In Iraq this was a pool of excellent, professional, experienced, ex Royal Ulster Constabulary [RUC] Special Branch officers who had retired early following the transition of the RUC into the Police Service of Northern Ireland. This frontline experience [often 25 years plus per officer] could not , and still in 2010, cannot, be replicated by the US or other coalition partners.

TIPs in Baghdad generated increasing 'actionable intelligence' for Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces with reports averaging from 150 per week in early 2005 to over 400 by the end of that year. An example: following the receipt of confidential information relating to a VBIED [Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device] attack on an IPS Station, swift transmission of this information to Coalition Military Intelligence resulted in a proactive operation in which a large number of suspects were arrested and vehicles packed with explosives recovered.

TIP's was one of the real successes of UK work which both brought in a large volume of intelligence that undoubtedly saved many Iraqi and Coalition lives, [REDACTED]

The success in Baghdad was subsequently replicated in Basra at the end of 2005. In the latter both the support of the Iraqi MOI and Coalition Military was achieved but also substantial funding was provided by both MND [SE] and MNF-I in Baghdad.

If there is one area that UK Police 'plc' has acquired experience in recent years it is that of 'strategic development'. Whilst this was largely ignored in MND (SE) in favour of military plans there was a perceived imperative in London to publish a 'Strategic Plan'.

There was not a shortage of such plans – in May 2005 in the office in Baghdad there were 3 previous plans, all including a well scripted foreword by the Minister of Interior! What was lacking for 3 years was a will and an organisational capability to develop, and act upon, such a strategy. Without this anything produced became a meaningless collection of words. The Coalition latterly realised the need to develop the organisation, notably the Ministry of the Interior, and to develop the Iraqi Police strategic capability.

The development of forensic capability is another acknowledged UK strength. This offers an alternative to ‘round up the usual suspects’ and for evidence based investigation. It does however, staffing aside, require substantial resource investment. Again this was realistically beyond UK ability to provide. In Baghdad whilst the UK took the lead on the Forensic Training Academy, overall development came under the US military in CPATT. This is an area that the UK, under the very capable leadership of an experienced UK police officer, continued to progress with some success into 2010, providing many skilled trainers and practitioners.

None of the above could be achieved without deploying the right skill sets. In an ideal world deploying serving police officers to Iraq should be a career development opportunity second to none. In reality the sourcing of such officers was problematic. Some forces, particularly the larger metropolitan, refused to allow serving officers to deploy and prospective officers themselves did not see it as either attractive or a low risk option.

The key factor is matching the appropriate skill sets to the role and post. Drawing from a limited pool, particularly for senior posts, those skills were not always available. By April 2006 most of the senior CivPol posts in Iraq were filled by retired officers. They, however, not only brought with them high professional skills accumulated over 30+ years but also deployed for a minimum period of 12 months, allowing a degree of

consistency. Is the priority in deploying to overseas missions, such as Iraq, to give police officers a career opportunity or to actually have an operational impact?

The use of 'civilian contract' officers was more contentious. An early, and sometimes recurring issue, was their role and command structure. In March 2005, in MND [SE] I brought them under direction of respective provincial CivPol SPA's. Some individuals within the contractors were slow to acknowledge this which, in future months, did their company and relationships with CivPol and Military little credit.

The UK was fortunate, during my period in Iraq, to have a post-Patten pool of ex-RUC/PSNI officers. These deployed to Iraq in large numbers through the civilian contractors. There was a failing within their management to acknowledge difficulties and recruit and deploy experienced senior officers as Team Leaders. The military singularly failed to realise the potential of these officers assessing them more in terms of 'pay packets' rather than capabilities.

The incident at the Al Jameat Police Station on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2005 was a defining moment in my secondment. It highlighted that UK CivPol worked as advisors. We never controlled the Iraqi Police. Whilst we sought to influence development, control and direction rested with CoPs and MOI (or not in the latter case). I, nor any of my officers, could give an order to even the lowest ranking Iraqi police officer.

It also highlighted the ever present role of the local 'Shia' militia. We had been aware of militia, tribal and political influence in the police for most of the year. For months we researched and highlighted cases of murder, kidnapping, extortion, torture and corruption, mostly ironically at the Al Jameat Police Station. Evidence against specific officers was provided to the Minister of the Interior and Deputy Ministers. I attended a meeting in Baghdad between the UK Deputy Ambassador and the [then] Minister of Interior, Bayan Baqer Solagh JEBBAR. A list of over 80 persons suspected of criminal

activities at the AL Jameat was handed over. The Minister vacillated. No action was taken by the CoP or MOI against these men, except occasionally moving them from one office to another or re-designating their department title. They were protected by local militia (Shia).

Much was made of this militia influence in the police. It must be remembered that training a Police Service is not the same as training an Army. In the latter, recruits are removed from their home environment, lodged in barracks and serve often far away from their locality. They operate as 'formed' units in large groups with a high level of self protection. Police officers serve, often alone, where they live, return home every night, worship at the local Mosque and police their own neighbourhoods. They are much more susceptible to local political and tribal influence and threats.

The success of any long term stability in Iraq rests on a community supported police force. This is best done through locally recruited officers – i.e. police who have both knowledge of the community in which they serve and a 'stake' in working together with local community and political leaders. There was a view amongst many in the Coalition that since the IPS was a 'national service' officers would serve across Iraq. This might have appealed on the view that you could deploy Sunni officers to Shia areas and vice versa and avoid tribal/political interference. In reality the police would then become an 'internal security force'.

#### Concluding Comments.

Management by hindsight is an exact science, however, experience in one area should not be overlooked, or limit future action, but be a guide. A great deal was achieved during 2005-2006. Had the situation on the ground been, or become more benign, this could have been exponentially greater.

Was greater resources needed? Yes, definitely. The timescale to reconstitute a police force should be put in perspective. If one compares the situation in Northern Ireland [a far less intensive situation], it could be argued that it took the UK nearly 10 years, between 1970 and 1980, to rebuild and develop the Royal Ulster Constabulary. This could realistically be juxtaposed to 15 to 20 years in Iraq. Under Saddam Hussain the IPS was chronically under resourced and effectively at the bottom of the security infrastructures. What was required after 2003 was a complete restructure and re-organisation from the bottom up.

Was the experience and capability of UK policing recognized? Yes, increasingly by Coalition, mainly US partners. It was just not enough in terms of numbers. In discussions on policing development with US colleagues, I used the expression – *‘The police have 90% of the knowledge and 10% of the resources. The military have 90% of the resources and 10% of the knowledge.’*

What was my overall impression of 15 months in Iraq? I refer to an analogy by a predecessor referring to the role of the Senior Police Advisor - *‘It was like being in a small rowing boat following in the wake of a troop transport’*. I would concur, but also add that the maps and navigation charts [for police development] were in the rowing boat!

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[a] Eric Schmitt, “2,000 More MPs Will Help Train the Iraqi Police,” *New York Times*, January 16, 2006.