

SECTION 15.1

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

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Introduction

1. This Section addresses:

- planning and preparation for the deployment of UK civilian personnel to Iraq;
- the recruitment and deployment of civilian personnel between 2003 and 2009;
- duty of care and protective security measures;
- recognition of service;
- support to locally engaged (LE) staff; and
- skills and seniority.

2. This Section does not consider:

- the recruitment, deployment or impact of UK police officers in Iraq, addressed in Section 12;
- the contribution of civilian personnel to the reconstruction of post-conflict Iraq, addressed in Section 10;
- the funding of civilian deployments, including the cost of protective security measures, addressed in Section 13; or
- the Government's review of the UK approach to post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation, and the creation of a deployable UK civilian standby capability, addressed in Sections 10.3 and 10.4.

Terms used in this Section

UK-based staff. UK Government employees deployed to Iraq for a defined period, usually between six months and one year.

Locally engaged (LE) staff. Staff recruited and employed in Iraq by the UK Government. Sometimes referred to as “locally employed staff” or “locally engaged civilians”.

Contractor. Used in this report for all personnel hired by UK (and US) government departments on fixed-term contracts, including those referred to in contemporary documents as “consultants”.

Consultant. Usually refers to contractors providing specialist technical advice. Widely used in contemporary documents and by witnesses to the Inquiry in place of “contractor”.

Personnel. All staff and contractors.

Seconded. An individual deployed temporarily to another organisation.

Civilian outreach event

3. In June 2010, the Inquiry held an outreach event for civilians who had served in Iraq between 2003 and 2009. A total of 48 people took part from a range of departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DFID). No contractors responded to the invitation.

4. Participants were divided into three working groups:
 - the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) period (18 participants);
 - mid-2004 to mid-2007 (21 participants); and
 - mid-2007 to mid-2009 (nine participants).
5. Each working group discussed two themes: “Strategy and Delivery” and “Support to Staff”.
6. Views expressed during the event appear where appropriate in this Section.

Pre-invasion planning and preparation

7. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 address the shortcomings in the UK Government’s planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.
8. When the invasion of Iraq began overnight on 19/20 March 2003, there had been no systematic analysis of the availability of civilian personnel to meet the UK’s likely obligations in post-conflict Iraq.
9. Factors shaping the Government’s pre-conflict approach to civilian deployments included:
 - inadequate planning machinery;
 - the absence of a comprehensive strategy for post-conflict Iraq, which could have informed a cross-Whitehall assessment of the civilian requirement;
 - an assumption that, after a short transitional phase led by the US, the post-conflict administration and reconstruction of Iraq would be run and staffed by the international community, led by the UN, allowing the UK to limit its contribution to provision of financial resources and targeted advice delivered by a small number of civilian specialists;¹
 - DFID’s limited operational capacity;
 - concerns about the legal status of UK secondees working for the US-led Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in Iraq; and
 - failure to decide whether the UK should assume overall responsibility for a geographical sector of Iraq.
10. In the months before the invasion, the UK Government made preparations for civilian deployment to Iraq in four areas:
 - cross-government support to ORHA;
 - DFID humanitarian support to the UK military and international organisations;
 - FCO staff for the British Embassy Baghdad; and
 - MOD civilians supporting Operation (Op) TELIC.²

¹ Paper FCO, [undated], ‘Scenarios for the future of Iraq after Saddam’; Letter Chilcott to Ward, 24 February 2003, ‘ORHA’.

² Operation TELIC was the codename for the involvement of UK Armed Forces in the military campaign in Iraq from 2003 to 2011.

ORHA

11. ORHA was created by the US in January 2003.³ It was led by retired US Lieutenant General Jay Garner and reported to the Department of Defense (DoD).

12. The UK's approach to ORHA in the weeks before the invasion of Iraq is described in Section 6.5. UK concerns during that period included:

- DoD's assumption of responsibility for all US post-conflict planning and the marginalisation of the State Department;
- the limited time available to ORHA to plan and prepare for the post-conflict phase of operations;
- persistent shortcomings in those preparations;
- legal concerns, in the absence of a UN mandate for the administration and reconstruction of Iraq, about the compatibility of certain post-conflict activities with the rules of military occupation, and the implications for any UK secondees serving with ORHA; and
- a shortage of information about ORHA's staffing requirements and, as a consequence, the contribution that should be made by the UK.

13. The UK Government's response to those concerns and the evolution of its policy towards ORHA during March and April 2003 are addressed in Sections 6.5 and 10.1.

14. In February 2003, the Government seconded a small number of officials and military officers to ORHA. The Inquiry has seen little evidence of formal inter-departmental discussion of the appointment process.

15. The first UK secondee, appointed in February 2003, and the senior UK member of ORHA was Major General Tim Cross.⁴

16. Maj Gen Cross had recent and relevant experience of planning for conflict in Iraq. In the second half of 2002 he had worked as Logistic Component Commander of the Joint Force being prepared for possible operations against Iraq. He returned to the UK in late 2002.

17. Maj Gen Cross told the Inquiry:

“I had been back only a short time at my desk, where I was the Director General of the defence supply chain, a couple of weeks and the phone rang literally out of the blue, and they⁵ just said we want you to go. To be honest, I wasn't surprised.”⁶

³ Bowen SW Jr., *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

⁴ Statement Cross, 2009, pages 6-7.

⁵ Maj Gen Cross was unsure whether he had been phoned by the Military Secretary (Major General Peter Grant Peterkin) or the Chief of the General Staff (General Sir Mike Jackson).

⁶ Public hearing, 7 December 2009, page 10.

- 18.** The record of the FCO Iraq Morning Meeting on 4 February 2003 stated that the US had requested “a broader UK team (in addition to our MOD representative [Maj Gen Cross])”.⁷ FCO officials would check Personnel Directorate’s⁸ progress in identifying “an FCO representative”. DFID was also considering sending a representative.
- 19.** Ms Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, was reluctant to second DFID officials to ORHA in the absence of a UN mandate for reconstruction (see Section 6.5). On 20 February, Ms Short agreed that one DFID representative should work with, but not in, ORHA “on a temporary basis” to “influence and help with the planning of the Office”.⁹
- 20.** A DFID official was appointed “temporary humanitarian adviser” to Maj Gen Cross later in February.¹⁰
- 21.** The record of the FCO’s Iraq Evening Meeting on 27 February stated: “ORHA needs strengthening – we are looking for a volunteer.”¹¹
- 22.** On 27 February, Sir Christopher Meyer, British Ambassador to the US, warned that ORHA was “woefully understaffed”.¹² He suggested that officials earmarked for the British Embassy Baghdad should be sent to help.
- 23.** On 6 March, Maj Gen Cross informed the MOD, the FCO and DFID that he expected the requirements for Lt Gen Garner’s “Top Team” to become clear the following week.¹³ In the meantime, he believed that two UK military officers might be able to join him from the US Central Command (CENTCOM) in Tampa. He reported that, on the civilian side, DFID’s humanitarian adviser continued “to explore how ORHA’s humanitarian plans are developing” and an FCO official had been identified as UK liaison officer for ORHA’s back office in the US.
- 24.** The record of the FCO Iraq Morning Meeting on 10 March stated that ORHA had been “strengthened with three further UK officers”, two from the FCO and one from British Trade International (BTI).¹⁴
- 25.** The British Embassy Washington reported on 16 March that five UK secondees had deployed with ORHA to Kuwait: Maj Gen Cross, a second military officer and the three civilians from the FCO and Trade Partners UK (TPUK), the division of BTI responsible

⁷ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 4 February 2003, ‘Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points’.

⁸ Renamed Human Resources Directorate later in 2003.

⁹ [Minute Bewes to Fernie, 20 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Meeting with General Cross’](#).

¹⁰ Minute Brewer to Secretary of State [DFID], 28 February 2003, ‘Iraq/UN: visits to New York and Washington, 26-27 February’.

¹¹ Minute MED to PS/PUS [FCO], 27 February 2003, ‘Iraq Evening Meeting: Key Points’.

¹² [Telegram 257 Washington to FCO London, 27 February 2003, ‘Iraq: Day After: UK Role in Post-Conflict Iraq’](#).

¹³ Minute Cross to DCDS(C), 6 March 2003, ‘ORHA feedback from Gen Cross 6 Mar 03’.

¹⁴ Minute Tanfield to PS/PUS [FCO], 10 March 2003, ‘Iraq Morning Meeting: Key Points’.

for promoting UK exports.¹⁵ DFID had also agreed formally to second an official to ORHA's humanitarian assistance division.

26. On 17 March, an official in the Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat (OD Sec) informed Sir David Manning, Mr Blair's Foreign Policy Adviser and Head of OD Sec, that Maj Gen Cross had asked whether a suitable UK official was available to improve ORHA's capacity to handle Arabic-language media.¹⁶

27. Concerns about the adequacy of the UK contribution to ORHA began to grow soon after the start of the invasion and are addressed later in this Section.

DFID humanitarian advisers

28. On 3 February, DFID officials recommended to Ms Short that DFID second six civil/military humanitarian advisers to the UK military and ORHA, in order "to take further forward our objective of refining the military planning options to ensure the humanitarian consequences of any conflict in Iraq are fully addressed".¹⁷

29. The Inquiry has not seen Ms Short's response to the advice, but DFID did second a number of staff over the following weeks.

30. On 7 March, DFID informed Mr Blair that, in addition to the DFID presence in ORHA, there was now a DFID staff presence in the 1st (UK) Armoured Division (1 (UK) Div) in Kuwait, with further deployments to the region and UN agencies imminent.¹⁸

31. DFID officials sent Ms Short an outline 'Humanitarian Strategy and Immediate Assistance Plan' for Iraq on 12 March (see Section 6.5).¹⁹ The single page describing DFID's "Operational Plan" explained that: "In view of DFID's limited resources, we will retain **maximum flexibility to respond to changing scenarios and needs**". Actions planned or under way included:

- "Information Management". Staff from the Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department Operations Team (CHAD OT) would be deployed to Kuwait and Jordan to collate, analyse and disseminate field information. DFID was also evaluating the need to send staff to Turkey, Iran and Cyprus, and would retain a limited capacity to deploy assessment teams to localised crisis points.
- "Direct Support to the UN". DFID was seconding specialists to support the co-ordination and information activities of the UN's Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HIC) and Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC).

¹⁵ [Telegram 347 Washington to FCO London, 14 March 2003, 'Iraq Day After: ORHA Deploys To Kuwait'](#).

¹⁶ Minute Dodd to Manning, 17 March 2003, 'Ad Hoc Group on Iraq'.

¹⁷ [Minute Conflict & Humanitarian Affairs Department \[junior official\] to PS/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 3 February 2003, 'Iraq: Refining the Military Options'](#).

¹⁸ [Letter Warren to Rycroft, 7 March 2003, \[untitled\] attaching Paper DFID, \[undated\], 'DFID Planning on Iraq'](#).

¹⁹ [Paper Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, 12 March 2003, 'Iraq: Humanitarian Strategy and Immediate Assistance Plan: Information Note'](#).

- “[Advice to the Military/Coalition](#)”. Two DFID secondees were advising 1(UK) Div and one DFID official was in ORHA, all contributing to DFID’s “information gathering system”. A DFID secondment to the National Component HQ in Qatar was under consideration.

32. On 21 March, two days after the start of the invasion, DFID reported that it had deployed seven humanitarian and civil/military advisers:

- a two-person team to Kuwait City;
- two advisers to join 1(UK) Div;
- one to join ORHA in Kuwait; and
- one each to Amman and Tehran.²⁰

The British Embassy Baghdad

33. In September 2002, the FCO began preparations for the reopening of a British Embassy in Baghdad.

34. On 27 September, Mr Peter Collecott, FCO Director General Corporate Affairs,²¹ briefed Sir Michael Jay, FCO Permanent Under Secretary (PUS),²² on plans for reopening the British Embassy:

“Based on the Kabul experience, we are planning for an Embassy of, initially, 11 FCO staff (plus 6 from OGDs [other government departments] and 12 Close Protection Officers). We have begun the process of identifying possible staff. On the technical side ... we have likely volunteers.”²³

35. Mr Collecott emphasised the importance of committing immediately to the capital expenditure required, including for “armoured vehicles, portable accommodation and ICT equipment”. The lead time for armoured vehicles in particular was very long: 20 weeks, which would mean delivery in late February or early March 2003.

36. On public presentation, Mr Collecott advised:

“Our major, and most visible, expenditure will be on equipment for Baghdad. That is defensible on the grounds that this is prudent planning; re-establishment in Baghdad does not necessarily imply a military campaign or indeed regime change; and that we have a commitment to the FAC (Foreign Affairs Committee) to have a rapidly deployable Embassy for use anywhere.”

²⁰ Paper DFID, 21 March 2003, ‘Iraq Humanitarian Situation Update: No 1 (INTERNAL)’.

²¹ Until late 2002 the DG Corporate Affairs was known as the FCO Chief Clerk.

²² In keeping with variations in use within departments, the Inquiry refers to the most senior civil servant in the FCO and the MOD as the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), but in all other departments as the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Under Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries are referred to collectively as Permanent Secretaries.

²³ [Minute Collecott to Jay, 27 September 2002, ‘Iraq Contingency Measures’](#).

37. The recruitment of staff for the new Embassy was part of a wider redeployment of FCO staff in response to developments in Iraq.

38. On 20 March 2003, Sir Michael Jay informed Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, that “almost five percent of FCO staff in London” had been redeployed:

- 51 staff had been redeployed to the main Emergency Unit;
- 119 had been redeployed to the Consular Emergency Unit;
- the Iraq Planning Unit (IPU) had been established;
- the nucleus of a mission in Baghdad had been prepared; and
- FCO staff had been seconded to ORHA and “other bodies”.²⁴

39. The creation of the IPU, based in the FCO, and the activation of the two FCO Emergency Units in London is addressed in Section 6.5.

40. Mr Collecott updated Mr Straw on preparations for the new Embassy on 21 March:

“Plans are in place for a two-phase re-occupation of the site [of the former British Embassy] as soon as hostilities are over, and military ordnance personnel have declared the site safe ... These plans have had to be made on the basis of worst case assumptions – an insecure environment; no secure office buildings or accommodation available off-compound; no available utilities.”²⁵

41. Mr Collecott explained that, in phase one, five specially converted containers would arrive in Kuwait on 26 March to be transported to Baghdad as soon as the route was safe. The containers would provide living and office accommodation for a team of four, led by Mr Chris Segar, a senior FCO official, and would be self-sufficient in power and water. Mr Segar’s team would have secure communications from the outset.

42. Phase two would begin in the first week of May and involve installation of a protected prefabricated flat pack Embassy, with its own water, drainage and power supply, and secure living and working accommodation for 44 staff, including close protection officers. Construction of the Embassy would take 12 weeks.

43. Mr Collecott explained that the timetable was based on transport by sea and land. The FCO would be exposed to “a very awkward period” if Baghdad returned to “relative normality” quickly and pressure mounted rapidly to expand the UK presence. Two or three weeks could be saved if the flat pack containers and other equipment were flown into Baghdad. The FCO was “keeping open the option of calling in a debt with the Americans by asking them to transport the flat pack equipment and containers to Baghdad. (The RAF are not at all sure they can help.)”

²⁴ [Minute Jay to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 20 March 2003, ‘Iraq Contingency Planning and Prioritisation’.](#)

²⁵ [Minute Collecott to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 21 March 2003, ‘A British Embassy in Baghdad’.](#)

44. On 11 April, Mr Charles Gray, Head of FCO Middle East Department, told Mr Straw that the plans were on course.²⁶ FCO Personnel Directorate was identifying a pool of staff at all grades willing to serve in Baghdad in the medium to long term. The aim was to deploy staff for one year “to avoid the rapid and disruptive turnover experienced in the early days of our redeployment to Kabul”. When permanent quarters were found, the flat pack Embassy would be returned to the UK for use elsewhere.

45. Mr Gray advised that security was a priority. Staff could not be put into a situation in which the FCO could not fulfil its duty of care. Before Mr Segar’s party and the close protection team travelled, the MOD and Assessments Staff needed to conclude that the situation was calm enough in the city as whole, not just in the area immediately surrounding the compound.

46. Mr Gray added that it had not been decided how to secure the compound perimeter. Relying on the US military or a private security company would be politically unacceptable and locally engaged (LE) Iraqi guards would not be a realistic option in the short term. The British Army was the only realistic alternative. The MOD was considering the issue, but would “take some persuasion to redeploy to Baghdad from the South in what would in effect be a full company, even for a short deployment (and the cost to the FCO will be high)”.

47. On 30 April, Mr Gray reported that planning for opening the mission in Baghdad, under the provisional name of “The British Office”, was in its final stages.²⁷ The staff, the flat pack Embassy and four armoured vehicles were scheduled to arrive in Baghdad on 5 or 6 May.

48. The British Office Baghdad was established on 5 May.²⁸

MOD civilian support to Op TELIC

49. The MOD deploys civilians in a wide range of support roles for military operations. A 2007 list of 15 different roles routinely performed by MOD civil servants on deployed operation, not specifically linked to Op TELIC, included:

- “Policy and Political Adviser (POLAD)” to the deployed Commander at brigade level or higher;
- “Civil Secretary (CIVSEC)”, the senior financial officer in theatre;
- “Finance Officer”;
- “Commercial Officer”, responsible for contracts and services with local suppliers;
- “Media Adviser”;
- “MOD Police”; and
- “Defence Fire and Rescue Service”, part of the force protection service.²⁹

²⁶ [Minute Gray to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 11 April 2003, ‘Baghdad: Preparing to Open’.](#)

²⁷ [Minute Gray to Private Secretary, 30 April 2003, ‘Baghdad: Reopening of the Mission’.](#)

²⁸ Minute Owen to MED [junior official], 7 May 2003, ‘Iraq Travel Advice’.

²⁹ [Minute \[unattributed\] to PS/PUS \[MOD\], 4 December 2007, ‘TELIC Visit – Support to Operations Brief’.](#)

50. In Iraq, the MOD also deployed civilians in advisory roles outside Op TELIC, including in the CPA and the UK’s bilateral diplomatic missions.

51. On 14 February 2003, Mr John Pitt-Brooke, MOD Director General Civilian Personnel, reported that the MOD had been “successful in getting people lined up for quick deployment into theatre”.³⁰ There were about 25 Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ)-sponsored civilian posts across the Middle East. Some individuals had already deployed; others would do so over the following weeks. Other parts of the MOD would be deploying specialist staff to their own timetable.

52. Mr Pitt-Brooke expressed concern that the approach to deployments across departments within the MOD had not been as consistent or coherent as it should have been. Key issues were:

- Management information: there was no central record of those deployed, “which we need for tracking people in theatre, providing the appropriate medical and welfare support, etc. We are working on gripping this quickly”.
- Risk assessment: individuals needed more clarity about potential risks. A single source of guidance needed to be published urgently.
- Training: the approach had been inconsistent.
- Availability of equipment: current arrangements were “less than the individual has a right to expect”.
- Briefing and travel allowance arrangements.
- Medical, welfare and insurance issues: “The lack of consistent, readily available advice on medical issues ... and the lack of a single point of contact for advice may be aspects that we could improve upon.”

53. Mr Pitt-Brooke advised that a new “focal point” had been set up in PJHQ to address those issues. New arrangements would be in place on 19 February.

54. In response, Sir Kevin Tebbit, the MOD PUS, instructed officials to “bear in mind the need for wider post-conflict planning. OGDs sh[oul]d bear the brunt, but we are likely to need MOD people as well.”³¹

55. On 31 March, Mr Paul Flaherty, MOD Civil Secretary at PJHQ, informed Sir Kevin that 156 civilians had been deployed to theatre in support of Op TELIC, the largest number in the Warship Support Agency, and that numbers fluctuated from day to day.³²

56. It had taken Mr Flaherty 18 days to compile the figures. He apologised that it had taken longer than he had hoped.

³⁰ [Minute Pitt-Brooke to 2nd PUS, 14 February 2003, ‘Operation TELIC: Civilian Participation’.](#)

³¹ Manuscript comment Tebbit, 17 February, on [Minute Pitt-Brooke to 2nd PUS \[MOD\], 14 February 2003, ‘Operation TELIC: Civilian Participation’.](#)

³² [Minute Flaherty to PS/PUS \[MOD\], 31 March 2003, ‘Deployed Civilians in Support of OP TELIC’.](#)

57. Mr Flaherty reported that civilians had been deployed at all grades “in a range of roles including finance, administration, claims, salvage, RFA [Royal Fleet Auxiliary], communications, POLAD etc”.

58. Mr Flaherty confirmed that the MOD Civilian Deployment Co-ordination cell had been established at PJHQ. For the first time, co-ordinated guidance had been made available to civilians deployed on Op TELIC and a pre-deployment training strategy had been established.

59. Mr Flaherty added:

“There is a great deal for the new cell to do, but an important current priority is constructing a register of the names, and other relevant details, of civilians who are deployed. The new cell is working to render this sort of information as complete and reliable as possible.”

60. Sir Kevin Tebbit described 156 as “a significant number for deployed personnel, notwithstanding that just over half that number are Royal Fleet Auxiliaries”.³³ He attached importance to the provision of “proper support for families” and expressed the hope that the co-ordination cell would pay attention to morale, as well as training.

61. Sir Kevin also requested, as a matter of urgency, advice on arrangements for dealing with civilian deaths.

62. Mr Richard Hatfield, MOD Personnel Director, explained that any MOD civilians and accredited war correspondents killed in Iraq would be subject to the same overarching policy as service personnel.³⁴ Any MOD civilians would be returned to the UK alongside service personnel and would have the same treatment on arrival, including ceremonial, if that was the wish of the next of kin. MOD civilians were Crown servants operating in direct support of the military in a theatre of war. To offer less might cause offence or embarrassment to the families. For accredited journalists, it was proposed to confine the policy to flying the body home, with no ceremonial.

63. Mr Hatfield reassured Sir Kevin Tebbit that work was “in step” on wider Op TELIC-related civilian and service personnel issues.

64. Sir Kevin approved the repatriation proposals on 7 April 2003.³⁵

³³ [Minute Wilson to PJHQ – Civ Sec, 3 April 2003, ‘Deployed Civilians in Support of Op TELIC’.](#)

³⁴ Minute Hatfield to PS/PUS [MOD], 4 April 2003, ‘Deployed Civilians in Support of Op TELIC: Repatriation of Civilian Dead’.

³⁵ Minute Wilson to Personnel Director, 7 April 2003, ‘Deployed Civilians in Support of Op TELIC: Repatriation of Civilian Dead’.

UK civilian presence during the Coalition Occupation of Iraq

65. The Inquiry estimates that, on the eve of the invasion, the UK had between 10 and 16 non-MOD civilians ready to deploy to Iraq:

- two DFID humanitarian experts to advise 1 (UK) Div;³⁶
- four secondees to ORHA (a fifth remained in ORHA's Pentagon office; two other UK secondees were military officers),³⁷ with five or six more “in the pipeline”;³⁸ and
- a team of four to reopen the British Embassy Baghdad.³⁹

66. In late March, the MOD deployed 156 civilians⁴⁰ to theatre in support of Op TELIC.⁴¹

67. Before the invasion, DFID also deployed a number of staff to locations outside Iraq:

- Four DFID staff were deployed to Kuwait, Jordan and Iran “to monitor and assess humanitarian needs and to liaise with UN agencies and NGOs”, with an undertaking to increase numbers “as circumstances dictate”.
- DFID seconded specialists to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and was “considering requests” from other parts of the UN system.⁴²

68. By 7 April, DFID had also seconded a Liaison Officer and a Logistics Officer to the UN's HIC in Larnaca, an Air Movement Officer to the WFP's Operations Centre, and an Air Co-ordinator to the UNJLC in Larnaca.⁴³

69. DFID deployed a second Air Movement Officer to the WFP Operations Centre in early May.⁴⁴

UK civilian deployments to ORHA

70. UK policy towards ORHA is addressed in detail in Sections 6.5 and 10.1. This Section considers the nature and scale of the UK contribution to the ORHA workforce.

³⁶ [Minute Iraq Planning Unit \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 24 March 2003, 'HMG Humanitarian Planning' attaching Paper Iraq Planning Unit, 'HMG Humanitarian Planning'.](#)

³⁷ [Telegram 347 Washington to FCO London, 14 March 2003, 'Iraq Day After: ORHA Deploys To Kuwait'.](#)

³⁸ [Paper Iraq Planning Unit, 28 March 2003, 'Iraq: Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance \(ORHA\)'.](#)

³⁹ [Minute Collecott to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 21 March 2003, 'A British Embassy in Baghdad'.](#)

⁴⁰ The figure of 156, quoted by Mr Flaherty on 31 March 2003, is significantly lower than the 327 civilians deployed in Iraq in the calendar month of March 2003 according to the table submitted to the Inquiry by the MOD in May 2013 (see Table 7).

⁴¹ [Minute Flaherty to PS/PUS \[MOD\], 31 March 2003, 'Deployed Civilians in Support of OP TELIC'.](#)

⁴² [Minute Iraq Planning Unit \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 24 March 2003, 'HMG Humanitarian Planning' attaching Paper Iraq Planning Unit, 'HMG Humanitarian Planning'.](#)

⁴³ Report DFID, 7 April 2003, 'Iraq Humanitarian Situation Update: No 12 (internal)'.

⁴⁴ Report DFID, 7 May 2003, 'Iraq Humanitarian Situation Update: No 28 (internal)'.

71. On 1 April, the IPU advised Mr Straw on the UK's future engagement with ORHA.⁴⁵ The IPU assessed that, while ORHA was "in many ways a sub-optimal organisation for delivering the UK's Phase IV⁴⁶ objectives", it was "the only game in town". There was, however, "ample scope" to use UK secondees to exert leverage over US Phase IV planning and implementation. The IPU recommended that the UK should continue to commit resources to ORHA where the UK "could add real value and exert influence over emerging US perspectives and plans".

72. The IPU also recommended that the UK should:

- continue to make clear to the US the limits within which the UK, including UK personnel within ORHA, could operate;
- seek close consultation on ORHA's plans, to ensure that they did not cross UK "red lines"; and
- subject to those points, confirm Maj Gen Cross as Deputy to Lt Gen Garner.

73. The IPU reported that ORHA, which at that stage was in Kuwait, had approximately 200 staff, expected to rise to over 1,000 by the time it deployed to Iraq. The UK and Australia each had six officers seconded to ORHA. Five more UK secondees were "in the pipeline" and one was working in ORHA's back office in the Pentagon. The UK secondees were "fully integrated" and "adding significant value". At ORHA's request, the IPU was considering whether to strengthen UK representation, particularly in the areas of public relations, civil administration and humanitarian operations.

74. On 2 April, Mr Peter Ricketts, FCO Political Director, sent Sir David Manning an earlier version of the IPU paper, which identified areas in which the UK was considering strengthening its representation: public relations, civil administration, humanitarian advice and administrative support for existing secondees.⁴⁷

75. Mr Tony Brenton, Chargé d'Affaires at the British Embassy Washington, warned Sir David Manning on 3 April that the UK was "in danger of being left behind" on ORHA.⁴⁸ The list of senior officials to "shadow" ministries in Iraq was almost complete and those officials would start deploying soon. Australia had bid for a place. The UK had not, even though the US had said it would be open to such a bid. Mr Brenton advised that:

"Following our significant military efforts we surely have an interest in following through to the civilian phase. If so, given the advanced state of US preparations, it will be important that we vigorously pursue the point at next week's talks [at Hillsborough]."

⁴⁵ [Minute Iraq Planning Unit to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 1 April 2003, 'Iraq: ORHA' attaching Paper IPU, 28 March 2003, 'Iraq: Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance \(ORHA\)'](#).

⁴⁶ The military term for the post-conflict phase of operations in Iraq.

⁴⁷ [Letter Ricketts to Manning, 2 April 2003, 'ORHA' attaching Paper Iraq Planning Unit, 27 March 2003, 'Iraq: Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance \(ORHA\)'](#).

⁴⁸ Letter Brenton to Manning, 3 April 2003, 'Post Conflict Iraq'.

76. Sir David commented: “We need to decide if we want a place. Do we?”⁴⁹ He asked Mr Matthew Rycroft, Mr Blair’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to discuss the issue with the FCO.

77. UK support for ORHA was the focus of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on Iraq Rehabilitation (AHMGIR), chaired by Mr Straw, on 10 April (see Section 9.1).⁵⁰

78. Mr Straw visited ORHA in Kuwait on 14 April.⁵¹ During the visit, Maj Gen Cross handed Mr Straw a copy of his ‘Must-Could-Should’ paper (see Section 10.1). The paper, which was sent to the MOD and the IPU on 15 April, identified ORHA posts that UK secondees must fill, should fill or could fill “to best help ORHA achieve success”.⁵²

79. Maj Gen Cross advised that, if all the recommendations were accepted, the number of UK staff would rise from 19 to “about 100” within an ORHA total of 1,500 (including force protection and support staff).

80. On 15 April, Mr Straw recommended to Mr Blair:

“... a step change in the resources and personnel we offer ... We are working urgently to establish where we can best make a contribution and how this will be funded.

“We now need an immediate effort across government and with the private sector to get UK experts into key Iraqi ministries quickly. Patricia [Hewitt, the Trade and Industry Secretary] is particularly keen that we should appoint people to the economic ministries ...”

81. In his memoir, Mr Straw wrote:

“I could not believe the shambles before my eyes. There were around forty people in the room, who, somehow or other, were going to be the nucleus of the government of this large, disputatious and traumatised nation.”⁵³

82. On 15 April, the IPU informed Mr Ricketts that it had requested extra staff to cover the “major surge of work” in managing the secondment of UK officials to ORHA, and was trying to identify funding.⁵⁴ It estimated that the first UK secondees would be required by early May.

⁴⁹ Manuscript comment Manning, 4 April 2003, on Letter Brenton to Manning, 3 April 2003, ‘Post Conflict Iraq’.

⁵⁰ Minutes, 10 April 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁵¹ Statement Cross, 2009, pages 17-18.

⁵² Minute Cross to MA/DCDS(C), 15 April 2003, ‘ORHA posts UK manning: must/should/could’.

⁵³ Straw J. *Last Man Standing: Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Macmillan, 2012.

⁵⁴ Minute Chatterton Dickson to PS/PUS [FCO], 15 April 2003, ‘Iraq: ORHA: PUS’s meeting with Permanent Secretaries, 16 April’.

83. Sir Michael Jay informed Mr Straw on 16 April that he had reached agreement with Sir Andrew Turnbull, the Cabinet Secretary, on “the modalities for deploying experts from central government, plus experts from eg the NHS and local government”.⁵⁵

84. Sir Andrew Turnbull sent Mr Blair a copy of Sir Michael’s minute later the same day, commenting: “This is important and we will respond. But we will need the right collective decisions quickly if this project is to [get] under way.”⁵⁶ Sir Andrew identified two problems:

- It was not clear that ORHA had reached the right conclusions about what was needed, or that ORHA’s view of its role was shared by the UK.
- The UK needed to decide on the scale and precise roles of UK secondees and to reach agreement on how to finance the activity.

85. On 17 April, Mr Blair agreed that the UK should “increase significantly the level of ... political and practical support to ORHA, including the secondment of significant numbers of staff in priority areas”.⁵⁷ Mr Blair added that:

“As a general rule, our role in humanitarian aid and in the reconstruction of Iraq should be commensurate with our contribution to the military phase.”

86. The FCO, DFID and the Cabinet Office were instructed to provide Mr Blair with lists of secondees, their roles and dates of arrival in Iraq, by 25 April.

87. Lt Gen Garner, accompanied by Maj Gen Cross and other ORHA staff, left Kuwait to fly into Baghdad on 21 April.⁵⁸

88. In his statement to the Inquiry, Maj Gen Cross commented that, during ORHA’s time in Kuwait, his UK team was “strengthened a little, including a very useful media team provided by Alastair Campbell [Mr Blair’s Director of Communications and Strategy]”, but efforts to secure significant numbers of additional UK personnel were “frustratingly slow”:

“I found myself ringing around lobbying my own contacts and then asking ‘formally’ for named individuals who I knew would add real value – usually with little or no ‘official’ agreement/response. I did however manage to get some ‘unofficial’ additional military support.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ [Minute Jay to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 16 April 2003, ‘Iraq: ORHA: UK Support’.](#)

⁵⁶ [Letter Turnbull to Prime Minister, 16 April 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Civil Assistance to ORHA’.](#)

⁵⁷ [Letter Rycroft to McDonald, 17 April 2003, ‘Iraq: ORHA’.](#)

⁵⁸ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009; Statement Cross, 2009, page 20.

⁵⁹ Statement, 2009, page 18.

89. In the absence of contingency preparations for the deployment of more than a handful of UK civilians to Iraq, officials urgently sought:

- cross-Whitehall agreement on the detailed arrangements for recruitment and deployment of individuals from a range of different organisations;
- agreement with ORHA on the level of support it would provide UK secondees; and
- detailed information on secondees' roles in Iraq.

90. Sir Michael Jay launched the recruitment process on 22 April, sending a request for volunteers to Sir Andrew Turnbull and all Whitehall Permanent Secretaries.⁶⁰

91. Sir Michael included a list of priority positions for UK secondees based on recommendations from Maj Gen Cross (see Section 10.1). Sir Michael described in broad terms the personal qualities and skills volunteers should possess:

“The key to a successful secondment will be enthusiasm, personal impact, resilience, flexibility and the ability to take a wide top-down view of policy and priorities. The ability to deploy quickly is also essential: ideally we want the first volunteers to reach Baghdad by around 5 May to allow them to help shape ORHA's work and approach from the start. We expect secondments to last between three and six months, depending on the requirements of ORHA and the Iraqi ministry concerned.

“I hope you will take a broad view in looking for volunteers ... you might consider suggesting secondment of officials on your books but not currently employed ... I hope you will also consider drawing people from your wider pool of stakeholders – I would, for example, welcome volunteers from eg police authorities, quangos or NHS trusts.

“In all cases, enthusiasm and personal qualities are likely to be just as important as specific expertise ...”

92. Sir Michael explained that salaries would be paid by employing departments. Discussions were continuing on how other costs should be met. ORHA was expected to provide accommodation. Staff would not be deployed until ORHA and Maj Gen Cross were confident it was safe to do so. The “austere” living and working conditions would be compensated by an allowance package being finalised by the FCO.

93. On 25 April, FCO, DFID, MOD and Cabinet Office officials agreed a number of steps to co-ordinate departments' responses:

- Mr Dominick Chilcott, Head of the IPU, would lead a scoping visit to identify posts of greatest value to the UK (see Section 10.1).

⁶⁰ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 22 April 2003, 'Iraq: UK Support for the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance \(ORHA\)'](#).

- The UK would pay salaries, additional allowances and transport costs to and from theatre, on the assumption that ORHA would cover accommodation and all other in-country costs.
- All departments would pay the salaries of their own staff. The MOD, DFID and the FCO would pick up additional costs for their staff. Other departments' additional costs would be met through the allocation of a portion of the UK's reconstruction budget to the FCO (see Section 13.1).
- FCO security advisers would assess the security risk in Baghdad as soon as possible.
- The IPU would inform ORHA that the UK understood that its secondees would receive the same medical, evacuation and emergency response package as US staff.
- A similar understanding would be needed "in due course" between the MOD and other departments, covering Multi-National Division (South-East) (MND(SE)).
- The FCO, DFID and the MOD would be responsible for recruiting their own staff. The Cabinet Office, in liaison with IPU and DFID, would select staff put forward by other departments.
- The FCO would arrange medical examinations and inoculations for secondees and issue formal letters of appointment and terms and conditions.⁶¹

94. The FCO informed No.10 on 25 April that members of the 20-strong UK contingent with ORHA in Kuwait had arrived in Baghdad.⁶² It explained that 12 more civilian and military secondees were expected to arrive in Baghdad by 5 May. Secondees' roles were still unclear, partly because of continuing uncertainty about ORHA's own role. The FCO was:

"... instructing them to take a flexible, pragmatic approach to their work, aiming to be proactive in identifying how they can best add value in support of Coalition Phase IV objectives. We are also requesting this first wave to report back with early recommendations for deeper UK engagement in specific areas."

95. Ms Emma Sky, CPA Governorate Co-ordinator for Kirkuk from June 2003 to February 2004, told the Inquiry that she was not given a briefing by the FCO before travelling to Iraq. Instead she had received a phone call telling her "You've spent a lot of time in the Middle East. You will be fine."⁶³

⁶¹ [Minute Dodd to Manning, 25 April 2003, 'ORHA: Practical Arrangements for UK Secondees'](#).

⁶² [Letter Owen to Rycroft, 25 April 2003, 'Iraq: ORHA'](#).

⁶³ Private hearing, 14 January 2011, page 2.

96. On 6 May, Mr Straw announced to Parliament the appointment of Mr John Sawers as the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Iraq (see Section 9.1). Mr Straw explained that:

“Mr Sawers will work alongside Chris Segar, head of the newly opened British Office in Baghdad, particularly in relation to the political process and our work in the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance.”⁶⁴

97. Sir John Sawers told the Inquiry that, although he was “the senior Brit on the ground” he was not Ambassador Bremer’s deputy, nor was he in the line management chain of ORHA or the CPA. Rather, he was a representative of the British Government and so his role was one of “exerting influence rather than exercising power”.⁶⁵

98. By 14 May, the UK had still not reached agreement with the US on ORHA support for UK secondees.⁶⁶ The IPU explained to Mr Straw that:

“Since ORHA deployed to Kuwait we have been trying to obtain assurances from the Americans ... about the precise terms on which our contribution is being provided. So far, despite a good deal of pressing, we have not been successful ...”

99. Deployment of the additional secondees was delayed briefly by DFID concerns about security.

100. On 13 May, Mr Suma Chakrabarti, DFID Permanent Secretary, informed Sir Michael Jay that ORHA’s ‘Outline Brief for Potential International Partners’ did not cover security issues adequately.⁶⁷ The outline committed the US military to provide overall security and evacuation arrangements, but “it does not set out any security procedures or contingency plans, as we would normally require for any other UK mission in any other country”.

101. Mr Chakrabarti explained that the contractors forming the bulk of the DFID team recruited in response to Sir Michael Jay’s request for staff on 22 April, and due to travel to Iraq the next day, had said that their insurance cover would be invalid until there was an adequate security plan. The existing DFID secondee to ORHA had therefore been put on standby to withdraw if security arrangements were not resolved quickly, and the first two additional secondees had been stood down. Mr Chakrabarti proposed to send a DFID security team to Baghdad the next day and requested that an FCO security adviser accompany them.

102. Sir Michael Jay responded the same day, after discussing the issue with the UK military, Maj Gen Cross and Mr Sawers.⁶⁸ Sir Michael reported that Maj Gen Cross

⁶⁴ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 6 May 2003, column 515.

⁶⁵ Public hearing, 10 December 2009, pages 56-58.

⁶⁶ [Minute Chatterton Dickson to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 14 May 2003, ‘Iraq: ORHA: Security for UK Secondees’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Ad Hoc Ministerial Group, 15 May: ORHA Secondees: Security’.](#)

⁶⁷ Letter Chakrabarti to Jay, 13 May 2003, ‘Iraq: Deployments to ORHA’.

⁶⁸ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 13 May 2003, ‘Iraq: Deployments to ORHA’.](#)

considered the issue in Baghdad to be “protection rather than evacuation”. Sir Michael was “willing to accept the judgement of those on the ground that the arrangements in place adequately provide security for the military and civilian secondees already in ORHA and the augmentees we will be deploying from today”.

103. Sir Michael added:

“In briefing UK secondees ... we have stressed that Baghdad is an insecure environment and that security guidelines laid down by the US military must be followed at all times ... All secondees are deploying with a full suite of protective equipment including body armour, helmets and personal NBC [nuclear, biological, chemical] suits, and have been trained in their use by MOD.”

104. Sir Michael agreed, however, that it would be helpful to have a more detailed plan, “not least to meet the insurance requirements of contracted staff”. Depending on what the DFID security team concluded, the FCO might take up the suggestion that their work “form the basis for a security plan covering all UK secondees”. DFID and the FCO should continue to liaise closely.

105. The first joint FCO/DFID security visit took place at the end of June and is addressed later in this Section.

106. Before the AHMGIR on 15 May, the IPU advised Mr Straw that:

“Security for our secondees is a key concern ... The US military are committed to providing ORHA’s overall security and evacuation arrangements ... ORHA does not yet have a detailed evacuation plan, but the advice from theatre is that the key issue in Baghdad is protection rather than evacuation.

...

“Our own judgement, including that of Security Strategy Unit, has been to accept the view of those on the ground ... The UK civilians currently in ORHA ... have told us that they are content with the way the US arrangements work in practice ... We have therefore proceeded with the deployment of additional secondees, and the first group of 22 departed for Iraq on 14 May.”⁶⁹

107. There is no record of the issue being discussed by the AHMGIR on 15 May.⁷⁰

108. In the Annotated Agenda for the 22 May AHMGIR, officials explained that security experts had drawn up procedures that allowed DFID “to deploy fully in support of ORHA”.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Minute Chatterton Dickson to Private Secretary [FCO], 14 May 2003, ‘Iraq: ORHA: Security for UK Secondees’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Ad Hoc Ministerial Group, 15 May: ORHA Secondees: Security’.

⁷⁰ Minutes, 15 May 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁷¹ Annotated Agenda, 22 May 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

109. The AHMGIR was also informed that 61 UK officials had been seconded to ORHA, five of them in Basra. Officials provided very basic information on the functions of 35 of the 61, explaining: “Some secondees have yet to be allocated specific roles.”

The CPA and the return to a “war footing”

110. Section 10.1 describes ORHA’s absorption into the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) during May 2003.

111. Mr Blair visited Basra and Umm Qasr on 29 May. DFID and the FCO provided separate briefings for the visit.

112. DFID advised that it had stepped up its “staff support” for ORHA in Baghdad and Basra and was looking at additional areas to support.⁷²

113. The FCO advised that the UK now had 61 secondees in ORHA (including in Basra), most of whom were working with Iraqi ministries.⁷³ In Basra, the UK had provided a Deputy to Mr Ole Olsen, the Danish Head of ORHA(South), and 10 other secondees, and planned to send more.

114. On 1 June, the Deputy to Ambassador Olsen reported that ORHA(South) had 21 staff (eight UK civilians, five UK military officers, five Danish civilians, two US military officers and one Japanese civilian). Additional staff were arriving “in trickles” but were mostly military officers and had been directed to ORHA(South) by 1 (UK) Div and Maj Gen Cross. Those officers were useful as “stopgaps”, but ORHA(Baghdad) needed to provide expert staff.⁷⁴

115. On 3 June, Mr Blair called for Whitehall to return to a “war footing” in Iraq to avoid losing the peace (see Section 9.1).⁷⁵ He stated that the CPA lacked “grip and organisation” rather than money or numbers of staff. The UK needed to “beef up” its involvement and there needed to be “a strong civilian team in the South. In general, there needed to be a much stronger civilian grip”.

116. After the meeting, Baroness Amos, the International Development Secretary, told Mr Hilary Benn, Minister of State for International Development, and Mr Chakrabarti that “the Prime Minister’s thinking seemed to be that the UK would put in the people; US the money”.⁷⁶

⁷² Letter Bewes to Cannon, [undated], ‘Iraq – Humanitarian Update’.

⁷³ Letter Sinclair to Cannon, 27 May 2003, ‘Prime Minister’s Visit to Iraq’.

⁷⁴ [Minute ORHA South \[junior official\] to Chilcott, 1 June 2003, ‘ORHA South – First Impressions’.](#)

⁷⁵ [Minute Cannon to McDonald, 3 June 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meeting, 3 June’.](#)

⁷⁶ Minute DFID [junior official] to DFID [junior official], 3 June 2003, ‘PM Iraq meeting’.

117. In the Annotated Agenda for the AHMGIR on 12 June, officials informed Ministers that:

“... we continue to strengthen the CPA with a fluctuating contingent of UK secondees, currently numbering around 70. The bulk of those sent in May will return to the UK in mid-August. Their concluding reports will give us the information to decide where we can best target our resources ... in the medium term.”⁷⁷

118. On 16 June, Ms Sally Keeble, who had been DFID Parliamentary Under Secretary of State until earlier that month, raised with Mr Blair her concerns about DFID’s planning and preparation for post-conflict Iraq and its performance since the invasion, including its slow engagement with the CPA after Ms Short’s resignation in May (see Section 10.1).⁷⁸

119. Mr Rycroft told Mr Blair that: “From what DM [David Manning] and I have seen from here, Sally’s letter is accurate in highlighting DFID’s failure to pre-plan and to engage with CPA.”⁷⁹ Mr Rycroft recommended that Sir Andrew Turnbull pursue the issue with DFID.

120. On 4 July, Mr Chakrabarti told Sir Andrew Turnbull:

“DFID support to CPA has grown dramatically; and continues to do so. In early April when CPA (ORHA as was) moved to Baghdad, DFID had one official in CPA. That has grown to 16 today split between Baghdad and Basra, and will rise upwards of 30 over the coming weeks – some 30 percent of the total UK contingent ...

“DFID secondees into CPA have been successful in work areas ranging from food distribution to refugee returns. Their success is based on thorough groundwork done beforehand to ensure they have substantive roles, the skill set they bring to their tasks, and professional support and back up from London.”⁸⁰

121. Ministers visiting Iraq in early July raised questions about the skills and seniority of secondees to the CPA.

122. On 2 July, Baroness Amos advised Mr Blair that the CPA contained “too many people with the wrong skill set – policy focus rather than operational expertise, and insufficient experience of post-conflict developing country situations”.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Annotated Agenda, 12 June 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁷⁸ [Letter Keeble to Blair, 16 June 2003, \[untitled\]](#).

⁷⁹ [Minute Rycroft to Prime Minister, 23 June 2003, ‘DFID’s Performance on Iraq: Letter from Sally Keeble’](#).

⁸⁰ [Letter Chakrabarti to Turnbull, 4 July 2003, ‘DFID’s performance on Iraq – Letter from Sally Keeble MP’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Areas of Concern Raised in Sally Keeble’s Letter’](#).

⁸¹ [Letter Amos to Blair, 2 July 2003, \[untitled\] attaching Report, ‘Iraq: Visit Report’](#).

123. Baroness Amos made a number of broad recommendations for enhancing the UK contribution:

- “more UK people with political skills on the ground ... Arabic speakers, with knowledge of the region, to strengthen capacity in CPA(South) and CPA Baghdad”;
- “strengthen the senior management” in CPA(South) and “provide other staff as required”; and
- send “whatever additional staff are required with the right skill set to CPA [in Baghdad]”.

124. A week later, Ms Hewitt advised Mr Blair of the need “to ensure that we are seconding sufficiently senior people to the CPA”.⁸² It was noticeable that the US was sending more senior people than the UK.

125. Ms Keeble told the Inquiry:

“... the numbers speak for themselves. I think there were two advisers embedded with the military, two others in Kuwait, one in Washington with ORHA, as it was then, one in Amman, one in Tehran, for a large part of the early stages of the action and, by the time I left DFID, I think there were – I think I’m right in saying about nine in Baghdad and six in Basra and presumably still one in Washington.

“... I think it is a matter of judgement as to whether that’s a large number or not. I didn’t think it was a very large number.”⁸³

126. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event who had served in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 commented on the additional responsibilities of Occupation. Many felt that Occupying Power status changed the nature of their job from simply working overseas to carrying an immense responsibility to Iraqis to do what was needed to get Iraq functioning. Many struggled to find defined roles and hold on to them in US-dominated Iraqi ministries. They commented that it was often difficult to influence the US because of the UK’s relative size and capacity.

127. The skills and seniority of civilian staff deployed to Iraq are considered later in this Section.

128. By June 2003, the security of civilian personnel in Iraq had become a major concern.

129. In Cabinet on 19 June, Baroness Amos said that the uncertain security situation in Iraq required the UK to keep the security of the people it deployed there under review.⁸⁴

⁸² [Letter Hewitt to Prime Minister, 11 July 2003, ‘Report of My Visit to Baghdad’.](#)

⁸³ Public hearing, 5 July 2010, page 27.

⁸⁴ Cabinet Conclusions, 19 June 2003.

130. Baroness Amos reiterated the point on 2 July, after her visit to Iraq. She told Mr Blair:

“The overwhelming – and immediate – priority is security ... the situation appears to be worsening by the day.”⁸⁵

131. The FCO and DFID carried out a joint security assessment of Baghdad and Basra between 29 June and 3 July.⁸⁶

132. Mr Peter Millett, Head of FCO Security Strategy Unit (SSU), set out the key conclusions to Mr Collecott:

“We are failing to meet our duty of care to both FCO staff and those seconded to CPA through the FCO. The security situation is extremely dangerous and the CPA security resources are inadequate. The majority of secondees need to travel outside the secure zone where the threat is high and there is little or no control of the streets. The rules require secondees to travel in soft-skinned vehicles escorted by US military vehicles. This makes them extremely vulnerable since the US military are the target of daily attacks. The alternative to military escorts is a two-car convoy with ‘shooters’, ie armed escorts. There are not enough military personnel, so UK secondees are being asked to handle weapons, which does nothing to enhance their security.”⁸⁷

133. Mr Millett listed the steps needed to allow CPA secondees to operate “effectively and safely” in Baghdad:

- a security manager in Iraq “to brief new arrivals, keep them up to date on security incidents, manage security assets (vehicles, flak jackets etc) and act as a focal point for communications”;
- a fleet of vehicles able to operate with or without US military escorts;
- a team of armed escorts to accompany secondees outside the secure zone; and
- a radio communications system to allow secondees to stay in touch with the security manager when outside the secure zone.

134. Implementation of the package required:

- agreement on the detail with DFID, which was already introducing better transport and equipment for its secondees;
- a calculation of the number of journeys required each week and therefore the number of vehicles and escorts needed;
- ordering vehicles for early delivery;

⁸⁵ [Letter Amos to Blair, 2 July 2003, \[untitled\]](#).

⁸⁶ Minute Gillett to Brewer, 5 July 2003, ‘Iraq: Joint FCO/DFID Security Assessment Visit 29th June to 3rd July’.

⁸⁷ [Minute Millett to Collecott, 7 July 2003, ‘Iraq Security’](#).

- pursuing a commercial contract for the security manager and armed escorts;
- factoring additional costs into the Iraq Reserve claim; and
- agreeing with the IPU a script for briefing all UK secondees before they deployed.

135. Mr Millett described the situation in Basra as “different from Baghdad, partly because of the political context in the South and partly because UK civilians are not accompanied by military patrols”. The atmosphere was “more benign”, but could deteriorate. Security in Basra was enhanced by “the active involvement of a DFID team and a commercial contract that will provide armed guards and more vehicles”.

136. Mr Collecott advised Mr Straw:

“We will inevitably be faced with some very difficult prioritisation decisions: activity v. security in Iraq; activity in Iraq v. priorities elsewhere.”⁸⁸

137. Mr Chakrabarti had already set in hand the first of the recommended improvements. On 9 July, he informed Sir Michael Jay that he had appointed Control Risks Group (CRG) to provide armed support to UK CPA secondees in Baghdad.⁸⁹ The contract had been let by DFID, in consultation with the FCO, with the intention of drawing up a joint DFID/FCO contract for the longer term. Mr Chakrabarti also undertook to send a first batch of “appropriate vehicles” and hand-held communications equipment from DFID’s stockpile for use by UK staff in Iraq.

138. In late June, DFID asked the MOD to provide a military close protection team for DFID staff in Baghdad.⁹⁰

139. In its response on 17 July, the MOD explained that Royal Military Police (RMP) close protection resources were “very heavily committed ... in support of the FCO presence in Baghdad and on other tasks elsewhere”. Steps had been taken to bring the RMP commitment down to sustainable levels. That included a reduction in RMP support for FCO staff, which would limit their freedom of movement in Baghdad. MOD Ministers had agreed that the only way the RMP could provide resources to DFID staff would be if DFID shared the resources available to the FCO:

“We recognise that this is far from ideal for you and is likely to further constrain HMG’s [Her Majesty’s Government’s] diplomatic activity in Baghdad, but it may be an improvement on your current arrangements.”

140. Separately, the MOD informed DFID that medical procedures were being updated to ensure that all UK civilians and contractors received the same standard of care as those in the MOD, including evacuation to the UK or Germany as appropriate.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Minute Collecott, 11 July 2003, on Minute Millett to PS [FCO], 11 July 2003, ‘Iraq: Security’.

⁸⁹ [Letter Chakrabarti to Jay, 9 July 2003, ‘Safety and Security of UK Secondees in Iraq’.](#)

⁹⁰ [Letter Kernahan to Miller, 17 July 2003, ‘Close Protection for DFID Staff in Baghdad’.](#)

⁹¹ Letter Ferguson to DFID [junior official], 17 July 2003, ‘DFID Personnel Deployed in Iraq’.

Locally employed contractors working for DFID would receive the same level of care as locally employed civilians working for the MOD or the military: emergency care in theatre at UK medical facilities.

141. On 18 July, as part of a wider bid to the Treasury to cover additional Iraq-related costs incurred by the FCO in financial year 2003/04, Mr Straw requested £20.2m to improve security for FCO staff and UK secondees to the CPA in Iraq.⁹² He advised Mr Paul Boateng, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury:

“To meet our duty of care to staff, we need to provide armoured vehicles, armed escorts and a communication system for UK civilian secondees to CPA. This expenditure is unprecedented, unforeseen and cannot be funded by reprioritisation, nor I understand, in part from the money we have received for CPA econdes’ costs.”

142. Mr Boateng approved the majority of Mr Straw’s request on 9 September.⁹³

143. Mr Straw’s request and the Treasury response are addressed in more detail in Section 13.1.

144. On 10 July, the AHMGIR agreed that:

- Secondments to the CPA should be maintained at “approximately the current level”, but matched more closely to requirements, with more specialist than policy staff.
- Secondments should be extended from three months to six.
- Ministers and Sir Andrew Turnbull should help identify and release suitable staff from departments, including a senior oil expert and senior economist.
- The UK “effort” in CPA(South) should be increased “as required”, including through the appointment of a “suitably strong UK figure” to replace Ambassador Olsen.
- The UK should continue to send small numbers of staff to other CPA regional offices.⁹⁴

145. The IPU prepared more detailed proposals for the AHMGIR on 17 July.⁹⁵ It based its recommendations on the principle that the UK should seek to exert influence at “all levels”, from national input provided by the Prime Minister’s Special Representative to working level appointments in selected policy areas. The IPU recommended:

- filling gaps, including at a senior level in UK coverage of Security Sector Reform (SSR), the economic ministries and the oil ministry;

⁹² [Letter Straw to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 18 July 2003, ‘Iraq-Related Costs’.](#)

⁹³ [Letter Boateng to Straw, 9 September 2003, ‘Iraq Reserve Claim’.](#)

⁹⁴ Minutes, 10 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁹⁵ Annotated Agenda, 17 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting attaching Paper Iraq Policy Unit, 14 July 2003, ‘Ad Hoc Ministerial Meeting: 17 July, (Annex C) Future Staffing of the CPA’.

- targeting secondments to other CPA ministry teams more precisely;
- increasing working level support for CPA governance and the foreign, health and culture ministries;
- appointing a senior figure to lead CPA(South), where there were already 15 UK secondees;
- continuing provision of two officials to CPA(North), including the Chief of Staff;
- continuing provision of the Chief of Staff in CPA(South Central) and a cultural expert at the Babylon archaeological site; and
- leadership of four of the 18 CPA Governorate Teams (GTs) scheduled to begin operations in September, with deployment starting in late August.

146. The IPU reported that Mr Andy Bearpark, CPA Operations Director and senior UK secondee to the CPA, advised against concentrating the UK contribution to GTs in the four southern governorates on the grounds that an all-UK sector might have more difficulty in accessing funds from Baghdad. He advised that a spread of representation would also give the UK sight of developments across Iraq.

147. The AHMGIR agreed that the UK should shift emphasis over time from regional areas of operation to governorates. Ministers requested firm recommendations for the following week.⁹⁶

148. The briefing for the 24 July meeting of the AHMGIR explained that GT security was the responsibility of the local Coalition military, but that the UK was likely to have to provide additional security to fulfil its duty of care to UK GT members.⁹⁷ There would be “significant resource implications”. DFID had undertaken to fund the set-up costs of GTs in Maysan, Muthanna and Dhi Qar and running costs to the end of October 2003. The CPA would assume liability for all costs from 1 November.

149. The AHMGIR agreed that the UK would offer to lead four GTs, two in the South-East, one in the Kurdish area and one elsewhere in the Sunni area, “but not in the less stable central areas around Baghdad”.⁹⁸

150. At the AHMGIR, Mr Straw asked the Cabinet Office and the IPU to devise a debriefing system for secondees to Iraq, “to garner their experience ... and to ensure that their contribution was recognised on their return to home departments”. Ministers agreed that officials should provide a report on the results.

151. On 25 July, Sir Michael Jay updated Sir Andrew Turnbull and Permanent Secretaries on civilian deployments.⁹⁹ Sir Michael explained that, since his request for volunteers on 22 April, the Government had trained and deployed “over 100 civilian staff

⁹⁶ Minutes, 17 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁹⁷ Annotated Agenda, 24 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁹⁸ Minutes, 24 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁹⁹ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 25 July 2003, 'Iraq: UK support for reconstruction'](#).

from sixteen different branches of government”, an exercise he described as having “no modern precedent”:

“We now have 65 UK public servants working in the CPA Headquarters in Baghdad, and nearly 30 in the CPA South-East Office in Basra ... Small numbers are also working in the CPA offices in central and northern Iraq.”

152. Sir Michael reported that Ministers had decided the UK would maintain “approximately the current level of overall commitment” with a focus in Baghdad on SSR, the economic ministries and the oil sector, a “stronger lead” in CPA(South) and leadership of four CPA GTs.

153. Sir Michael explained that the FCO had set up a liaison office in Baghdad working to Mr Sawers and a CPA Operations Team (CPA-OT) in the IPU to put the UK’s secondments on “a focused and sustainable basis, and provide secondees with the appropriate support for service in what will remain a difficult and unpredictable environment”. The CPA-OT would “debrief the first group of secondees as they return to ensure we learn the right lessons from their experiences on the ground”.

154. Sir Michael advised:

“We will continue to need to provide good human resources if the CPA is to succeed. As reconstruction proceeds we expect more of this requirement to be met with staff engaged under contract from outside HMG. But we will continue to have a need to second staff with specialist skills from our own public service. The new machinery in Baghdad and the IPU will enable us to match requirements and resources more exactly.”

155. Sir Michael wrote separately to Sir Nigel Crisp, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health (DoH), to thank the DoH team in Basra for its “major contribution to the re-establishment of a functioning health system”, which had been “out of all proportion” to its numbers.¹⁰⁰

156. Sir Michael also wrote to Sir Robin Young, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), who had raised concerns about security and staff salaries.¹⁰¹ Sir Michael explained that, after the assessment of security in Baghdad and Basra, the FCO had taken urgent action that should allow it to fulfil its duty of care to staff. Working and living conditions were also improving and were now “quite reasonable (and are compensated by a good allowances package)”.

157. On salaries, Sir Michael explained to Sir Robin Young that the terms under which the FCO received funding from the Treasury for CPA deployments prevented it paying the salaries of staff seconded from other departments. He hoped that “the priority given to the reconstruction of Iraq at every level from the Prime Minister down will convince

¹⁰⁰ Letter Jay to Crisp, 25 July 2003, ‘Iraq volunteers’.

¹⁰¹ Letter Jay to Young, 25 July 2003, ‘Iraq: volunteers’.

your Ministers of the need to continue providing the CPA with the specialist help it needs". Sir Michael observed that Ms Hewitt had already made clear her support.

158. Ambassador Olsen resigned as Head of CPA(South) on 28 July.¹⁰²

159. His successor, Sir Hilary Synnott, arrived in Basra on 30 July.¹⁰³

160. Sir Hilary told the Inquiry what he found on arrival:

"A pretty dysfunctional team of eight to ten different nationalities, very, very few British, three Foreign Office officials, one permanent DFID official and a lack of focus and a lack of capability ... The phones didn't work, there were no mobile phones at that time and nobody had thought to provide me with any form of computer."¹⁰⁴

161. The decision to appoint Sir Hilary as Head of CPA(South) and his experience on arrival in Basra are addressed in more detail in Section 10.1.

162. Shortly before Sir Hilary Synnott's arrival in Basra, the CPA produced a 'Vision for Iraq', supported by a detailed implementation plan (see Section 10.1).¹⁰⁵

163. In his memoir, Sir Hilary wrote:

"The trouble was it [the 'Vision for Iraq'] did not amount to an operational plan of action ... There were no indications about how in practice they would be achieved: no details of funding, of personnel involved, of support systems or of timing."¹⁰⁶

164. On 7 August, officials informed the AHMGIR that the IPU was debriefing the first wave of UK secondees to the CPA returning from Iraq.¹⁰⁷ Operational lessons would be put to Ministers in September.

165. Separately, the Cabinet Office Corporate Development Group (CDG) began assessing the benefits of CPA secondments to staff and departments. The aim was to report to Ministers in November, drawing on responses to a questionnaire to be put to secondees within a month of their return from Iraq.¹⁰⁸

166. The outcome of both exercises is described later in this Section.

¹⁰² *Iraq Report*, 1 August 2003, *Southern Iraq Administrator leaves post*.

¹⁰³ Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain's Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, page 9.

¹⁰⁵ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009; Bremer LP III & McConnell M. *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*. Threshold, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain's Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Annotated Agenda, 7 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

¹⁰⁸ [Minute Dodd to Barker, 4 August 2003, 'Iraq: feedback from secondees'](#).

The impact of deteriorating security

167. On 19 August, a bomb exploded outside the UN headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, killing 22 UN staff and visitors, including Mr Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq (see Section 9.2).¹⁰⁹ One member of DFID staff was slightly injured.¹¹⁰

168. Later the same day, Mr Benn held a meeting with officials to discuss next steps and review the status of DFID staff in Iraq.¹¹¹ Dr Nicola Brewer, DFID Director General Regional Programmes, stated that it would be “unfortunate if DFID precipitated a withdrawal of staff from Iraq”. The department should say publicly that it would not be “intimidated” by terrorism, but any member of staff who wanted to leave should be allowed to do so. Staff employed on contracts would need advice. If anyone did want to leave, it would need to be co-ordinated across Whitehall and not perceived as an evacuation.

169. On the night of 19 August, the British Office Baghdad was evacuated to the CPA secure zone after officials received a warning of a possible attack.¹¹²

170. A second attack on the UN took place on 22 September.¹¹³

171. Security also deteriorated in the South, with fuel and electricity riots taking place in Basra during August (see Section 9.2).¹¹⁴

172. In his memoir, Sir Hilary Synnott wrote that a “shortage of space and squalid living conditions were affecting operations”, but, most importantly:

“... our combined offices and sleeping quarters were clearly unsafe. Although, in those early days, there were no instances of suicide bombs, we were still vulnerable to car bombs, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, small-arms fire through our windows, siege and sapping. The building adjoined town houses and was flanked by roads on three sides, one of which was next to a canal. The only exit towards a military safe-haven if we were attacked was over a single bridge, which could easily be blocked by any assailants. We had to move.

...

“I formally called for separate and independent security reviews by the CPA in Baghdad and by the FCO in London, knowing that they could only agree on the need for us to move.”¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq, 20 October 2003.

¹¹⁰ Minutes, 28 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

¹¹¹ Minute Assistant Private Secretary [DFID] to Austin, 19 August 2003, ‘Iraq: Meeting following the attack on the UN office in Baghdad’.

¹¹² Telegram 121 Baghdad to FCO London, 19 August 2003, ‘Evacuation of Staff of British Office’.

¹¹³ Report of the Independent Panel on the Safety and Security of UN Personnel in Iraq, 20 October 2003.

¹¹⁴ Public hearing Synnott, Lamb, Stewart, 9 December 2009, pages 19 and 57.

¹¹⁵ Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain's Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

173. The FCO Senior Overseas Security Adviser (SOSA) and the Director of CHAD OT visited Basra from 18 to 20 August and Baghdad from 20 to 22 August.¹¹⁶ They reported their findings to an official-level meeting of COBR, the Government’s emergency response mechanism, chaired by Mr Graham Fry, FCO Director General Wider World, on 26 August.¹¹⁷

174. The two officials described the picture in Baghdad as “relatively reassuring”. Overall security and staff awareness in the CPA zone, where the British Office Baghdad would be located for the foreseeable future, had improved, but DFID and the FCO were taking additional steps to reinforce security awareness “as a matter of urgency”. Basra was “more alarming”. Security at the CPA compound there was “still inadequate”.

175. COBR agreed that:

- Staff in Basra should move to more secure locations within Basra Airport until satisfactory physical security measures were in place, subject to Sir Hilary Synnott’s agreement that the move “would not compromise the operational effectiveness of the CPA in Basra to an unsatisfactory level”.
- The FCO should consider appointing permanent security managers for Baghdad and Basra to provide a rolling review of the threat.
- The Cabinet Office should raise the seriousness of the situation at the next Ministerial meeting on Iraq and “reiterate the need to deploy only those staff deemed essential”.

176. Advice prepared by officials for the 28 August AHMGIR did not reflect the COBR conclusions on deploying only “essential” staff.

177. Before the AHMGIR on 28 August, Mr Neil Crompton, Head of the IPU, advised Mr Straw:

“Concerns about security argue against putting in more staff [in Basra], but holding staff back, or withdrawing staff temporarily, will only compound the problem. The immediate solution is to strengthen security measures in CPA(South) ... Civilian staff also need to be provided with a large fleet of armoured vehicles: until these arrive, which will take time, we need more assistance with escorting from the military ... Resources for security assets are an issue. But the principle should be that we provide the number of security assets we need for people to do their jobs properly, rather than limit the number of tasks we take on to the number of security assets we have on the ground (as some around Whitehall have been suggesting). This will be expensive.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Minute CHAD OT to Austin, 27 August 2003, ‘Security Assessment of Baghdad and Basra’ attaching Paper CHAD OT, ‘DFID Security Assessment of Basra and Baghdad’.

¹¹⁷ [Minute OD Secretariat \[junior official\] to Sheinwald, 26 August 2003, ‘COBR: Iraq Security Situation: Update’.](#)

¹¹⁸ [Minute Crompton to PS \[FCO\], 28 August 2003, ‘Ad Hoc Ministerial’.](#)

178. Officials also raised concern about “the unwillingness of US personnel [in Baghdad] to discuss security arrangements ... in detail”.¹¹⁹ The UK would need to make its own assessment of the national situation, potentially leading to UK staff being unable to participate in certain CPA activities. The presence and security of UK staff sent to the CPA would “need to be balanced against our responsibilities for the government and reconstruction of Iraq”.

179. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event who served in Iraq during the CPA period commented that intelligence on threats and no-go areas should have been disseminated to all civilians. They suggested that the UK had been better at this than the US, but in Baghdad, where the US controlled security, there had been problems with the flow of information.

180. The AHMGIR agreed that the recommendations in the DFID/FCO security review should be implemented as soon as possible.¹²⁰

181. Sir Hilary Synnott told the Inquiry:

“After the attack on the UN building at the end of August, the Spanish and Japanese Governments ordered their civilians to leave. And on 30 August, of course, the UN ordered their expatriates to leave also. Everybody else stayed. I was told by London to draw up security regulations and to take disciplinary action if they were not obeyed. I replied that I had already drawn up security instructions which we had been testing, and as for taking disciplinary action, I reminded London that I actually had no statutory authority, as far as I knew, over the nationals of another country.”¹²¹

182. On 28 August, Mr Crompton informed Mr Straw that Sir Hilary Synnott had requested 34 secondees for CPA(South).¹²²

183. Later that day, the AHMGIR agreed, “subject to security concerns”, that: “Hilary Synnott should be given such assistance and staff as he deemed necessary to improve the workings of CPA South.”¹²³

184. Mr Crompton visited Iraq from 31 August to 3 September.¹²⁴ He concluded that “the Coalition as a whole is only just beginning to come to terms with the scale of the task”. The “general view” was that the job was “doable”, but the UK needed to “throw massive resources at the problem now”. UK staffing in the South and the governorates needed to increase significantly. The relationship between the two was “not yet clear”.

185. Mr Crompton judged that staffing in CPA Baghdad was “about right”, but CPA(South) was “woefully under-staffed”. It was clear that the UK would have to fill the

¹¹⁹ Annotated Agenda, 28 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

¹²⁰ Minutes, 28 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

¹²¹ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, page 111.

¹²² [Minute Crompton to PS \[FCO\], 28 August 2003, ‘Ad Hoc Ministerial’](#).

¹²³ Minutes, 28 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

¹²⁴ [Minute Crompton to Chaplin, 5 September 2003, ‘Visit to Iraq: 31 August to 3 September’](#).

positions itself rather than rely on third country nationals or CPA Baghdad. If necessary, the FCO Board of Management should be asked to rule that Iraq was its top priority and that staff willing to go there could be pulled out of existing jobs at short notice.

186. On 2 September, Mr Blair requested advice on how to improve conditions for UK staff working for the CPA and the British Office Baghdad.¹²⁵

187. The FCO advised that improvements were in hand in Baghdad and Basra.¹²⁶ Efforts were being made to speed up the move from the CPA building to the former regime palace in Basra, which was expected to be ready by mid-October.

188. On 4 September, the MOD put proposals to Mr Blair for additional troop deployments to the South-East to improve overall security and help accelerate reconstruction (see Section 9.2).¹²⁷ In addition to the extra troops, the MOD intended to put an additional Brigade Headquarters on reduced notice to move in order to support other requirements, which were still to be scoped, but included support to DFID-managed critical infrastructure work and the provision of military protection to civilian contractors.

189. Mr Blair agreed the proposals shortly afterwards.¹²⁸

190. On 17 September, Sir Michael Jay informed Permanent Secretaries that:

“We now have 18 armoured vehicles in Baghdad for travel outside the Secure Zone. By the end of November there will be 68 vehicles in country, including for staff working for CPA in Basra and the Governorate Teams ... For each of these vehicles there is a two-man Armed Protection Team (APT). The contractors (Control Risks) now have 72 personnel protecting our staff in CPA and will be providing a total complement of 110 men, including for CPA Basra and the Governorate Teams.”¹²⁹

191. In his valedictory report from Basra, Sir Hilary Synnott thanked DFID for procuring a large number of armoured vehicles and civilian protection teams for CPA(South) staff to use: “They have saved several lives from explosive devices.”¹³⁰

192. On 22 September, Mr John Buck, the FCO’s recently appointed Iraq Director, updated Mr Alan Charlton, the FCO Personnel Director, on staffing requirements in London and Iraq. Mr Buck stated:

“I understand pressures on staff resources. But there is a real need to get staffing of Iraq work onto a basis sustainable in the medium term. So far, it has understandably

¹²⁵ [Letter Cannon to Adams, 2 September 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing for the Prime Minister’.](#)

¹²⁶ [Letter Adams to Cannon, 4 September 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing for the Prime Minister’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Conditions of Service for UK Civilian Staff’.](#)

¹²⁷ [Letter Williams to Rycroft, 4 September 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Forces and Resources Review’.](#)

¹²⁸ [Manuscript comments Blair and Rycroft on Letter Williams to Rycroft, 4 September 2003, ‘Iraq: UK Forces and Resources Review’.](#)

¹²⁹ [Letter Jay to Street, 17 September 2003, ‘Security In Iraq’.](#)

¹³⁰ [Telegram 10 CPA Basra to FCO London, 26 January 2004, ‘Basra Valedictory’ \[Parts 1 and 2\].](#)

been a little hand to mouth. I fear No.10 will not accept our telling them that we can't do things because we don't have the people. So I hope you will be sympathetic if, after a few weeks on the job, I make further bids for staff.”¹³¹

193. At the Iraq Senior Officials Group (ISOG) on 23 September, Mr David Richmond, the Prime Minister's Deputy Special Representative on Iraq, reported that UK “influence in CPA Baghdad is limited; we supply only 100 out of its 1,000 staff there”.¹³² Mr Richmond recommended that deployment of UK secondees be “continuously reviewed so that they are where we most need them. The UK is still under-represented at senior level; we should continue to seek senior posts as they become available.”

194. Sir David Richmond told the Inquiry:

“I don't think we asked for a lot more people. What we wanted was Arabic speakers for obvious reasons, and we had Charles Heatley [CPA spokesman, see Section 10.1] and his successor, both of whom were very good Arabic speakers, but we probably could have done with more.”¹³³

195. Sir David also observed that “lack of continuity was a far greater problem than a lack of skills”.¹³⁴

196. On 15 October, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessed that:

“The security situation remains difficult in central Iraq. The upward trend in the number of attacks against the Coalition Forces (CF) shows no sign of abatement ... The vast majority of attacks (some 80 percent) occur in Baghdad and the surrounding Sunni Arab areas ... Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are the single most common form of attack, some increasingly sophisticated, and we have also seen more mortars being employed.

...

“The situation in the UK Area of Responsibility in the South remains relatively calm. In the first week of October, out of 174 attacks against CF in Iraq, only four were against troops in MND(SE). The mortar attack against the British base in Basra on 8 October was a serious incident, but the trend continues to be a relatively low level of attacks.”¹³⁵

197. In early October, Sir Hilary Synnott reported “markedly improved attitudes throughout the South over the last three months, and especially when compared with the hot humid days of early August when tempers exploded into violence and killings”.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Minute Buck to Charlton, 22 September 2003, ‘Staffing for the Iraq Directorate’.

¹³² Minute [Cabinet Office junior official] to Sheinwald, 25 September 2003, ‘Iraq Senior Officials Group Meeting’.

¹³³ Public hearing, 26 January 2011, page 87.

¹³⁴ Public hearing, 26 January 2011, page 79.

¹³⁵ [JIC Assessment, 15 October 2003, ‘Iraq Security’](#).

¹³⁶ Telegram 33 CPA Basra to FCO London, 9 October 2003, ‘South Iraq: The Political Scene’.

198. Sir Hilary told the Inquiry that there was a general impression of improvement in Basra during October and November 2003.¹³⁷

199. In late 2003, a significant number of civilian vacancies in CPA(South) were filled temporarily by the UK military, including by Reservists from the Territorial Army (TA).

200. After a visit to Basra on 2 October, Mr Adam Ingram, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, commented on the time it had taken to set up an effective CPA and the “large number of gapped posts and military personnel doing jobs that should be done by civilian volunteers”.¹³⁸

201. On 13 October, Mr Ingram described to Mr Benn, who had replaced Baroness Amos as Secretary of State for International Development on 5 October, the risks involved in using military reservists to address “the precarious situation on CPA(S) manpower”.¹³⁹ Mr Ingram attached lists of the 48 military staff embedded in CPA(South) and the CPA GTs in Basra, Maysan, Muthanna and Dhi Qar. A total of 35 were Reservists, all but one of them due to leave Iraq by the end of 2003.

202. Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, raised the issue of Reservists with Mr Straw on 23 October.¹⁴⁰ The ad hoc filling of vacant posts by military personnel, including Reservists who happened to have relevant skills from civilian life, was “not a robust way to resource such an important body”. Mr Hoon stated:

“... we need to get out of a mindset where the default position is to call on ‘spare’ military personnel to fulfil roles for which they have not been trained. CPA(S) may well require a higher proportion of civilians than the CPA elsewhere in the country because the roles and capabilities of UK forces do not encompass all of those available within the much larger US Armed Forces. We will, of course, continue to support the overall effort in the South where we can, but the best people for the posts in CPA(S) could well come from a wider range of Whitehall departments and the civilian sector in the UK.”

203. On 30 October, the MOD Iraq Secretariat briefed Mr Hoon on options for compulsory mobilisation of volunteer reserves to fill CPA gaps.¹⁴¹ It advised that Reservists’ willingness to take on those jobs was admirable, but it was unfair to employ them in roles for which they had not originally volunteered and for less pay than they would receive as civilians. Their transfer to civilian roles also represented an opportunity cost to the military.

¹³⁷ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, page 40.

¹³⁸ [Minute Johnson to APS/Min\(AF\), 17 October 2003, ‘Minister\(AF\) visit to Basra: 2 October 2003’.](#)

¹³⁹ [Letter Ingram to Benn, 13 October 2003, \[untitled\].](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Letter Hoon to Straw, 23 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Visit to Basra 20-21 October 2003’.](#)

¹⁴¹ Minute AD Iraq to APS/Secretary of State [MOD], 30 October 2003, ‘Op Telic – Support to CPA: Mobilisation of Volunteer Reserves’.

204. The Iraq Secretariat recommended that the MOD wait to see the outcome of the latest FCO/DFID recruitment drive, but also stand ready to provide what assistance it could if that was unsuccessful. Numbers were unlikely to be large (“10s of people”). The Iraq Secretariat stated that an effective CPA(South) was crucial to UK success in the South: “*If other avenues have been exhausted* it may thus be in our interest to seek Reservists to fill requirements.”

205. UK policy on the deployment of Reservists in civilian roles is addressed in Section 10.3.

206. CPA(South) moved from the former Electricity Accounts building in Basra to the Basra Palace site on 15 October.¹⁴² Sir Hilary Synnott wrote in his memoir:

“It was security which had driven the move and which had ensured that it happened quickly, but it was the improved comfort which everyone appreciated the most.

“The difference in living conditions seemed almost unbelievable. Instead of sleeping in crowded rooms or on floors, with unspeakable sanitary arrangements and virtually non-existent communications equipment, every staff member had their own cabin ... with a proper bed, a cupboard, a shower and lavatory, and even an air-conditioning unit ...

“Within another couple of weeks FCO engineers had installed a secure communications system ...

...

“At last, two-and-a-half months after my arrival, I was starting to muster the staff and equipment which would enable me to do my job reasonably effectively. This support was as nothing compared with the general’s [Major General Graeme Lamb, General Officer Commanding (GOC) MND(SE)] staff, but it was something; and, of course, our respective tasks were different.”

207. By late October, Sir Hilary Synnott had received none of the additional staff he had requested in late August.¹⁴³ On 27 October, he sent a further request to the FCO.¹⁴⁴ He explained that his initial request for 37 staff had focused on “our top priority areas: infrastructure, finance, police and security”. It was now clear to him that 44 more staff were needed to cover “political reporting, governance issues and CPA(S) internal support”.

208. Sir Hilary added:

“I also urgently need assurance that arrangements are in hand for the succession of those UK staff currently in mission. The relatively rapid turnaround of staff makes

¹⁴² Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain’s Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

¹⁴³ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, page 45.

¹⁴⁴ [Telegram 38 Basra to FCO London, 27 October 2003, ‘CPA\(South\): Staffing Requirements’](#).

continuity difficult at the best of times. Gaps between postings, as have happened up to now, can and do seriously undermine progress in specific areas and across the board. Personnel management structures are needed for the replacement of all UK personnel in CPA(S) well in advance of their departure for mission.

“Some other factors are relevant. 18 UK military personnel currently seconded to CPA(S) will be drawn down to zero between now and 28 December. They will need civilian replacements ...”

209. On 14 November, Mr Desmond Bowen, Deputy Head of OD Sec, reported to departments that 104 staff from eight countries were working in CPA(South).¹⁴⁵ The largest contributors after the UK were Italy and Denmark. Of the 48 UK secondees, 30 were civilians and 18 military, half of them from the TA. Seven TA personnel were in the process of being re-engaged on civilian contracts.

210. Mr Bowen explained that DFID had contracted the Crown Agents in October to recruit 37 staff: seven to replace Reservists and 30 for new posts. Recruitment had not been easy, despite financial inducements:

“Successful candidates need to have the right technical skills, aptitude for building Iraqi capacity and willingness to work in a difficult environment. When recruited, candidates also need to undergo security training. The Crown Agents should fill 15 of the 37 posts this month, including seven TA personnel who are being re-engaged on civilian contracts. These seven TA posts will be vacant for two to three weeks while the TA officers are demobilised and contracted by Crown Agents ... Up to five lesser priority posts are likely to remain more difficult to fill, but Crown Agents are being pressed to locate suitable candidates as soon as possible ...

“... Hilary Synnott subsequently asked FCO to fill a further 29 posts. These are in the areas of interior and justice, liaison with the southern governorates, and in the political development directorates. Job descriptions for these posts have now arrived from Basra ... It should be possible to fill many of the jobs from Whitehall (eg Home Office), although outside specialists may be necessary for some. There is already a database of volunteers. But the security situation will be a deterrent. Extracting people from current jobs, security training and the logistics of deployment often take longer than we would want. But FCO aim to fill the posts during December and January.

“CPA(South) has now grown substantially, and UK civilian staffing in Iraq as a whole is moving towards the 200 mark. The number of civilians in CPA(South) is larger than in other regions. But account must be taken of the fact that the large numbers of US Army Civil Affairs officers who are available elsewhere are not available in the South.”

¹⁴⁵ [Letter Bowen to Owen, 14 November 2003, 'Iraq: CPA \(South\) Staff'](#).

211. Sir Hilary Synnott told the Inquiry:

“One of my key requests was at the end of August when I asked for, I think, 37 additional expert staff, not generalists but experts, and 20 armoured vehicles. I was sent the record of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee [on 28 August], I think within a day of this, and it was recorded there that Synnott should be provided with everything he thought was necessary. That, to my mind, clearly came from No.10 and that was the pattern throughout. The difficulty, however, was turning that political imperative into reality ... I put in this bid at the end of August. The task was ultimately given to DFID. I understood that in October they put out a trawl with a deadline of, I think, the end of October for recruitment. By 1 January, 18 out of 37 had arrived.”¹⁴⁶

212. Mr Jim Drummond, DFID Iraq Director from September 2003 to December 2004, described DFID’s role to the Inquiry:

“Sir Hilary Synnott, working with us, identified, I think it was 37 posts that he wanted to have filled, and we agreed to do that.

“We asked the Crown Agents to source those people from the market, because we didn’t at that stage across government have a pool of people that could easily be called upon, although the Iraq Planning Unit based in the Foreign Office had managed to get quite a number of civil servants from Treasury, DFID and across government into the CPA in the early days. But for Basra we were looking really to fund from contractors in the market, partly because we were looking for specialist skills in project implementation that we don’t necessarily have full-time in DFID.”¹⁴⁷

213. Mr Drummond explained that some of the jobs were advertised across DFID, but “mostly they were people who came from the market”. People had arrived in slightly greater numbers after Christmas because those selected in December had asked for their contracts to start on 1 January.

214. During his farewell meeting with Mr Straw on 11 February 2004, Sir Hilary Synnott said he had been frustrated at the length of time it had taken the FCO to deploy people and provide secure communications. The FCO response had compared unfavourably with that of other departments.¹⁴⁸

215. Sir Hilary told the Inquiry that Whitehall departments’ interpretation of their duty of care towards civilian personnel had been an obstacle to the recruitment of the people he needed:

“I raised it with the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and we both of us thought that it was a bit odd that our men and women in the armed forces could be exposed to risk. But ... we could not risk injury or death to civilians ...

¹⁴⁶ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, page 45.

¹⁴⁷ Public hearing, 17 December 2009, pages 10-12.

¹⁴⁸ Minute Owen to PS/PUS [FCO], 12 February 2004, ‘FCO Response to Iraq’.

“I raised this with the Permanent Under Secretary [Sir Michael Jay] when I got back and I was told that ... the Permanent Under Secretaries’ Committee ... were quite adamant about this: it was an important duty and civilians were different from the military ... I think there was some concern about liability of being sued in the event of injury or death.

...

“A side effect of this was that the interpretation varied within ministries, and there was one occasion in early September 2003 when I discovered that I was short of 17 DFID personnel. They had gone away for a break and they had been stopped by their managers from going beyond Kuwait on the grounds that conditions were too dangerous in Basra.

“Now, we were living and working [in] Basra ... The general who is the expert on security had not been consulted, but the managers of DFID had decided that they should not come back. I kicked up a bit of a stink and after quite some time they were allowed back.”¹⁴⁹

216. Efforts to co-ordinate departmental approaches to duty of care are addressed later in this Section.

217. Mr Buck advised Sir Michael Jay that the FCO record was not perfect, but the department had “learned several lessons and gained valuable experience for the future”:

- Staffing of the FCO’s Iraq operation in London had been “hand to mouth from the start, and only recently received adequate strength, depth and continuity”. A properly staffed unit needed to be formed as soon as it became clear the FCO would have to manage a major new overseas deployment, and the FCO needed to accept far more quickly that the requirement would remain for the medium term.
- In London and abroad, the FCO needed to be able to redirect staff “more swiftly and flexibly” and to be able to target officers with suitable qualifications “more systematically than HR records have allowed in the past”.
- A “genuinely flexible” budget allocation along the lines provided for the military, possibly controlled by the AHMGIR, would have saved time and energy and prevented the Treasury playing one department off against another. “The only area on which the Treasury have been genuinely helpful has been security.”
- In the early stages DFID had not been “fully on side”. When it agreed to recruit a large tranche of contractors, it had been slow to implement that commitment.
- The FCO had little previous experience of recruiting contractors, but now had a pool of knowledge to draw from in future.

¹⁴⁹ Public hearing, 9 December 2009, pages 108-110.

- Delays caused by duty of care obligations were “unavoidable”, but the Iraq experience would help streamline the process in future.
- Part of the problem in Basra had been uncertainty about what was needed and “requests bounced about quite a bit. It would have made sense to have a senior post-conflict reconstruction expert in Basra working to Hilary Synnott, defining needs from the outset.”¹⁵⁰

218. On communications equipment, Mr Buck explained that a secure communications package and engineer had been deployed to the British Office Baghdad at the outset and a full Firecrest¹⁵¹ system had been ready to be shipped with the flat pack Embassy in May. Firecrest systems were designed for a large network of posts. Because of the changing set of posts in Iraq, installation in Baghdad and Basra had been delayed until October. The delay had been a “major disadvantage” that made it “difficult for the FCO to establish authoritative leadership”. Part of the answer lay in secure laptops. A new position had been created “to co-ordinate and improve emergency deployment of secure IT and communications”.

219. Mr Buck advised that most of those points had been fed into the FCO-led review of post-conflict reconstruction (see Section 10.3).

220. Sir Michael Jay commented:

“I agree with this. There are many lessons to learn from the – wholly unprecedented – Iraq experience; but I don’t think Hilary Synnott’s criticisms are entirely fair.”¹⁵²

221. On 26 October, the al-Rashid Hotel in the Green Zone of Baghdad, used as a Coalition military base, was hit by a number of rockets.¹⁵³

222. The attack killed a US soldier, and injured 15 other people. US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who was staying in the hotel, escaped unhurt.

223. One UK civilian seconded to the CPA was seriously injured.¹⁵⁴

224. Sir David Manning, British Ambassador to the US, described the attack as “the bloodiest 48-hour period in Baghdad since March”.¹⁵⁵

225. Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Iraq, commented: “Terrible news. This is the first time a CPA civilian has been killed in Iraq, a fact that will have serious repercussions.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ [Minute Buck to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 16 February 2004, ‘FCO Response to Iraq’.](#)

¹⁵¹ The FCO ICT system.

¹⁵² [Manuscript comment Jay on Minute Buck to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 16 February 2004, ‘FCO Response to Iraq’.](#)

¹⁵³ *BBC News*, 26 October 2003, *US shocked at Iraq hotel attack*.

¹⁵⁴ Briefing [unattributed], 30 October 2003, ‘Briefing for Foreign Secretary: Cabinet: 30 October’.

¹⁵⁵ Telegram 1426 Washington to FCO London, 28 October 2003, ‘Iraq: US Views 28 October’.

¹⁵⁶ [Telegram 231 IraqRep to FCO London, 26 October 2003, ‘Rocket Attack on Al Rasheed Hotel’.](#)

226. Mr Bearpark told the Inquiry that he viewed the attack as a turning point:

“... through July, August, September we were optimistic that we were on an upward slope. We had got through the worst of the problems ...

“From September onwards, then the graph just went sharply down. The trigger point ... would have been the mortaring of the al-Rashid Hotel.”¹⁵⁷

227. By the start of November, there had been several bombs and rocket attacks in Baghdad, including attacks aimed at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and at police stations (see Section 9.2).¹⁵⁸

228. The al-Rashid Hotel bombing led to a review of protective security and staffing levels in Baghdad. Plans were drawn up to provide hardened accommodation for UK civilians.

229. On 28 October, COBR, chaired by Mr Bowen, commissioned an MOD-led review of protective security within and beyond the Green Zone in Baghdad.¹⁵⁹

230. The preliminary report on 3 November recommended three areas for action:

- a. Improved ballistic protection for UK staff in their place of work and accommodation. This action is required quickly as the threat is likely to worsen in the coming weeks.
- b. Improved passage of information and access to detailed threat assessments. Current levels of information are poor and the CPA system for dissemination and action in the aftermath of an incident is inadequate. Greater influence is required from within the system.
- c. Consideration of future accommodation options with enhanced ballistic protection. Favoured options will involve some cost and will need to be finessed with the US who are also reviewing their options.”¹⁶⁰

231. COBR also commissioned FCO-led reviews of training, briefing and terms and conditions for UK civilian staff in Iraq, to “ensure that there is consistency across all government departments seconding staff and consultants”.¹⁶¹

232. The findings of the FCO-led reviews are described later in this Section.

¹⁵⁷ Public hearing, 6 July 2010, pages 43-44.

¹⁵⁸ [JIC Assessment, 5 November 2003, 'Iraq security'](#).

¹⁵⁹ Minute OD Secretariat [junior official] to Sheinwald, 28 October 2003, 'Iraq: Review of Security Arrangements for UK Staff'.

¹⁶⁰ [Paper \[unattributed\], 3 November 2003, 'Physical and Protective Security for UK Staff in the Coalition Provisional Authority \(Baghdad\): Executive Summary'](#).

¹⁶¹ Minute OD Secretariat [junior official] to Sheinwald, 28 October 2003, 'Iraq: Review of Security Arrangements for UK Staff'.

233. Sir Nigel Sheinwald visited CPA(South) in early November.¹⁶² During the visit a number of issues were raised by civilian secondees, including:

- Insufficient security support, limiting mobility of CPA staff (currently only eight protected vehicles for over 60 staff requiring transport).
- Inadequate succession planning (the much praised DoH team particularly complained of this).
- Over-reliance on TA soldiers to perform specialist civilian jobs.”

234. On 11 November, Sir Michael Jay advised Permanent Secretaries and the heads of organisations with secondees in Iraq that the FCO was considering “on a contingency basis – whether it would make sense to reduce the numbers of civilian staff if the security situation were to deteriorate; and, if so, which staff we should retain in those circumstances”.¹⁶³

235. Sir Michael reported that, in Baghdad, following the recommendations of the review of accommodation after the al-Rashid Hotel bombing, the FCO was pursuing urgently the possibility of constructing accommodation in the basement of the Green Zone Convention Centre. The work could take two to three months, but the FCO was pressing hard for it to be ready before Christmas. In the meantime it was looking at interim arrangements.

236. Sir Michael explained that, to ensure security measures were implemented effectively and threat information disseminated promptly, the FCO had set up co-ordination structures in London, Baghdad and Basra:

“The London Iraq Security Committee, chaired by the FCO, meets once a week with a secure video link to Baghdad (to be joined by Basra when their video equipment has been installed). Jeremy Greenstock chairs a UK security committee in Baghdad which is linked into a wider CPA security committee. A similar committee is being set up in Basra. Security issues are also discussed at Cabinet Office meetings including COBR, the group of senior officials chaired by Nigel Sheinwald [ISOG] and the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group [AHMGIR], which the Foreign Secretary chairs.”

237. Sir Andrew Turnbull and Mr Gus O’Donnell, Treasury Permanent Secretary, discussed UK civilian secondees on 11 November. They agreed that there were roles in the provisional administration in Iraq that would need to continue to be filled, but that security must be tightened appropriately.¹⁶⁴

238. On 14 November, Mr Drummond approved an expansion of DFID’s contract with CRG for “security support services” in Basra and Baghdad.¹⁶⁵ The number of CRG

¹⁶² Letter Cannon to Owen, 13 November 2003, ‘Iraq: Nigel Sheinwald’s Visit: Operational Issues’.

¹⁶³ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 11 November 2003, ‘Security of UK Civilian Secondees in Iraq’.](#)

¹⁶⁴ Minute [unattributed and undated], ‘Sir Andrew Turnbull’s Bilateral with Gus O’Donnell 11 November 2003’.

¹⁶⁵ Manuscript comment Drummond, 14 November 2003, on Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to Drummond, 31 October 2003, ‘Iraq – the extension of security support services for Baghdad and Basra’.

personnel was increased from 16 to 68 and the contract extended to 31 March 2004, reflecting the expected increase in staff numbers in Basra and the recognition that “a permissive security environment will not be a reality for some time”.

239. On 24 November, Mr Straw requested £2m from the Treasury for “essential new, secure accommodation for UK civilian staff in Baghdad”.¹⁶⁶ He explained that the security review after the al-Rashid bombing had recommended conversion of the ground floor of a car park near the Convention Centre in the Green Zone into secure accommodation. Mr Straw advised Mr Boateng that the work would be completed in January. In the meantime:

“... ad hoc accommodation for staff is extremely uncomfortable and unsatisfactory from a security point of view. To reduce discomfort somewhat, many staff are now sleeping in vulnerable trailers. We cannot allow this situation to continue any longer than absolutely necessary.”

240. Mr Boateng approved the request on 8 December.¹⁶⁷

241. The IPU briefing for Mr Straw’s visit to Iraq on 25 and 26 November included an update on staff security.¹⁶⁸

242. The IPU explained that FCO Overseas Security Advisers (OSAs) made regular joint visits with DFID to Iraq. There had been four visits since May 2003. The next was scheduled for the turn of the year.

243. The IPU summarised security provision in Baghdad, Basra and the governorates:

“Mobile Security

“All travel outside the Secure Zones must be in full armoured convoys with a minimum of two vehicles. There are currently 52 armoured vehicles in Iraq, shared between Baghdad and Basra, and six Governorate Teams. 23 more will arrive in theatre by the end of November. A further 40 will arrive by February. All such convoys include a four-man armed protection team supplied under contract by Control Risks Group (CRG). There are a total of 26 teams, with 104 men. A further six teams will deploy as additional armoured vehicles arrive.

“Static Security

“Security for the CPA Green (Secure) Zone in Baghdad is provided by the US military and Global Security (a private British company). The unoccupied British Embassy compound (containing the partially-built flat pack Embassy) and the

¹⁶⁶ Letter Straw to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 24 November 2003, ‘Physical and Protective Security for UK Civilian Staff in Baghdad’.

¹⁶⁷ [Letter Boateng to Straw, 8 December 2003, ‘Iraq Reserve Claim’.](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 24 November 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing for Visit – 25-26 November 2003’ attaching Paper, ‘Meetings with British Staff’.](#)

villa housing the British Office Baghdad are both guarded by a Gurkha contingent supplied under contract with ArmorGroup.

“Following the attack on the al-Rashid Hotel, all other UK civilians in CPA Baghdad are currently accommodated in trailer parks within the Secure Zone. The units now benefit from physical security barriers which protect them against lateral bomb blast. However, they remain vulnerable, particularly to mortar and rocket attack. We now have a green light to proceed with construction of new accommodation under hard cover (new trailers on the ground floor of car park building). This should be complete by mid-January.

“UK CPA civilians required to work outside the Secure Zone (eg in Iraqi ministries) are protected in those locations by an Individual Bodyguard also supplied under contract by Control Risks Group. Security for the CPA headquarters in Basra is provided by the British military.

“Close Protection

“The Head of the British Office (Chris Segar) and IraqRep (Sir J Greenstock) are protected by a ... team from the Royal Military Police Close Protection Unit.

“Security in Governorates

“Following last week’s attack on the Italian Police compound in Nasariyah, CPA Baghdad launched a review of security in the governorates where UK staff are deployed. This review is moving more slowly than we had hoped ... IraqRep have ... issued specific instructions to UK staff in the governorates to take extra security precautions. Additional physical security measures such as blast walls, bomb shelters, alarm systems and window protection, are also in the process of being implemented.

“UK staff in the governorates are subject to the same security procedures and discipline as UK staff in Baghdad and Basra (eg armoured cars and armed protection teams). Evacuation plans are being drawn up and tested.”

244. Contingency plans for the phased withdrawal of UK CPA secondees in Baghdad were ready by 1 December.¹⁶⁹

245. Sir Jeremy Greenstock discussed CPA staffing with Sir Michael Jay on 12 December.¹⁷⁰ He reported that “a strong spirit of commitment” among UK secondees contrasted with concern about living conditions in Baghdad and apprehension about the reaction of families in the UK to the dangers to which people were exposed.

¹⁶⁹ Minute Dodd to Sheinwald, 1 December 2003, ‘Iraq: Senior Officials Group’.

¹⁷⁰ Minute Jay to Parham, 12 December 2003, ‘Conversation with Jeremy Greenstock: Iraq: Staffing Issues’.

Some secondees who had left after the attack on the al-Rashid Hotel were returning, but security was likely to get worse rather than better and required “constant vigilance”. Communication from London to Baghdad and Basra, and with families in the UK, was important.

246. Sir Michael Jay told the Inquiry:

“... some individuals ... were rather more gung-ho and rather more prepared to take risks ... Some of the DFID people were rather less used than those of us in the Foreign Office or elsewhere, to be working in very difficult conditions. These were completely understandable differences and they never became serious issues, as far as I’m aware ... They were the sort of things that I discussed with the Permanent Secretaries concerned, so that we reached agreement on the right approach.

“... I do remember one or two conversations when some departments were less willing than others to go out into the field. I think that’s inevitable ...

“You have got to have ... duty of care at the top of the agenda and you have also sometimes got to say to people, ‘I know that you say you are willing to do that, but if you get killed, your parents are not necessarily going to thank you for that or thank us.’”¹⁷¹

247. At the weekly meeting of Permanent Secretaries on 7 January 2004, Sir Nigel Sheinwald stated that the next six months in Iraq were critical and that it was important the UK maintained the quality of its secondees.¹⁷²

248. The same day, a Treasury official advised Mr O’Donnell on the return of Treasury secondees evacuated after the al-Rashid bombing:

“Since the rocket attack on the al-Rashid hotel ... and subsequent incidents and security threats the contingent of UK economists from HMT (and the Bank of England) seconded to the CPA has withdrawn from Iraq. In part this reflects concerns about the status of the accommodation on offer ... it also reflects family wishes ...”¹⁷³

249. The official explained that the FCO’s conversion of the ground floor of a car park into hardened accommodation was scheduled for completion by the end of January. In the interim, in recognition of the critical importance of Treasury and Bank of England secondees to the restoration of economic stability in Iraq, the UK military had offered accommodation for up to three economists with “a solid roof and very good ‘point’ security”.

¹⁷¹ Public hearing, 30 June 2010, pages 62-63.

¹⁷² Minutes, Meeting of Permanent Secretaries, 7 January 2004.

¹⁷³ [Email Treasury \[junior official\] to Perm Sec \[Treasury\], 7 January 2004, ‘Iraq: Secondees’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: secondees’.](#)

250. The official recommended that existing volunteers, who were fully aware of the security risks, be allowed to make preparations for their return, and that new volunteers be permitted to attend a hostile environment course and deploy to Iraq, if their line manager agreed. Because of the timing of courses, new volunteers would not be able to deploy until at least 28 January.

251. On 9 January, Mr O'Donnell's office replied that he was "keen to see HMT people return if the conditions are appropriate and that people who volunteer are made fully aware of, and are trained about, the risks".¹⁷⁴

252. On 14 January, Sir Michael Jay informed Sir Andrew Turnbull and Permanent Secretaries that the FCO and DFID had 165 civilian staff in Iraq.¹⁷⁵ The total was likely to rise above 200 in June, before falling after the transfer of sovereignty. Sir Michael provided a breakdown of the 165 by employer:

- 37 FCO staff;
- 23 FCO contractors;
- 52 seconded via the FCO from OGDs and the police;
- 5 DFID staff; and
- 48 DFID contractors.

He also provided a breakdown by geographical location:

- 72 in Baghdad:
 - 50 in CPA Baghdad (including 7 in the UK-CPA Co-ordination Cell);
 - 9 in the British Office Baghdad;
 - 8 in IraqRep (the office of the Prime Minister's Special Representative);
 - 4 in the DFID Baghdad Office;¹⁷⁶
- 77 in Basra:
 - 72 in CPA(South);
 - 5 in the Basra Governorate Team; and
- 16 in other governorates.

253. Sir Michael listed 14 areas of UK civilian involvement in CPA Baghdad:

- policing and SSR;
- oil;
- governance;
- press and communications;

¹⁷⁴ Email PS/Gus O'Donnell to Kilpatrick, 9 January 2004, 'Iraq: Secondees'.

¹⁷⁵ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 14 January 2004, 'Iraq – Civilian Staffing' attaching Paper, 'Iraq: Civilian Staffing'](#).

¹⁷⁶ The numbers in Sir Michael Jay's list add up to 71, not 72.

- finance;
- immigration and customs;
- infrastructure and infrastructure security;
- civil affairs;
- human rights;
- justice;
- media policy and regulation;
- gender;
- youth and sport; and
- civic education.

He described the spread of functions in Basra as “even wider”, given the UK’s “overall responsibility” there.

254. Sir Michael explained that the extra staff expected to deploy between January and June were likely to include:

- 30 more secondees to CPA(South);
- a DoH team for CPA(South) and the southern governorates;
- “political process consultants”; and
- FCO staff setting up new diplomatic posts in Baghdad and Basra.

255. Sir Michael anticipated that numbers should fall to between 70 and 80 after the transfer of sovereignty, spread across the British Embassy Baghdad, the British Embassy Office Basra and “possibly” other regional offices. He warned that FCO human and financial resources were stretched, but concluded that plans for the next six months were “sensible – and manageable as long as the necessary resources are available”.

256. Sir Michael Jay also updated Permanent Secretaries on security and duty of care on 14 January:

“We would not normally deploy civilian staff to an area as dangerous as Iraq now is. But Treasury Solicitors have confirmed to the Cabinet Office that we are complying with our duty of care if (i) we take all reasonable measures to mitigate risk, at least on a par with other governments, (ii) staff are volunteers, and we put no pressure on them to take up posts in Iraq, and (iii) we deploy staff for good reason. We are confident we are fulfilling these requirements.”

257. On mitigation of the security risk, Sir Michael explained:

“The CPA itself is responsible for CPA staff security. But our guidelines and additional security assets bring security for British staff up to levels which we believe are required to allow staff to do their jobs while mitigating the risk to an acceptable

level. Most importantly, all British civilian staff are required to travel in armoured vehicles and in convoy with armed protection teams ... We have to be prepared for the possibility of serious casualties: ... people may just be in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

258. Sir Michael Jay visited Baghdad from 21 to 23 January. He told Mr Straw:

“There are some tensions on the ground, notably over security, particularly in Baghdad: staff tend to put a greater premium on quality of life ... than on security. I believe Jeremy Greenstock’s maxim that no British staff should be killed by a predictable attack is right.”¹⁷⁷

259. On 18 February, Mr O’Donnell confirmed to Sir Jeremy Greenstock that, in light of the assurances he had received, “Treasury secondees will be making their way back to Iraq from the beginning of next week”.¹⁷⁸

260. Lord Jay told the Inquiry:

“Flying into Baghdad [in January 2004] in a Hercules which has got red blobs on the radar screens saying ‘That’s where the missiles were fired the last time round’ concentrates the mind a bit ... These were not normal conditions. These were, I thought, very brave, very able people from a wide range of government departments doing a fantastic job in very, very difficult circumstances and you come back thinking, ‘Gosh! You have really got to focus on their safety. It is hugely important that they continue to do this job as well as they are doing it at the moment.’ But you have got to have huge responsibility for their safety.”¹⁷⁹

261. A DFID security assessment of Baghdad and Basra in January 2004 found that:

“With many more armoured vehicles now in country, constraints on the movement of staff have eased over the period but the CRG teams remain fully stretched. Numbers of British staff at both locations (Baghdad and Basra) continue to increase, and extra armoured vehicles and Armed Protection Teams (APTs) are still urgently needed.”¹⁸⁰

262. On 26 January 2004, Mr Straw requested a further £9.4m from Mr Boateng:

“The firm judgement of our security experts is that, without the protection of armoured vehicles and APTs (armed protection teams), it would be too dangerous for our civilian staff to travel outside guarded CPA compounds such as the Green Zone in Baghdad.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ [Minute Jay to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 26 January 2004, ‘Visit to Iraq: 21-23 January’.](#)

¹⁷⁸ Letter O’Donnell to Greenstock, 18 February 2004, [untitled].

¹⁷⁹ Public hearing, 30 June 2010, page 46.

¹⁸⁰ Paper CHAD Operations Team [junior official], January 2004, ‘DFID Security Assessment of Baghdad and Basra – January 2004’.

¹⁸¹ [Letter Straw to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 26 January 2004, ‘Iraq: Security for British Civilian Staff’.](#)

263. Mr Boateng agreed the FCO bid in full on 30 January.¹⁸²

264. By 21 April, the number of UK civilians seconded to the CPA had risen to about 260, with approximately 120 each in Baghdad and Basra, and 20 elsewhere in Iraq.¹⁸³ Between 70 and 80 MOD civil servants were directly supporting Op TELIC.

The British Offices in Baghdad and Basra

265. During the CPA period, the expansion of the British Office Baghdad and the opening of a British Office in Basra were delayed by the limited availability of security assets and the need to prioritise other UK activities in Iraq.

266. The British Office Baghdad was opened by Mr Segar on 5 May 2003.¹⁸⁴

267. Originally staffed by a team of four, by late summer 2003 it had eight UK-based staff and a locally employed British Council officer. The Commercial Section was staffed by two UKTI officials and a secondee from industry.

268. The flat pack Embassy arrived in Baghdad on 23 June in 80 containers. It consisted of prefabricated office and accommodation units and was designed to house up to 40 staff.

269. On 18 July, in a letter to Mr Boateng requesting additional funds for security enhancements to FCO posts in Iraq, described earlier in this Section, Mr Straw reported that the British Office Baghdad was assembling the flat pack Embassy under 24-hour sniper watch and would “soon be up to full strength of eight UK-based officers”.¹⁸⁵

270. On 5 August, FCO officials discussed proposals from Mr Segar to expand the British Office Baghdad to 10 UK-based and 23 local staff.¹⁸⁶ Mr Crompton informed Mr Segar that availability of security assets was likely to be “a major constraint” on his expansion plans: “further increases in armed protection teams, armoured cars and other security equipment could only be funded through compensating savings elsewhere”. He advised Mr Segar “to think carefully about prioritising”.

271. On 19 August, after the bombing of the Canal Hotel, the British Office Baghdad was moved from the former British Embassy compound to a villa in the CPA secure zone.¹⁸⁷

272. After visiting Baghdad at the beginning of September, Mr Crompton advised Mr Edward Chaplin, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, that there was “a clear

¹⁸² Letter Boateng to Straw, 30 January 2004, ‘Iraq Reserve Claim’.

¹⁸³ [Letter Tebbit to Turnbull, 21 April 2004, \[untitled\]](#).

¹⁸⁴ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], ‘Iraq: Briefing for Visit – 25-26 November 2003’ attaching Paper \[unattributed\], ‘Background on Other Issues’.](#)

¹⁸⁵ [Letter Straw to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 18 July 2003, ‘Iraq-Related Costs’.](#)

¹⁸⁶ [Letter Crompton to Segar, 13 August 2003, ‘BOB staffing, security and accommodation’.](#)

¹⁸⁷ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 24 November 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing for Visit – 25-26 November 2003’ attaching Paper \[unattributed\], ‘Background on Other Issues’.](#)

and distinct role for a ... British Office [Baghdad] to pursue bilateral interests and begin developing long-term contacts".¹⁸⁸ There were also "many opportunities for TPUK and British Council", but expansion plans should be "moderated to match the availability of accommodation and security assets".

273. Further work appears to have halted until early 2004, when the FCO created a project management team in London, with project managers in Baghdad and Basra, to plan the UK's post-CPA representation in Iraq.¹⁸⁹ The planning process is addressed later in this Section.

274. In November 2003, the IPU reported that work on the flat pack Embassy had stopped and that it would shortly be secured and waterproofed "until the security situation is more permissive and work can continue".¹⁹⁰

275. In July 2003, the FCO put on hold plans to open a British Office in Basra by the end of August in order to focus on strengthening CPA(South).¹⁹¹ Any staff already identified for the British Office were to be redirected to CPA(South).

276. On 15 July, the IPU recommended to Mr Straw that the FCO establish "a limited form of UK mission in Basra on 1 December 2003 which would be gradually staffed by FCO UK secondees moving across" from CPA(South).¹⁹² The IPU recommended a total of six UK-based staff, including one from TPUK, and an unspecified number of local staff. DFID and the British Council were reported to have indicated an interest in having one representative each.

277. Mr Straw agreed the proposal subject to Treasury approval of the necessary funds.¹⁹³

278. A decision on whether to open a British Office in Mosul was postponed.

279. Mr Julian Metcalfe, Head of FCO Estate Strategy Unit, informed Mr Collecott on 30 July that efforts to identify premises for the British Office in Basra were "turning into something of a joke" because of security constraints and the shortage of staff resources in CPA(South).¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ [Minute Crompton to Chaplin, 5 September 2003, 'Visit to Iraq: 31 August to 3 September'](#).

¹⁸⁹ Minute Jay to Foreign Secretary, 6 February 2004, 'Iraq: Post-Transition Representation' attaching Paper, 'Future UK Representation in Iraq'.

¹⁹⁰ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 24 November 2003, 'Iraq: Briefing for Visit – 25-26 November 2003' attaching Paper, 'Background on Other Issues'](#).

¹⁹¹ Minute Crompton to Ehrman, 9 July 2003, 'British Office Basrah'.

¹⁹² [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS/Straw, 15 July 2003, 'Iraq: Establishing a British Office in Basra and Mosul'](#).

¹⁹³ [Minute Owen to IPU \[junior official\], 21 July 2003, 'Iraq: Establishing a British Office in Basra and Mosul'](#).

¹⁹⁴ [Minute Metcalfe to Collecott, 30 July 2003, 'Basra Offices'](#).

280. Two FCO officials visited Basra to identify a suitable location on 30 July, 24 hours after Sir Hilary Synnott's arrival as the new Head of CPA(South).¹⁹⁵ They reported that Sir Hilary had been very helpful, but that, in the absence of FCO staff able to facilitate the visit, it had "bordered on farce at times". Initially they had been told there was no transport or protection available for a tour of the city, but the visit was "saved at the eleventh hour from being a total disaster" by the MND(SE) visits officer and MOD/CPA liaison officer. The officials did not reach firm conclusions on a location and recommended "a more structured visit" soon.

281. Sir Hilary Synnott advised the FCO that December was not soon enough to establish a bilateral presence in Basra.¹⁹⁶ Commercial, visa and consular demands were all increasing. Much as he would like to help, CPA(South) did not have the capacity or the mandate to do so. He therefore recommended the early creation of a small "UK bilateral cell" in Basra.

282. Mr Straw submitted a claim on the Reserve to cover the expected cost of setting up and running the Basra Office in his letter to Mr Boateng on 18 July.¹⁹⁷

283. Mr Boateng rejected Mr Straw's claim on 9 September, explaining that he "would have expected the FCO to have adjusted their internal Resource Allocation Round at the end of last year" when faced with what was an "increasingly likely" contingency.¹⁹⁸

284. In November 2003, Sir Nigel Sheinwald advised Mr Blair that the idea of a bilateral UK office in Basra to handle "trade contacts, culture and visitors ... fell by the wayside in the summer" and needed to be revived.¹⁹⁹

285. Mr Blair asked for the FCO to "put in place a British Office in Basra to handle trade contacts, cultural ties, visitors etc".²⁰⁰

286. The IPU advised Mr Straw that there would be advantage in revisiting the idea of setting up a small unit in Basra for bilateral work, arranging visits and managing the establishment of a post-CPA British Office, "not least to flag up the resource implications to No.10".²⁰¹ Costs could be kept to a minimum by using staff already selected for other roles and providing accommodation on the CPA(South) site. Other Whitehall departments would join as the project developed.

287. On 27 November, the FCO informed No.10 that it proposed to set up a "Bilateral Unit" in Basra run by an FCO official, under the supervision of Mr Henry Hogger, the

¹⁹⁵ Paper FCO Services [junior official], 5 August 2003, 'Basra (Future Offices)'.

¹⁹⁶ [Telegram 41 FCO London to Baghdad, 4 August 2003, 'Iraq: Pursuing British Interests in Southern Iraq'](#).

¹⁹⁷ [Letter Straw to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 18 July 2003, 'Iraq-Related Costs'](#).

¹⁹⁸ [Letter Boateng to Straw, 9 September 2003, 'Iraq Reserve claim'](#).

¹⁹⁹ [Minute Sheinwald to Prime Minister, 10 November 2003, 'Visit to Iraq'](#).

²⁰⁰ [Letter Rycroft to Adams, 11 November 2003, 'Iraq: Next Steps'](#).

²⁰¹ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 25 November 2003, 'Iraq: Draft Letter on British Office, Basrah'](#).

Basra Governorate Co-ordinator. UKTI, DFID and the British Council had identified staff to work in the new office. If circumstances and resources allowed, the “Bilateral Unit” would oversee the establishment of a substantive “British Transitional Office”.

288. Mr Hogger explained on 2 January 2004 that there was “little to report yet on implementing the Prime Minister’s wish for the establishment of a British Office in Basra”.²⁰² He hoped that a visit by security experts in January would make progress on identifying possible premises for an “embryonic British Office” and the eventual Consulate. He advised that, in the current security climate, the British Office would almost certainly have to be housed in the CPA/UK military compound, which was already overcrowded.

Preparations for the transfer of sovereignty

289. On 15 November 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council announced an accelerated timetable for the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi transitional administration, with the CPA to be dissolved by 30 June 2004 (see Section 9.2).

290. *Hard Lessons*, Mr Stuart Bowen’s account, as US Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, of the US experience of reconstruction between 2002 and 2008, described the impact of the new timetable:

“Reconstruction plans that had just been devised on a two-year timetable now had to shift, and the rush began to prepare Iraq’s government to stand on its own in seven months.”²⁰³

291. On 5 December, Sir Hilary Synnott advised the FCO that the compressed timetable made adequate staffing more important than ever. Recruitment needed to look beyond the dissolution of the CPA. The UK would need to sustain “an intensive development co-operation/technical assistance relationship” with Iraq and “might usefully maintain an international co-ordination role. This will require a careful transitional process with maximum use of acquired experience.”

292. Sir Michael Jay visited Iraq from 21 to 23 January 2004 to discuss the implications of the transfer of sovereignty with UK staff in Baghdad and Basra.²⁰⁴ He discussed his findings with Mr Straw on 29 January.²⁰⁵

293. On 6 February, Sir Michael submitted formal recommendations for an Embassy in Baghdad, a Consulate General in Basra and an office in either Kirkuk or Mosul.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Telegram 1 CPA Basra to FCO London, 2 January 2004, ‘Prime Minister’s Visit to Basra: Scenesetter’.

²⁰³ Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

²⁰⁴ [Minute Jay to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 26 January 2004, ‘Visit to Iraq: 21-23 January’.](#)

²⁰⁵ [Manuscript comment Adams to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 30 January 2004, on Minute Jay to Secretary of State \[FCO\], 26 January 2004, ‘Visit to Iraq: 21-23 January’.](#)

²⁰⁶ Minute Jay to Foreign Secretary, 6 February 2004, ‘Iraq: Post-Transition Representation’ attaching Paper, ‘Future UK Representation in Iraq’.

294. Mr Straw sent Mr Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, an indication of the estimated costs of post-transition representation on 11 February as the basis for detailed discussions between FCO and Treasury officials.²⁰⁷ Combined annual running costs for the three bilateral offices were estimated at £37.1m, including £21.7m (58.5 percent of the total) for security.

295. Mr Straw attached a paper setting out the proposed functions of the three offices and estimated staff numbers for Baghdad and Basra:

- Baghdad: 78 resident UK staff (including police and MOD advisers), up to 20 visiting contractors and DFID staff during peak activity, and 55-56 local staff; and
- Basra: 81 resident UK staff (including police), 10 visiting contractors and 30 local staff.

296. The expectation was that it should be possible to reduce UK representation as Iraq stabilised.

297. The paper stated that office infrastructure and key staff should be in place by the end of June. Recruitment of staff and development of sites would begin as soon as agreement had been reached with the US on a number of issues, including the use of potential sites. The plan was to recruit staff for one year if possible, six months renewable if necessary. Recruitment would not be easy. As one incentive, the FCO planned to give staff the option of having their families in Kuwait.

298. The paper also stated that the FCO had created a project management team in London, which had set up a cross-Whitehall Transition Project Management Group including representatives of interested government departments. An FCO officer had been seconded to the State Department transition team and a UK civilian was a member of the CPA Transition Team.

299. Sir Kevin Tebbit explained the arrangements for looking after civilian personnel in Iraq to Sir Andrew Turnbull and Permanent Secretaries on 21 April 2004.²⁰⁸ There were two categories of civilian employee: MOD civilians deployed as part of Op TELIC, and other staff and contractors, either seconded to the CPA or deployed directly to Iraq, who were “under the wing of IraqRep”.

300. Sir Kevin explained:

“... the 70-80 MOD civil servants deployed at any one time in direct support of Operation TELIC effectively enjoy the same protection as the military, alongside whom they live and work. They would be unlikely to have to leave, but if they were, the arrangements would be made through the Permanent Joint Headquarters which is part of their reporting chain and also ‘owns’ the military transport assets. This would be fairly straightforward given the numbers involved.

²⁰⁷ [Letter Straw to Chancellor of the Exchequer, 11 February 2004, ‘Iraq: Post-Transition Representation’.](#)

²⁰⁸ [Letter Tebbit to Turnbull, 21 April 2004, \[untitled\].](#)

“Of the IraqRep staff (including civil servants and contractors) there are about 120 each in Baghdad and Basra and 20 or so in smaller locations. Most are based in secure locations which are currently protected by Coalition Armed Forces. Protection whilst on the move is normally provided by private contractors. The security guidelines for these staff is constantly under review, based on risk assessment done by full time FCO security managers in Baghdad and Basra. Staff understand that they are volunteers and that they may return to the UK if not comfortable with the security arrangements.

“In the event that HMG civilians had to be withdrawn from the South, the UK Armed Forces would assist with the evacuation of UK staff, through Basra Airport, by road to Kuwait, or by sea, depending on the operational circumstances. Those in Baghdad would be assisted to leave through the airport. In the outlying areas the US military would assist. Detailed contingency plans are being drawn up.”

301. Sir Kevin also commented on concerns expressed by Permanent Secretaries that the withdrawal of civilian contractors could undermine the reconstruction effort:

“The impact on reconstruction would indeed be serious if contractors began to withdraw, although there is little evidence that this is happening on a large scale. Most companies seem to realise that they must balance their desire to participate in [the] reconstruction effort with the need to look after their staff. Many are reassessing their security arrangements, but look likely to remain ... No UK or US funded contractor has withdrawn from Iraq.”

302. The Annotated Agenda for the AHMGIR on 22 April advised that security had deteriorated “markedly” over Easter (9 to 12 April) and that the risks to UK civilian staff in Iraq were “high”.²⁰⁹ The deployment of civilians had been reviewed and, as a temporary measure, new deployments to Baghdad had been suspended and staff unable operate in the current security environment had been withdrawn.

303. The AHMGIR approved the recommendation that all other staff should remain in Iraq subject to continuing review.²¹⁰

304. The 11 May meeting of ISOG discussed a concern raised by Mr Patrick Nixon, Sir Hilary Synnott’s successor as Head of CPA(South), that there would be a gap in reconstruction activity in the South between the end of the CPA and the launch of major infrastructure projects in August.²¹¹ The number of UK reconstruction staff would fall from 51 to seven (see Section 10.1).

305. On 18 May, Mr Philip Parham, Head of the FCO Iraq Operations Unit (IOU), updated Sir Michael Jay on the security of civilian staff in Iraq.²¹²

²⁰⁹ [Annotated Agenda, 21 April 2004, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.](#)

²¹⁰ Minutes, 22 April 2004, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

²¹¹ Letter Cabinet Office [junior official] to Buck, 13 May 2004, ‘Iraq: Senior Officials Group’.

²¹² [Minute Parham to PS/PUS, 18 May 2004, ‘Iraq: Security of Civilian Staff’.](#)

306. Mr Parham reported that, in Baghdad, all staff were accommodated under hard cover, very few road journeys were authorised beyond Baghdad and there was heightened concern about the road between Baghdad Airport and the Green Zone. There was no operational alternative to using the airport road and staff would continue to use it while mitigating risks as far as possible.

307. Security in Basra had deteriorated over the previous two months. Staff were accommodated in soft-skinned CPA trailers, which were being sandbagged to give extra blast protection. Progress had been very slow, but was now being expedited. From 30 June, all staff at the British Embassy Office Basra would be under hard cover.

308. Mr Parham explained that the drawdown of CPA(South) staff would begin in early June as transition approached and that DFID was considering whether to bring forward the departure of experts performing non-essential tasks.

309. Mr Parham also reported on the security of UK staff in other provinces:

- In Nasiriyah, Mr Rory Stewart, Deputy Governorate Co-ordinator, had already been evacuated with the Co-ordinator and the CRG close protection team on 17 May after the CPA compound had come under sustained attack. Mr Parham explained that it would not make sense for civilian staff to return to the CPA office. Instead, a core staff might operate from the Italian military base “as security allows”.
- Mr Nixon and the Basra Security Manager would visit Samawah, the capital of Muthanna province, on 19 May to assess whether the Deputy Governorate Co-ordinator, the only UK member of the GT, should remain there.
- The GT for Wasit province, headed by Mr Mark Etherington, was confined to the city of Kut, where US troops were securing the CPA compound. Mr Parham advised that the UK would pull out its staff if US troops withdrew.
- The GT in Kirkuk was “securely established in a well-protected compound”.
- In Erbil, Dr Liane Saunders, CPA Regional Co-ordinator, was based in an isolated compound that was “very secure and well-guarded”. She was able to operate over a wide area.

310. On 24 May, two UK civilians, an adviser to the Iraqi Oil Ministry employed by the FCO and a CRG employee, were killed by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) just outside the Green Zone in Baghdad.²¹³

311. An initial ban on staff movements outside the Green Zone introduced after the attack was lifted on 26 May.

312. ISOG instructed the FCO, MOD and DFID to review staff deployments, and the FCO and MOD to speed up the delivery of Electronic Counter-Measures (ECMs)

²¹³ Letter Overseas and Defence Secretariat [junior official] to Buck, 26 May 2004, ‘Iraq: Senior Officials Group’.

against remotely controlled IEDs, which had been on order for “some time” and were now urgent.

313. IED counter-measures are described in more detail in Section 14.1.

314. On 27 May, Mr Stuart Jack, Mr Parham’s successor as Head of the IOU, advised Mr Straw:

“... we are currently at the limit of technical measures we can apply to protect staff in Iraq. They have armoured cars and armed protection ... All staff have body armour and helmets. Everyone in Baghdad now sleeps under hard cover ... security managers are constantly reviewing the threat and apply the security guidelines robustly; if travel becomes too dangerous, staff are required to remain in the secure zone. It would be difficult to do much more and still allow staff to carry out their jobs.”²¹⁴

315. Mr Jack identified three options for “further minimising” risk to staff:

- “(i) We could bring forward departure dates for those staff scheduled to leave in June, as DFID are planning.
- “(ii) We could delay the deployment of new staff going out to fill jobs at the Embassy.
- “(iii) We could reduce our presence in Baghdad.”

316. FCO security advisers visited Baghdad and Basra again from 14 to 20 June. Mr Millett reported that the threat was higher than on the advisers’ previous five visits. Security within the secure zones was good, but transport security remained the main problem.²¹⁵ He stated:

“We have now reached the limit of what we can do to protect staff in Iraq ...
[I]f the numbers of attacks increase further, we have nowhere else to go ...

“We must ensure the numbers of staff are kept as low as possible consistent with achieving our strategic objectives in Iraq. We also have to ensure that we keep the contingency plan up-to-date for evacuation by the US and/or UK military.”

317. Mr Richmond reported on 17 June that the threat to staff in Baghdad was at its highest level since April 2003.²¹⁶ Journeys outside the Green Zone were only being approved under exceptional circumstances, seriously handicapping operational capacity (although work to support the Prime Minister’s Office and some other programmes were continuing). He had asked all staff who were not staying beyond 30 June to leave by 21 June.

²¹⁴ [Minute Jack to PS \[FCO\], 27 May 2004, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staffing and Security’.](#)

²¹⁵ [Minute Millett to Buck, 25 June 2004, ‘Iraq Security’.](#)

²¹⁶ Telegram 328 IraqRep to FCO London, 17 June 2004, ‘Iraq: Security of Personnel’.

318. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event commented that, although it was difficult to arrange travel to meetings outside the Green Zone in Baghdad from mid-2004, it was equally difficult for Iraqis to attend meetings inside the Green Zone. Iraqis did so at significant personal risk and did not understand why their UK interlocutors appeared to be so risk averse. The participants reported that similar conditions prevailed in Basra from mid-2006.

319. In March 2004, Mr Jack completed a review of the FCO’s worldwide security strategy, commissioned in response to the attack on the UK Consulate General in Istanbul in November 2003.²¹⁷ The terms of reference were: “To review the basis for the FCO Security Strategy. In particular to re-examine the balance between security and operational effectiveness.” Mr Jack’s review identified risk management as the most important tool available to identify the measures needed to meet the FCO’s duty of care to staff.

320. The FCO Board endorsed the main conclusions of the review on 26 March.²¹⁸

321. In late June 2004, the FCO advised staff of the review’s conclusions, including that, although total risk avoidance was unrealistic, risk management was fundamental to striking a balance between security and operational effectiveness, and to the prioritisation of security resources.²¹⁹ The FCO’s Security Strategy Unit was reported to be developing a risk matrix to help inform decisions in posts.

322. On 23 June, DFID officials sought advice from Treasury Solicitors on draft guidance on DFID’s duty of care responsibilities in Iraq.²²⁰ Treasury Solicitors confirmed that:

“... DFID, in common with all other employers, owes its employees a duty to take reasonable care for their physical and mental health and safety in all the circumstances of the case so as not to expose them to unnecessary, reasonably foreseeable risk of personal injury or death ...

...

“What DFID must do in order to comply with the duty of care depends on what is reasonable in all the circumstances, which include not only its own knowledge of the risks but also the degree of control it has over its employees given where they are, their experience and the nature of their work.

...

²¹⁷ Report Jack, March 2004, ‘Security Review: Final Report’.

²¹⁸ Letter Millett to FCO Heads of Mission, 29 April 2004, ‘FCO Security: Stuart Jack’s Report’.

²¹⁹ Telegram 224 FCO London to Abidjan, 29 June 2004, ‘Review of FCO Security Overseas’.

²²⁰ [Letter Treasury Solicitors \[junior official\] to Department for International Development \[junior official\], 25 June 2004, ‘Duty of care to staff in Iraq’.](#)

“Should DFID’s employees be in Iraq at all, given current circumstances? The answer is that DFID is free to employ its employees on work which will expose them to unavoidable risk of injury or death (ie against which it cannot guard by taking precautions); and, in the absence of express stipulation to the contrary, the risk is held to be with them and not with DFID. The law, however, requires DFID to use all reasonable care to diminish any inherent dangers, if it cannot eliminate these; and, if (as I presume to be the case here) it cannot effectively eliminate the dangers so that significant risks remain, it may be required to give its employees such information which is available to it to help them evaluate properly the benefits of being in Iraq against the risks. However, such a duty is more likely to arise where the risks are *not* common knowledge (which I would say they probably are here).

“DFID is not legally obliged to provide staff of consultancy organisations with the same level of support as it gives its own employees. Nor is it required by law to underwrite the steps taken by NGOs to support their staff working in Iraq.”

323. On 29 July, Treasury Solicitors added that DFID should “consider carrying out formal, periodic risk assessments as a further safeguard, and amending advice and procedures as a result of any relevant risks identified”.²²¹

324. The first version of the DFID guidance on duty of care seen by the Inquiry is dated January 2005.²²² It stated:

“DFID has a responsibility to take reasonable measures to protect its employees from risk of injury (physical, psychological) or death ... DFID does not guarantee that an employee will not be injured ... In taking reasonable care, DFID will only be liable if there is some lack of care on its part for failing to prevent something that was reasonably foreseeable ...

“All employees have a duty to take all reasonable steps to mitigate any risks to their safety and security to which they are exposed ...

“All UK-based DFID staff visiting or working in Iraq are volunteers and are under no obligation to travel to Iraq and can leave Iraq at any time without penalty ...”

325. On the question of DFID’s obligations to non-DFID staff, the guidance stated:

“Individual consultants are not the employees of DFID and are ultimately responsible for their own well-being and security arrangements ... However, bearing in mind the prevailing security conditions and difficulty of working in Iraq, DFID aims to provide solo and singleton consultants with the same levels of security, logistical and counselling support as it does its own staff ...

...

²²¹ [Letter Marriott and Treasury Solicitors \[junior official\] to Department for International Development \[junior official\], 29 July 2004, ‘Duty of care document’.](#)

²²² [Paper Iraq Directorate, January 2005, ‘Iraq: Guidance for DFID on its duty of care’.](#)

“Consultancy organisations are responsible for the well-being and security arrangements of their staff deployed to Iraq. Consultancy organisations are strongly advised to follow the same rules and procedures as DFID does for its own staff ...

“The responsibility for duty of care provisions and the security of NGO employees working in Iraq is held by the NGO. DFID will offer to meet the reasonable costs of providing the same level of security to NGO staff working on a DFID-financed project as DFID does for its own staff.”

The post-CPA UK civilian presence in Iraq

326. On 1 July 2004, officials informed the AHMGIR that the British Embassy Baghdad and “Consulates” in Basra and Kirkuk had started operating.²²³ Baghdad was reported to have 75 staff, Basra 47 and Kirkuk three.²²⁴

327. The FCO predicted that numbers in Baghdad would grow to “around 100 UK staff, of whom over half will be consultants to Iraqi ministries and advisers on Security Sector Reform”.²²⁵ The British Embassy Office Basra would consist of “around 80 UK-based staff, of whom around 60 will be consultants and security sector advisers”.

328. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event told the Inquiry that those arriving in mid-2004 felt a clear disconnect between the CPA, whose staff were shutting up shop and anxious to be home, and what followed. Knowledge acquired by CPA personnel was not passed on and commercial rivalry between old and new contractors damaged continuity.

329. The security situation deteriorated as the number of civilian personnel rose.

330. On 12 July, Mr Simon Collis, the new Consul General in Basra, described security as “the greatest immediate preoccupation”.²²⁶ He added:

“As we prepare to move beyond the bare essentials of an office, a secure perimeter, accommodation in hardened containers and a canteen – none yet fully in place – our duty of care requires that, after security, morale must be a high priority. Access to social amenities is currently less than any post I have seen ...

...

“Rapid staff turnover (the tour cycle, with breather visits, leaves only five months in post before moving on) means there is a lack of institutional memory. And as yet there is no cadre of experienced local staff to provide continuity ...

“We need to take care to get the next phase of estate development right. This means breaking the rush-job habits which have, necessarily, been a feature of the

²²³ Minutes, 1 July 2004, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

²²⁴ The minutes do not distinguish between UK-based and local staff.

²²⁵ Telegram 236 FCO London to Abidjan, 2 July 2004, ‘Iraq: New Embassy and Embassy Offices’.

²²⁶ [Telegram 77 Basra to FCO London, 12 July 2004, ‘Basra: Creating and Supporting a New Consulate’](#).

inception phase ... We have an excellent team here. And the Consulate [the British Embassy Office] will be a fine building when completed.”

331. Mr Collis told the Inquiry:

“Security was the most important factor, and by several orders of magnitude more significant than any other single constraint, because it made it much more difficult to tackle any of the other constraints.”²²⁷

332. On 5 August, Mr Collis reported that the detention on 3 August of four members of the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) militia had increased tension between the Sadrist militia and the MNF in Basra City, Maysan and Nasiriyah.²²⁸

333. The tension was such that Mr Collis considered there was “a fair probability of mortar attack attempts on British bases tonight, possibly including our Consulate”.

334. The British Embassy Office was locked down in mid-August.²²⁹ Mr Collis reported that, with the help of the military, staff were able to fly out on recuperation breaks using spare seats on helicopters visiting the military compound in Basra. They then transferred to military flights from Basra Airport to Kuwait. Staff were not yet using that route to return to the compound.

335. The British Embassy Office Basra was locked down at least three times in the second half of September, including:

- after further OMS attacks on 17 and 18 September;²³⁰
- after an attack on the Basra Palace site on 22 September;²³¹ and
- after attacks on international civilian vehicles in Basra on 28 September.²³²

336. On 29 September, there were three rocket attacks on the Basra Palace site, including a direct hit on the British Embassy Office.²³³

337. On 21 September, Mr Dickie Stagg, FCO Director General Corporate Affairs, reported on a short visit to Baghdad and Basra.²³⁴ He informed senior FCO officials, including Sir Michael Jay and Mr Sawers, that he had been impressed by the “resilience

²²⁷ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 48.

²²⁸ Telegram 86 Basra to FCO London, 5 August 2004, ‘Iraq: OMS activity in Basra’.

²²⁹ Telegram 104 Basra to FCO London, 12 August 2004, ‘Southern Iraq: Sitrep’.

²³⁰ Telegram 151 Basra to FCO London, 18 September 2004, ‘Iraq: Clashes in Basra’.

²³¹ Telegram 154 Basra to FCO London, 23 September 2004, ‘Iraq: Basra Security Situation’.

²³² Telegram 156 Basra to FCO London, 28 September 2004, ‘Iraq: Attacks on International Civilian Vehicles in Basra’.

²³³ Telegram U/N [un-numbered] Basra to FCO London, 29 September 2004, ‘Attack on British Consulate Basra’.

²³⁴ [Minute Stagg to Jack, 21 September 2004, ‘Iraq: Security/Morale/Staffing’.](#)

and good spirits of staff (many of whom extend beyond six months) in exceptionally testing circumstances”. Mr Stagg concluded:

- “a) We need to review constantly the number of staff in both posts to ensure that they all really can add value, in a situation in which movement off compound is so constrained. Nobody should be there unless we are clear their role is critical to the achievement of our (very important) goals in Iraq. I am sceptical about the impact of those trying to help the Iraqis reform their ministries on the basis of 2-3 meetings a week. Similar work in Sofia²³⁵ (a much less difficult environment) was impossible without having people working in the ministries full-time.
- b) We must have adequate security staff in both posts. I wasn’t convinced that the arrangements in Baghdad are adequate ...
- c) We need to have a contingency plan for how to handle things if many fewer staff (at all grades) were willing to serve in Iraq because of the security situation ...”

338. Sir Andrew Turnbull and Sir Michael Jay discussed security in Iraq at their bilateral meeting on 29 September.²³⁶ Sir Andrew expressed concern about the situation in Basra. Sir Michael said that it would be necessary to reconsider the terms on which staff from different departments were in Iraq.

339. Mr Collis reported on 30 September that arrangements were being made to provide military escorts for CRG vehicles and to restrict movements to certain times of day.²³⁷ He also reported reduced availability of the military air bridge to Basra Airport that had been used in August. Staff remained under instructions to use hardened buildings only and to carry body armour when moving around the Basra Palace site at night.

340. The number of DFID contractors in Baghdad grew throughout 2004.²³⁸ By October, the number of DFID contractors in Basra was also rising, reversing the significant drop in numbers at the end of the CPA period.

341. On 8 October, FCO Iraq Directorate briefed Mr Straw on the latest assessment of the risks to FCO staff and the measures being taken to minimise them.²³⁹ Officials reported that the direct threat had heightened just as the number of UK civilians had increased with the deployment of extra DFID contractors. The FCO was “reaching the limits” of its ability to increase effective protection.

²³⁵ Mr Stagg was a former British Ambassador to Bulgaria.

²³⁶ Minute Cabinet Secretary’s Private Office [junior official], 18 October 2004, ‘Sir Andrew Turnbull’s Bilateral with Sir Michael Jay: 29 September 2004’.

²³⁷ Telegram 158 Basra to FCO London, 30 September 2004, ‘Iraq: The Threat to Us in the South’.

²³⁸ [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\] attaching Table, \[untitled\]](#).

²³⁹ Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to PS [FCO], 8 October 2004, ‘Staff Security in Iraq’.

342. Officials reviewed the situation against contingencies that would trigger a reduction in the numbers of staff exposed to the threat:

“In Baghdad: a deterioration in security within the International Zone; a redrawing of its perimeter to place the Embassy at its edge ...; an increase of accurate strikes from rockets or mortars; loss of control of the airport road; or a CBW threat.

“In Basra: use of SAMS [surface-to-air missiles] in a manner that removed the scope for evacuation by air; an increase of accurate mortar or rocket strikes; more sophisticated attacks on vehicles; or a CBW threat.”

343. Officials concluded that, in Basra, a rocket attack on the British Embassy Office had triggered one of the contingencies. In consultation with other departments, the FCO had initiated a limited withdrawal of less essential staff and DFID had postponed several new deployments, largely because proposed work in the governorates was not possible in current circumstances.

344. Officials reported that, in Baghdad, the contingencies had not been triggered, but the Embassy was reviewing staffing levels. DFID had reviewed its staffing in Baghdad and planned a net reduction of six consultancy posts. Some work would be based outside Iraq with shorter visits to Baghdad, but core work with the Iraqi Prime Minister’s Office and on economic reform and support to civil society would not be affected.

345. An easing of the security situation in Basra during November came to an end with a rocket attack on the Basra Palace site on 4 December.²⁴⁰ Mr Collis reported that staff had reverted to carrying body armour when moving outside after dark, but that the Consulate Club, which had been housed in a portakabin, had reopened in a hardened location on 5 December.

346. Further low intensity and inaccurate attacks continued throughout December.²⁴¹

347. During 2004 and 2005, UK civilian personnel in Iraq became increasingly dependent on military assets for transport between and within Baghdad and Basra.

348. On 27 November 2004, after a series of attacks on the road to Baghdad Airport, the US Embassy announced the suspension all road travel to the airport by civilian staff.²⁴² Until further notice, they would travel by helicopter.

349. Mr Chaplin advised the FCO that the removal of US civilian vehicles from the airport road would raise the threat to UK road travel to an unacceptable level. US helicopters had no spare capacity and UK helicopters were committed to military operations. For the Embassy’s operations to be sustainable, it needed its own helicopter assets.

²⁴⁰ Telegram 214 Basra to FCO London, 6 December 2004, ‘Iraq: Attack on Basra Palace Site’.

²⁴¹ Telegram 227 Basra to FCO London, 23 December 2004, ‘Iraq: Stand Off Attack on Basra Palace Site’.

²⁴² Telegram 430 Baghdad to FCO London, 29 November 2004, ‘Iraq: Suspension of Road Moves to Baghdad Airport’.

350. The UK military offered help in the short term where Embassy requirements matched its plans, but was not in a position to provide a regular service.²⁴³

351. On 1 December, the Chiefs of Staff agreed an FCO request for helicopter support to the British Embassy Baghdad.²⁴⁴

352. Sir Kevin Tebbit informed Sir Michael Jay that the military would provide the best service it could over the next couple of weeks and was looking at the possibility of making additional helicopters available from Northern Ireland.²⁴⁵

353. Mr Straw raised the issue with Sir Nigel Sheinwald, who told him Mr Blair would be ready to write to the MOD to ensure its support continued.²⁴⁶

354. The FCO Senior Overseas Security Adviser (SOSA) visited Basra and Baghdad in March 2005.²⁴⁷ Security arrangements at both posts were reported to be “first class”. All staff were said to have confidence in the security arrangements, which allowed them “to work with a reasonably comfortable feeling in a very hostile environment”. Two issues were highlighted:

- A continuing shortage in Baghdad and Basra of ECMs for preventing remote detonation of IEDs. Additional suites of ECMs had been ordered, but more were needed.
- A substantial reinforcement of US patrolling along the Baghdad Airport road since the beginning of 2005. If the number of incidents along the road remained low, the British Embassy might be able to re-assess whether it could be used again.

355. In May 2005, in his valedictory as Head of the IPU, Mr Crompton advised:

“... we need to sell the notion that military assets (particularly transport) belong to HMG as a whole and that decisions on how they are used are determined by HMG, rather than MOD/PJHQ on the basis of military priorities, occasionally in ways which have not best served wider HMG objectives”.²⁴⁸

356. Section 9.4 describes the further deterioration in security during the second half of 2005, at the same time as the Government started to discuss the consequences for civilian activities of the planned drawdown of UK military forces from southern Iraq.

²⁴³ Letter Asquith to Houghton, 29 November 2004, ‘Request for Help with Helicopter Transport for British Embassy, Baghdad Between Green Zone and BIAP’.

²⁴⁴ Minutes, 1 December 2004, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

²⁴⁵ Minute Jay to Private Secretary [FCO], 1 December 2004, [untitled].

²⁴⁶ [Minute Owen to IPU \[junior official\], 2 December 2004, ‘Iraq: Helicopter Transport’.](#)

²⁴⁷ [Minute Security Strategy Unit \[junior official\] to Asquith, 14 March 2005, ‘SSU Visit to Iraq’.](#)

²⁴⁸ [Minute Crompton to Sawers, 4 May 2005, ‘Iraq Reflections’.](#)

357. On 15 July, the Iraq Strategy Group (ISG) considered a draft paper to be signed by Dr John Reid, the Defence Secretary, on operational transition in Iraq (see Section 9.4).²⁴⁹

358. The paper described a process in which Iraqi Security Forces would take primacy province by province. The transfer would be implemented from October in Maysan and Muthanna provinces. Basra and Dhi Qar would follow in spring 2006. This would lead to a reduced profile for UK forces, and reductions in numbers to around 3,000 by summer 2006.

359. After a discussion, the ISG concluded that the paper needed to cover more clearly the implications for other government departments and international actors.

360. In the revised paper, sent to No.10 on 18 July, Dr Reid stated that the drawdown could have an impact on the broader UK and international effort in the South:

“It is also possible that other (FCO and DFID) activity in Iraq aimed at developing the Iraqi police service and reconstruction will need to be curtailed or reduced, with consequent implications for HMG’s wider effort, because of the difficulties of running projects without UK military support and protection. This will need to be looked at in more detail with Other Government Departments.”²⁵⁰

361. Dr Reid’s paper also recognised that, although the drawdown was likely to deliver a significant cost saving to the military, there could be an increase in costs for others:

“Other Government Departments operating in Iraq may ... face increased security costs as they are forced to seek commercial alternatives to military force protection.”

362. The Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy Sub-Committee on Iraq (DOP(I)) agreed Dr Reid’s recommendation on 21 July.²⁵¹

363. On 16 September, the IPU advised Mr Straw and Sir Michael Jay that the frequency and sophistication of attacks in Basra were increasing and the British Embassy Office was locked down.²⁵² The threat was greater than in autumn 2004. The IPU recommended that the number of staff be kept under review and that Sir Michael Jay press the MOD for a dedicated helicopter service.

364. Officials prepared a draft paper for DOP(I) on 27 September advising that civilian activity in the South was “heavily reliant on UK forces for a range of services”, such as accommodation outside Basra, helicopter transport and regular intelligence on security

²⁴⁹ Letter Cabinet Office [junior official] to Iraq Senior Officials, 15 July 2005, ‘MOD paper on operational transition in Iraq’ attaching Paper MOD, ‘Operational transition in Iraq’.

²⁵⁰ Paper Secretary of State for Defence, 18 July 2005, ‘Operational Transition in Iraq’.

²⁵¹ [Minutes, 21 July 2005, DOP\(I\).](#)

²⁵² Minute Jeffrey to PS [FCO], 16 September 2005, ‘Basra Security Situation’.

threats.²⁵³ Those services could be sourced from private contractors after the military drawdown, though at a lower “level of service” and with increased risk to civilian staff. The UK had spent £19.2m on life support (including £16m on security) in 2004/05. The cost to source those services from private contractors would be at least 80 percent higher.

365. On 29 September, after a further IED attack on a US convoy travelling on a route being considered by the British Embassy Office Basra for road transfers to Kuwait, Sir Michael Jay agreed to the temporary withdrawal of five FCO and contracted staff from Basra.²⁵⁴

366. On 30 September, Mr Straw’s Private Office sent No.10 joint FCO/MOD/DFID advice on the implications for UK policy of the 17 September “Jameat incident”, when two UK soldiers in Basra killed one Iraqi police officer and wounded another, and were detained by the Iraqi authorities (see Section 9.4).²⁵⁵ Mr Straw’s Office advised that paper had been agreed by officials, but had not yet been seen by Mr Straw. The joint paper stated:

“For FCO, DFID and OGD personnel to operate out of Basra will ... require an air bridge (similar to the one in Baghdad) from the Consulate General to Basra airport.

...

“We will need to allocate more resources, which might include military resources, to security. The next week, and possibly months, are likely to be rough. Attacks on us are becoming more sophisticated. We will need to protect our staff.”

367. A manuscript comment by a No.10 official on an advance copy of the paper shown to Mr Blair stated: “John Reid does not want this [additional military resources for civilian security].”²⁵⁶

368. General Sir Mike Jackson, Chief of the General Staff (CGS), visited Iraq in early October.²⁵⁷ His report of the visit referred to the pressure on the helicopter support fleet and the air bridge: “we really need to take stock of our AT [air transport] capability in the round, especially in light of our impending commitment to Afghanistan”.

369. In October 2005, Dr Reid sought approval from Mr Des Browne, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, to procure a counter-measure to the threat posed to UK troops by IEDs (see Section 14.1).²⁵⁸

²⁵³ [Paper \[draft\] \[unattributed\], 27 September 2005, ‘The Consequences of Operational Transition for Civilian Activities in Southern Iraq: A paper for DOP\(I\) 20 October 05’.](#)

²⁵⁴ Manuscript comment Jay, 29 September 2005, on Minute Iraq Operations Unit [junior official] to PS/PUS [FCO], 27 September 2005, ‘Basra Security Situation’.

²⁵⁵ [Letter Hayes to Quarrey, 30 September 2005, ‘Iraq: Basra’ attaching Paper FCO/MOD/DFID, 30 September 2005, ‘South-East Iraq: impact of security incident in Basra’.](#)

²⁵⁶ Manuscript comment Quarrey on Minute [draft] FCO/MOD/DFID, 30 September 2005, ‘Iraq: Basra’.

²⁵⁷ Minute CGS to CDS, October 2005, ‘CGS visit to Iraq: 10-13 Oct 05’.

²⁵⁸ Letter Reid to Browne, 31 October 2005, ‘Iraq UORs: M*’.

370. Ten days later, Mr Benn, who had received a copy of Dr Reid’s letter, expressed his support for the proposal, pointing out that it would also “significantly reduce the current threat against UK forces and DFID staff”.²⁵⁹

371. The FCO SOSA visited Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra between 10 and 21 November.²⁶⁰ He reported that:

“The number of terrorist attacks remains at a high level and continues to be well targeted and professional. The main threat to our staff in Baghdad and Basra is from Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFPs). However, all methods of Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) can be expected in all areas in which our staff operate. Indirect fire attacks are a threat to all our bases and the threat [of] kidnap is high.

“The Security Managers and CRG are to be congratulated on their professional control of road movement ... It is clear that all road moves are subject to risk. The completion of accommodation at the police academies and at the airports in Baghdad and Basra will allow more flexibility. The use of helicopters is vital in order to change the pattern of movements.

“We recommend that all staff in Basra can move in Warrior armoured vehicles.”

372. Growing pressure on military assets created tension between civilian and military personnel.

373. Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Colin Smith, the UK’s Chief Police Adviser in Iraq from May 2005 to April 2006, told the Inquiry that, when the FCO handed over responsibility for operational delivery of Security Sector Reform to the MOD in October 2005 (see Section 12.1), one UK General Officer Commanding (GOC) in MND(SE) “indicated that unless civilian contractors agreed to be carried in ‘Snatch’ Land Rovers their contracts should be terminated”.²⁶¹

374. Chief Constable (CC) Paul Kernaghan, holder of the International Affairs portfolio for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) from 2001 to 2008, told the Inquiry that duty of care for civilians in Iraq, including police, was addressed on a collective basis in Whitehall and that he only had to intervene twice: to allow police training officers to remain overnight at their training centre; and to prohibit police officers from being transported in UK military Snatch Land Rovers.²⁶² He insisted that they be transported in better protected vehicles, including Warrior:

“I know this meant police officers were treated differently from soldiers, but police officers are not soldiers and different considerations apply.”

²⁵⁹ Letter Benn to Browne, 10 November 2005, [untitled].

²⁶⁰ Minute SMD [junior official] to Patey, 1 December 2005, ‘Security Visit to Baghdad and Basra’.

²⁶¹ Statement, 25 June 2010, page 7.

²⁶² Statement, 9 June 2010, page 8.

375. Protected mobility is addressed in more detail in Section 12.1.

376. On 16 December, DFID officials recommended to Mr Benn a number of changes to transport arrangements in Basra, including use of Warrior armoured vehicles by DFID staff for mission-critical visits to certain sites in southern Iraq.²⁶³ Until then, DFID staff had travelled in civilian rather than military vehicles because of their lower profile, consistent with the nature of DFID's work.

377. Officials advised Mr Benn that:

“... the continuing threat from EFPs in southern Iraq fundamentally compromises our ability to complete important projects, particularly in the power and water sectors at acceptable levels of risk.”

378. Three days later, FCO officials recommended to Mr Straw “a safe and measured return to road moves” for civilian staff in the South “in order to fully promote HMG objectives”.²⁶⁴ They proposed that, subject to regular review:

- all civilian staff be allowed to travel in Warrior armoured fighting vehicles within Basra, where there was a significant risk from armour piercing roadside bombs;
- UK civilian police officers be able to travel with contracted British Iraqi Police Advisers in their FCO armoured vehicles, escorted by UK military Snatch Land Rovers; and
- road moves in FCO armoured vehicles should restart along the main road from Basra Airport to Nasiriyah and Basra Airport to Kuwait.

379. Mr Straw approved the recommendations on 9 January 2006, provided the rules were subject to regular review.²⁶⁵

380. On 12 January, Mr Straw told DOP(I) that he remained concerned about the need to maintain staff morale, particularly in Basra. All departments needed to keep staff morale and welfare under review.²⁶⁶

381. On 2 February, DFID officials sought Mr Benn's approval to bring DFID policy on road movements into line with the FCO.²⁶⁷

382. Officials updated Mr Benn on security in Basra six days later.²⁶⁸ Rocket attacks on the Basra Palace site were becoming more frequent and accurate. Three attacks had

²⁶³ Minute [DFID junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 16 December 2005, 'Iraq: Iraq Security Update'.

²⁶⁴ [Minute Iraq Directorate \[junior official\] to Foreign Secretary, 19 December 2005, 'Iraq: Proposed Changes to Travel in Southern Iraq for HMG Civilian Staff'](#).

²⁶⁵ [Minute Siddiq to Iraq Directorate \[junior official\], 9 January 2006, 'Iraq: Proposed Changes to Travel in Southern Iraq for HMG Civilian Staff'](#).

²⁶⁶ Minutes, 12 January 2006, Defence and Overseas Policy Sub Committee on Iraq.

²⁶⁷ Minute [DFID junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 2 February 2006, 'Iraq: Iraq Security Update'.

²⁶⁸ [Minute \[DFID junior official\] to PS/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 8 February 2006, 'Information Note: Security Update – Basra, Iraq'](#).

taken place on 5 and 6 February, without injuries or damage. The FCO and DFID were assessing options for a temporary reduction in staff numbers.

383. Officials also reported that concerns were growing for local staff, who were increasingly fearful for their safety “after reports of intimidation and murders of local staff employed by the UK” and increased tensions surrounding the Shia festival of Ashura. Mr James Tansley, the Consul General, and others had briefed local staff and did not believe there was much substance to the rumours:

“However, DFID Basra have offered local staff the option of taking time off if they feel unsafe, have advised varying routes for those who do come in and have made arrangements for varying access times and gates to the compound.”

384. On 14 February, in a paper for DOP(I), Dr Reid set out transport options for the British Embassy Office Basra and the UK-led Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) after the handover of security responsibility to Iraqi control in Maysan and Muthanna provinces.²⁶⁹ The options included escorts from security contractors “as now, depending on local threat” and a range of military options including land and air escort.

385. DOP(I) agreed the approach set out in the paper.²⁷⁰

Departmental reviews of staffing levels

386. After reviews of personnel safety in response to an upsurge in violence in March 2006, DFID and the FCO concluded that there should be no reduction in staff numbers.

387. On 3 March, following attacks on the British Embassy Baghdad and an upsurge in violence after the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra (see Section 9.4), DFID officials reviewed personnel numbers in Iraq. They recommended to Mr Benn:

“DFID should maintain staffing at current levels for now. The FCO security advice is that there has been no significant change to our direct threat levels. We assess that existing staff remain important to the success of our programmes and that each person continues to deliver effective work despite restrictions on movements. We judge that HMG can continue to manage known threats robustly.”²⁷¹

388. That advice was restated two weeks later, in keeping with the conclusions of an Embassy audit of staff and security in Baghdad and Basra.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Paper Secretary of State for Defence, 14 February 2006, ‘Iraq: Handover of Security in Maysan and Al Muthanna Provinces – Paper by the Secretary of State for Defence’.

²⁷⁰ Minutes, 15 February 2006, DOP(I) meeting.

²⁷¹ Minute Dinham to Private Secretary [DFID], 3 March 2005 [sic], ‘Iraq: Security of International Staff’.

²⁷² Minute Dinham to Private Secretary [DFID], 15 March 2005 [sic], ‘Iraq: Security of Staff’.

389. Mr William Patey, British Ambassador to Iraq, sent an audit of staff and security to Mr Dominic Asquith, FCO Director Iraq, on 9 March.²⁷³ He reported that all staff appreciated that working in Iraq was not without risk. The UK's safety record was good:

“Since 2003 we have only suffered two fatal casualties in Baghdad, a DFID oil contractor²⁷⁴ and a CRG team member. In Basra two CRG personnel were killed by the first Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) in July 2005.²⁷⁵”

“Staff have reacted well to recent events ... I have reiterated that all staff are volunteers and if at any time they feel anxious they should make their concerns known. They are free to leave and no-one would think the worse of them. No-one has asked to leave.”

390. Mr Patey recommended no change to staff levels in Baghdad:

- Reducing the number of consular staff from two to one would result in no cover during staff absences and leave the Consular Section short staffed during kidnap cases.
- Reducing the size of the seven-strong Management/Security Section would be “folly”.
- The Political/Economic/Military Section was large by FCO standards, but so were the demands on it. It could not meet those demands with fewer staff while ensuring they received the decompression breaks to which they were entitled.
- The single Commercial Officer was needed to cover trade promotion and air service matters.
- The Head of DFID Iraq, Mr Tim Foy, “takes security seriously and liaises constantly with us and DFID London”. Mr Foy did not think the security situation warranted a drawdown of DFID staff.
- 2006 was “the year of the Police”. There was a large Civilian Police Section, but the key UK objective of support to the Iraqi Police Service would have to be curtailed if numbers were reduced.

391. Mr Patey advised that numbers could be reduced in Basra, but that it would have a severe impact on the service offered “while having a negligible effect on the risk”. He advised that numbers would have to be cut “drastically” to reduce the risk appreciably.

392. Mr Patey explained that risk assessments were reviewed and amended on a daily basis and in response to each incident:

“Recent changes have been a more rigorous pre-screening to ensure staff are fit enough to cope with security measures and don't pose a danger to themselves and others; and the provision of fixed accommodation at BIAP [Basra International

²⁷³ [Letter Patey to Asquith, 9 March 2006, 'Staff and Security Audit'](#).

²⁷⁴ DFID and the FCO have informed the Inquiry that the consultant was contracted by the FCO, not DFID.

²⁷⁵ The first EFP attack in Basra was on 29 May 2005, not in July (see Section 14.1).

Airport] and Basra Air Station. Future challenges include the shrinking of the International Zone [in Baghdad], the gradual transfer of responsibility for security to the Iraqi forces and Transition in MND(SE). We continually assess and evaluate these changes and will not hesitate to recommend changes to the establishment should we deem them necessary, even at the expense of achieving our objectives. Both missions have a robust Contingency Plan that can be invoked quickly to reduce staff numbers. Having reviewed again the two missions I judge that all staff are carrying out, or enabling others to carry out, jobs required of us by our clients in the UK.”

393. On 4 April, Mr Tansley reported a “sustained and substantial” rocket and mortar attack on the Basra Palace site during the Queen’s Birthday Party reception, with one salvo hitting and damaging a building belonging to the British Embassy Office.²⁷⁶ No staff were injured. The attack was the fifth on the Basra Palace site in seven days.

394. FCO and DFID officials put advice in parallel to Mr Straw and Mr Benn, recommending a temporary reduction in the number of staff in Basra (five each from FCO and DFID), to be reviewed after two weeks.²⁷⁷

395. The IPU explained to Mr Straw that the “security conditions generally in Basra City have made it impossible for some staff to continue working effectively (the key criterion for their presence)”. A review of staffing levels had concluded that it was “debatable whether the benefits of retaining them are commensurate with the risks faced”.

396. At the ISG on 7 April, Sir Nigel Sheinwald observed that the drawdown of civilian staff from the Basra Palace site was a significant development and asked the FCO and DFID to “consult more widely than their respective Secretaries of State”.²⁷⁸ The subsequent advice to Ministers should make clear that:

“Set against the issue of not keeping people somewhere they could not operate, there was the problem of re-entry [of civilian staff] and the political or practical fall-out of the UK being driven out of the Basra Palace by terrorists. A decision to locate our civilian presence at the airport would represent a major failure.”

397. Sir Peter Ricketts, UK Permanent Representative to NATO and FCO PUS-designate, visited Baghdad and Basra from 5 to 7 April.²⁷⁹ In his visit report on 10 April, he endorsed the FCO recommendation.

398. Sir Peter described staff as “highly committed and motivated ... well led and managed, doing important work with great enthusiasm and adaptability”.

²⁷⁶ [eGram 9731/06 Basra to FCO London, 4 April 2006, 'Iraq: Basra: Indirect Fire Attack on Basra Palace'](#).

²⁷⁷ [Minute Iraq Policy Unit \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 7 April 2006, 'Basra: Security of British Embassy Office Situation'; Minute MENAD \[junior official\] to PS/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 7 April 2006, 'Basra Security Update and Contingency Plans'](#).

²⁷⁸ Minute Cabinet Office [junior official] to Sheinwald, 10 April 2006, 'Iraq Strategy Group: 7 April 2006'.

²⁷⁹ [Minute Ricketts to Asquith, 10 April 2006, 'Visit to Baghdad and Basra'](#).

399. Sir Peter reported that, although security was a major preoccupation in Baghdad, the threat from indirect fire seemed to be lower than in Basra and the ability to move around the Green Zone reduced the sense of claustrophobia. The arrangement with the RAF for guaranteed helicopter hours²⁸⁰ seemed to work reasonably well, although there were some serviceability problems with the helicopters.

400. In Basra staff felt “pretty beleaguered”. The main complaint was the difficulty getting in and out:

“It often takes two or even three days for staff to get to/from Kuwait, given the frequent delays or cancellations in the helicopter flights to Basra airport, and then the uncertainties of the RAF surf flights up to Baghdad and then on to Kuwait. This is intensely frustrating as well as inefficient, and is leading some staff to consider not taking breather breaks because of the hassle.”

401. Sir Peter recommended taking up the issue with the MOD at a high level. The Basra team perceived that the service had reduced recently because of other operational pressures on MOD assets:

“It must be in the MOD’s interests to ensure the viability of the Palace Compound, given the need for an overall plan in the South. Perhaps we should look again at contracting for a specified number of helicopter hours per month (as in Baghdad). Failing that, I wonder whether there might be a commercial solution ...”

402. Sir Peter concluded with a suggestion that, after a period of heavy capital investment and a big increase in staff, there was probably scope “to start squeezing down on running costs, eg for the security contracts”.

403. On 12 April, Mr Richmond, now FCO Director General Defence and Intelligence, and Mr Asquith discussed the Basra air bridge with Lieutenant General Nicholas Houghton, Chief of Joint Operations (CJO), who had returned from Iraq in March.²⁸¹ Mr Richmond and Mr Asquith explained that:

- The FCO would need “much greater confidence in the reliability of air transport” between the Basra Palace site, Basra Airport and Kuwait if it was to keep the staff drawdown to levels that did not have a significant impact on the UK’s ability to achieve its objectives.
- Long delays were preventing staff engaged in the SSR programme from carrying out their objectives.
- They “suspected that the problem was a mixture of military priorities and resources”. It was essential that the military viewed the operation in Basra as “a team effort”.

404. Lt Gen Houghton undertook to investigate the causes of the delays. He advised that if it was a resource problem, it could probably be resolved only at Ministerial level.

²⁸⁰ The Inquiry has not seen details of the terms of this arrangement.

²⁸¹ [Minute Asquith to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 13 April 2006, ‘Basra’.](#)

405. Mr Asquith informed Sir Michael Jay that FCO officials were looking again at the possibility of a private sector provider for the air bridge service and exploring the possibility of using a proposed US military air bridge between the Basra Palace site and Kuwait.

406. On 20 April, FCO and DFID officials recommended the return of a small number of staff pending a further review in another two weeks.²⁸² Their advice drew on the views of Mr Robin Lamb, Mr Tansley's successor as Consul General, who recommended a two-stage return, reflecting a reduction in indirect fire over the previous weeks, but also the continuing constraints on staff mobility and their ability to work effectively.²⁸³

407. Sir Michael Jay approved the phased return to normal staffing in Basra on 15 May, after a brief delay while officials considered the implications of the shooting down of a UK military helicopter in Basra on 6 May (see Section 9.5).²⁸⁴ Sir Michael instructed that:

“... the security situation needs to be kept under constant and active review (as I know it is), and we should be ready to draw down again if the security situation deteriorates to the extent that staff are unable to carry out their duties, or if we judge the risk simply too great for them to stay.”

408. DFID officials recommended to Mr Benn that DFID also return to full staffing, but explained that numbers would not rise substantially because DFID's programme in the South was “less labour-intensive” than six months earlier.²⁸⁵ They stated that:

“Numbers will be kept at the current level of eight with an occasional rise to 10 or 11 to account for overlap in rotations. This would mean a breakdown of two out of three DFID staff and five out of the nine consultants at the [Basra] Palace with a maximum of three DFID staff and seven consultants during handover periods ... Visitors would be additional to those numbers. Essential visits only will go ahead, by no more than two visitors and for a maximum of four days at a time.”

The Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team

409. Many of the problems the UK had encountered with the deployment of civilian personnel since 2003 resurfaced with the opening of the UK-led Basra PRT in May 2006. Those included:

- rapid turnover of staff;
- civil/military co-operation; and
- departmental co-ordination.

²⁸² Minute IPU [junior official] to PS [FCO], 20 April 2006, 'Basra: Security Situation'; Minute MENAD [junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 21 April 2006, 'Basra Security and Staffing'.

²⁸³ Letter Lamb to IPU [junior official], 20 April 2006, 'Basra: Security and Drawdown'.

²⁸⁴ Manuscript comment Jay, 16 May 2006, on Minute Iraq Policy Unit [junior official] to PS/PUS [FCO], 15 May 2006, 'Basra: Security Situation'.

²⁸⁵ Minute MENAD [junior official] to Private Secretary [DFID], 17 May 2006, 'Iraq: Staff Security and Staffing Levels in Basra'.

410. The Basra PRT was established on 14 May 2006 (see Section 10.2).²⁸⁶ Its first Head was Mr Mark Etherington, previously Governorate Co-ordinator of Wasit province.

411. Mr Etherington reported on 17 May that the established strength of the PRT was 35, drawn from the UK (FCO, DFID, MOD and the inter-departmental Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU)), Denmark and the US.

412. Mr Etherington described the “substantial” challenges facing the PRT in Basra. He judged that:

“... we have but one chance properly to configure and launch the PRT in order to maximise the chances of its success. For this reason we would wish to retain in theatre for as long as possible those resources that are already here ...

“... The key to the PRT’s capabilities will be the retention of a core of long-term civilian expertise in each envisaged work strand. Basra is our main problem and the notion of withdrawing valuable staff as the PRT gears up to tackle it is counter-intuitive.”

413. Mr Etherington advised that:

“The PRT, because of its integrated civil-military structure, has continued to function despite the difficult security environment. The military component is able to travel when the civilian component cannot ... In the event of a protracted deterioration in security terms, the PRT would also be forced to cease military capacity-building efforts in Basra; and it is probable that our Iraqi partners would be reluctant to continue meeting us. In these circumstances the PRT would have to suspend its work altogether until security was restored.”

414. In August and September 2006, the US Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) examined whether PRTs were “fully empowered, staffed and resourced to meet their mission, and to identify any other barriers impeding achievement of the PRT mission” (see Section 10.2).²⁸⁷

415. The SIGIR audit, published on 29 October, concluded that the creation of 10 PRTs and eight satellite offices was a “noteworthy achievement”, but that many obstacles to effective operation remained, including insecurity, a lag in funding, the difficulty of recruiting and retaining qualified civilian personnel, and the difficulty of integrating civilian and military personnel.

416. The audit stated that the unstable security situation in Basra meant that PRT members had not been able to interact personally with their Iraqi counterparts, significantly limiting the Basra PRT’s ability to achieve its mission. It questioned

²⁸⁶ [Minute Etherington to \[Cabinet Office junior official\], 17 May 2006, ‘Basra PRT: challenges and opportunities’.](#)

²⁸⁷ Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 29 October 2006, *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq*.

“whether the continued deployment of PRT personnel to ... Basra ... makes operational sense at this time”.

417. More widely, the report stated that, because of the US Government’s difficulties in recruiting civilians to serve in PRTs, a majority of positions were initially filled by military civil affairs personnel. In September 2006, of 128 positions allocated to civilians, 77 had been filled; of the 163 allocated to the military, just two were vacant.

418. The Inquiry has seen no evidence that the SIGIR audit was seen or considered by UK officials.

419. In a review of the first eight months of the Basra PRT commissioned by the PCRU and produced in March 2007, Mr Etherington made a number of recommendations, including:

- *Key staff should be held to a minimum of one year tours, with the requisite adjustments for welfare and travel.* The repeated and cyclical loss of experience in south-east Iraq [in] 2006 was damaging.
- *Where integrated bodies such as the PRT are raised in future, they should be recruited or sub-contracted by a single authority and to a single contractual template, with clear procedures established for grievance and misconduct. Ideally such groups would train together ... and move to theatre as a formed body. That single authority would also be financially and administratively responsible for the operating requirements of the group.”²⁸⁸*

420. Mr Etherington added:

“The lack of clarity regarding ownership of the PRT caused substantial administrative difficulty, for the PRT disposed of no assets of its own and no single department believed itself responsible for it ...

“Unlike other PRTs in Iraq, the UK-led team was assembled in large measure from existing effort ... While this conferred valuable operational momentum and expertise on a new team it significantly complicated administration, because the team had to merge a wide array of existing contracts, leave schemes, equipment, security procedures and cultures while lacking any defined mandate to do so.

“The administrative world which the PRT was forced to inhabit was always difficult, and verged in the early months on Kafka-esque. An FCO car in the Iraq support team at Kuwait airport would not pick up the inbound PCRU-contracted PRT office manager – or book her hotel – because she was ‘not an FCO responsibility’.”

²⁸⁸ [Paper \[unattributed\], 26 March 2007, ‘The Establishment and Operation of the Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team \(PRT\), April 2006 – January 2007: Lessons Identified’.](#)

421. Mr Etherington singled out staffing as the best illustration of the difficulties faced by the PRT:

“... the commercial company Enterplan fielded the bulk of consultants for DFID; which in turn seconded them into the PRT. Perhaps understandably, the consultants ... tended to look to either or both of their original employers for guidance and recourse; and this divided loyalty persisted because UK departments, upon whom the PRT concept had largely been forced, were lukewarm about the idea and seconded none of their civil servants into the team, preferring to retain separate departmental structures ... While this undoubtedly exposed companies like Enterplan to risk – after all, it was they who were contractually bound to individuals – it also allowed them undue influence in theatre and allowed the possibility that conflicts of interest might arise. In the only instance of the period in which misconduct proceedings were initiated these difficulties became obvious.

“The PRT consisted, at peak, of staff on seven different kinds of contract ... and the cumulative effect of managing ... [different] leave schemes, together with a range of other frictions, was to make the maintenance of momentum almost comically difficult.

“The sheer throughput of staff exacerbated this difficulty. This tended to be because parent agencies and departments tended to move ‘their’ people in and out of theatre without reference to PRT management ...

“PRT staff varied widely in calibre and disposition ...

“The Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) contribution of core staff such as a communications and IT expert and office manager proved invaluable.”

422. PCRU support for the Basra PRT is addressed in Section 10.3.

Reassessment of risk and duty of care

423. At the end of May 2006, the FCO SOSA reviewed security in Baghdad and Basra with a DFID security official.²⁸⁹

424. Mr Andrew Noble, FCO Director of Security, reported the outcome to Mr Nigel Casey, Head of the IPU:

“The starting point for the review remains that the security risks to which our staff are exposed in Iraq are extreme by normal diplomatic standards. All plausible security measures are being put in place to provide as great a degree of assurance from attack as possible. But we are operating at the limits of what can be achieved, consistent with running a diplomatic mission. In such an extreme environment, the likely consequences of an accident or a piece of bad luck could make the difference between life and death. SMD’s [Security Management Directorate’s] clear

²⁸⁹ Minute SOSA to Patey, 13 June 2006, ‘Visit to Baghdad and Basra’.

assessment is that it is more a question of when there is a fatality amongst our diplomatic staff, rather than if. This assumption needs to be shared or challenged by the risk owners.”²⁹⁰

425. The main findings included:

- Significant deterioration in the security of UK posts: in Basra, because of insufficient military protection; in Baghdad, because of the increasing threat from extremists.
- An increasing threat of kidnap. FCO security officials were looking at providing key staff with transponders to detect their location in case they were captured.
- The SOSA’s judgement that senior staff were facing “undue political pressure to ‘produce the goods’ which could lead to the acceptance of inappropriate levels of risk”. Security managers and heads of close protection teams were “acting as a constraint on senior staff movements to risky areas”.
- Signs of speculation in other government departments about moving “off-shore” because of the “nearly impossible operating environment”.

426. On 12 June, Sir Michael Jay updated Mrs Margaret Beckett, who had succeeded Mr Straw as Foreign Secretary in early May 2006:

“We have always been aware of the risks of operating in Iraq. Because of the political importance to the UK of our work in Iraq, we have judged it acceptable to tolerate a higher level of risk there (and in southern Afghanistan) than elsewhere in the world. But our duty of care towards our staff, and towards those from other government departments who work in our posts, remains.

“We invest considerable resources in reducing as far as is possible the risk to our staff, and all those for whom we are responsible. We have in place robust structures to manage and mitigate risk, which are subject to constant review, in response to changes in the situation on the ground. We recognise, however, that there remains a residual level of risk in operating in such an extreme environment, against which we cannot wholly protect ourselves.”²⁹¹

427. Sir Michael listed the four conditions for any FCO member of staff working in Iraq:

- All staff must be volunteers;
- They must be fully aware of the security risks;
- We must do all we reasonably can to reduce the risks they face;
- Conditions on the ground must be such that staff are able to do their jobs effectively.”

²⁹⁰ [Minute Noble to Casey, 6 June 2006, ‘Security of our Posts in Baghdad and Basra’.](#)

²⁹¹ [Minute Jay to Foreign Secretary, 12 June 2006, ‘Iraq: Security of Our Posts in Baghdad and Basra’.](#)

428. Sir Michael informed Mrs Beckett that, in response to the SOSA’s report, he had asked for another review to look at “the context for our operations in Iraq; our broad approach to the risks we face; the structures and procedures we have in place to manage the risks; the extent to which these are being observed in practice; and whether these satisfy our legal obligations towards our staff”. He hoped that the review would “enable us to satisfy ourselves that an acceptable basis for continuing our operations in Iraq remains”.

429. Sir Michael also advised Mrs Beckett that Mr Patey and Mr Lamb “both rejected entirely the suggestion that ‘senior staff in our missions are facing undue political pressure to produce the goods’”. Mr Patey was clear that the advice of professional security advisers on the ground had never been overruled.

430. Staff in Basra remained concerned about the unreliability of the Basra air bridge.²⁹² A visiting member of FCO HR Directorate reported that the air bridge was affecting people’s ability to do their job, “adding to the angst” of decompression breaks and final departures:

“My own inward journey experience was 27 hours from leaving my hotel in Kuwait to arriving at Basra Palace with an overnight at Basra Airport. My previous trips by road to Basra usually took a morning. When I got to ... Basra Airport I found that there were several ... staff stuck waiting for a helicopter move – some had been waiting as long as four days ... The US have agreed that we can put staff on their weekly Chinook flight to/from Kuwait, but there are no guaranteed places ...”

431. On 18 June, a locally engaged (LE) member of staff at the British Embassy Office Basra was murdered. His wife, also an LE member of staff, was seriously injured.²⁹³

432. The murder raised concerns about the growing threat to local staff.

433. The FCO and DFID adopted different responses, reflecting the different roles and work patterns of their local staff.

434. DFID officials advised Mr Benn that, as a consequence of the murder, DFID’s single LE member of staff in Basra was staying at home and DFID’s five local contractors had been advised to avoid the Basra Palace site.²⁹⁴ Further advice would follow when more information was available from the FCO.

435. Mr Asquith updated Mrs Beckett on 21 June.²⁹⁵ He reported that the assumption was that the two LE staff had been targeted because they worked for the British

²⁹² [Minute \[FCO junior official\] to Asquith, 4 July 2006, ‘Visit by HR Manager to Basra 14-19 June 2006’.](#)

²⁹³ eGram 25107/06 Basra to FCO London, 19 June 2006, ‘Basra: Shooting of Consulate General Local Staff’.

²⁹⁴ Minute [DFID junior officials] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 20 June 2006, ‘Iraq Security Update: Basra and Baghdad’.

²⁹⁵ Minute Asquith to Private Secretary [FCO], 21 June 2006, ‘Assassination of Locally Engaged Staff in Basra’.

Embassy Office. UK and US LE staff were regularly intimidated in Baghdad and Basra. One US LE member of staff had been murdered in Basra on 4 June. Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) interpreters had also been killed.

436. Mr Asquith reported that Mr Lamb had advised LE staff not to come to work until further notice, although local labourers and support staff working for contractors on the premises had continued to come in. A number of steps were under consideration to improve LE staff security. The attack was not judged to have changed the security conditions for UK-based civilians and it was not, therefore, proposed to draw down UK staff.

437. DFID officials put further recommendations to Mr Benn on 23 June, drawing on advice from DFID Basra.²⁹⁶ Pending agreement from the FCO, which was expected imminently, officials recommended that:

- at his own request, the DFID LE staff member in Basra should leave the country as soon as possible on a two-month development attachment;
- the locally contracted administrative assistant for power projects should be relocated to Basra Airport; and
- two other locally contracted staff should work from home for two months.

438. On 14 July, DFID officials explained to Mr Benn that DFID and the FCO had adopted different approaches:

“FCO offered their office-based staff three months’ salary if they wanted to leave. We believe most have now accepted this offer. FCO is now deciding if and how to fill these positions with either UK or third country nationals ... Although far from ideal, this has so far had no significant impact on DFID’s work.

...

“We suggest that, where staff can work remotely (on project sites, at home, in town), we should continue to employ them on the same basis as before and that we maintain our position on this as originally planned despite it differing from the FCO approach. Our circumstances are different. FCO local staff are needed on a daily basis at the [Basra] Palace. Most of our local staff are not and the two administrative staff who were, have already resigned. All of our local staff know that they have the option to work flexibly, to take time off if they feel threatened and to leave if they feel it is too dangerous.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Minute [DFID junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 23 June 2006, ‘Iraq Security Update: Basra and Baghdad’.

²⁹⁷ [Minute MENAD \[junior official\] to PS/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 14 July 2006, ‘Information Note: Security Update – Iraq’.](#)

439. The introduction of the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme in 2007 in recognition of the uniquely difficult circumstances faced by LE staff is addressed later in this Section.

440. The IPU review of security submitted to Sir Michael Jay on 30 June examined the FCO's approach to risk in Iraq, structures and procedures to manage that risk, the extent to which those structures and procedures were being observed in practice and whether they satisfied the FCO's legal obligations towards its staff.²⁹⁸

441. The IPU explained that other FCO departments had contributed to the review. DFID officials had also participated and would report to their Ministers separately.

442. The IPU stated that the FCO approach to risk derived from its "duty of care in law to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to ... FCO employees (UK-based and locally engaged) as well as those who visit the premises of our missions and work from there eg from OGDs".

443. The description of the FCO's duty of care was derived from a paper prepared by FCO Legal Advisers as part of the 2004 FCO Security Review. The Legal Advisers stated:

"Whether a duty of care exists in particular cases depends on whether the death, injury or damage sustained was foreseeable, whether there was a relationship between the FCO and the claimant viewed by a court as one of 'proximity' and whether the court considers it fair, just and reasonable to impose a duty ...

"Even if a duty of care does exist in a particular case, the FCO is liable in law only if it is found to have breached that duty, ie to have fallen below a reasonable standard of conduct through negligent acts or omissions. The fact that an attack on a mission has succeeded does not necessarily mean that the FCO was at fault or has failed to act reasonably."

444. The IPU described the FCO's "basic approach" as "risk averse":

"... if we judge a situation exists whereby personnel are exposed to greater risk than the mitigating measures in place to deal with that risk, that task will not be undertaken ..."

445. Decision-making structures were reported to be in line with the recommendations of the 2004 review. London decision-makers were the Foreign Secretary, the PUS (and FCO Board of Management) and the Iraq Director, supported by the IPU. Advice was provided by the Director General Corporate Affairs and Director General Defence and Intelligence and their subsidiary departments, and by FCO Legal Advisers.

²⁹⁸ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 30 June 2006, 'Iraq: Review of Security' attaching Paper Iraq Policy Unit, June 2006, 'Review of Security of Staff and Missions in Iraq'.](#)

446. The decision-makers in Iraq were the Heads of Post and Post Security Officers in Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk, advised by their Overseas Security Managers (OSMs), Post Security Committees and the UK military.

447. The IPU set out the risk assessment procedures for posts in Iraq:

- daily assessment in each post of all operations in or out of compounds and daily contact between the FCO and posts;
- weekly meetings of Post Security Committees, with records copied to the FCO with recommendations as necessary;
- every six weeks “on average”, a London-based “Nuts and Bolts” meeting to review measures in place and agree next steps, involving relevant FCO officials and other government departments as necessary;
- quarterly visits to posts by a UK-based FCO OSA, who completed a risk assessment matrix in line with FCO worldwide procedures;
- immediate reviews of security measures in response to incidents or fresh intelligence; and
- regular reviews of contingency plans and business continuity planning.

448. The IPU concluded that those procedures were “closely observed” and that steps taken by the FCO to manage the risks to staff for whom it had a duty of care “could be used as evidence of a reasonable standard of conduct by the FCO”. More work was needed to:

- improve pre-deployment procedures for staff from certain departments;
- clarify with the MOD arrangements for the evacuation of third country nationals employed by the FCO as contractors; and
- clarify the status of UK civilian police in Iraq: “It remains unclear whether they are our employees or remain employees of their constabularies.”

449. In an annex to the review, the IPU summarised departments’ and organisations’ responsibilities for the security of local and UK-based staff and contractors. It stated that the FCO’s duty of care “would extend to any visiting FCO staff and staff seconded temporarily to the FCO or working directly under FCO supervision and control”. The FCO had “a similar duty of care” to employees of other government departments, foreign governments or international organisations “who live and/or work on or visit the relevant mission compounds”. In practice, measures to protect those personnel had to be the same as for FCO staff. “Inevitably”, pre-deployment or pre-visit training and medical clearance might vary, but in the case of other government departments it was “clearly desirable that close co-ordination occurs and that the same or equivalent measures are adopted”.

450. The annex also stated that the standard of care for contractors “may, in particular circumstances, be lower than that required for employees”. Those circumstances included where contractors had security expertise of their own and when it “may not

be unreasonable for the FCO to expect them to make their own assessment as to the risks to their own staff (eg while travelling to and from post)". Contracts with such firms and agencies needed to be carefully vetted and contractors were required to have employers' liability insurance.

451. The IPU recommended that as many members of the FCO Board as possible attend a meeting to discuss:

- the impact of the Iraqisation of Iraqi Security Forces on security in Baghdad;
- the impact of the withdrawal of UK military personnel on security in the South;
- a thorough review of staffing levels; and
- a contingency planning exercise on coping with an emergency in Iraq, to be attended by as many Board members as possible.

452. Sir Michael Jay agreed the IPU recommendations on 3 July.²⁹⁹ He asked for:

- the status of civilian police to be clarified quickly;
- confirmation that a number of specific issues were being addressed; and
- advice on measures to protect local staff should UK-based staff be evacuated.

453. The IPU responded on 19 July:

- Efforts were in hand to tighten DFID's pre-deployment medical screening procedures for staff and contractors.
- Pre-deployment procedures for police officers would be brought in line with those for FCO personnel by 1 September.
- Concerns remained about arrangements for the evacuation of third country nationals employed by the UK. A UK military assumption that third country nationals would be evacuated was unsatisfactory and was being pursued with the MOD.
- The Home Office had challenged the FCO view that police officers on secondment from their home police force were not FCO employees. The issue was with lawyers. The status of retired police officers was also being discussed with lawyers.³⁰⁰

454. Dr Rosalind Marsden, the newly arrived British Consul General in Basra, sent a detailed assessment of the security situation to Mr Casey on 31 August:

"The following strikes me, as a newcomer:

- (a) how exposed the Basra Palace Compound (BPC) is. We abut the city: houses, parks and fishing boats crowd around our walls. The 'badlands' start about two hundred feet from my office ...
- (b) the risks our local staff run to work for us ...

²⁹⁹ Minute Jay to Asquith, 3 July 2006, 'Iraq: Review of Security'.

³⁰⁰ Minute IPU [junior official] to PS/PUS [FCO], 19 July 2006, 'Iraq: Review of Security'.

- (c) the fragility of our transport and supply links to the airport ... There are few helicopters in theatre, those that we do have are prone to breakdown (because they are worked so hard) and, when it comes to getting a seat, the military take priority over civilians;
- (d) the difficulty and danger involved in moving around Basra City ... Because we depend on the military for support, road moves have to be planned well in advance and are sometimes cancelled at the last moment because of other operational priorities ...
- (e) the vulnerability of the BPC to indirect fire (mortars and rockets) ...

“We need to accept that the risks for UK-based staff are high and do everything possible to mitigate them. For example, we have mitigated the major threats (IDF [indirect fire], EFP and kidnapping) to an acceptable extent by providing hardened living accommodation, limiting helicopter flights to the hours of darkness, varying routes, using Warriors or three vehicle convoys, as appropriate, requiring minimum movement outside after dark and full body armour and constantly reviewing our alert status in the light of the latest intelligence ...

...

“For LE staff the threat is much greater and, I judge, increasing. We and IPU are wrestling with the dilemma of how to justify continuing to employ a bare minimum of staff ... in the light of the current threat to them.”³⁰¹

455. Dr Marsden advised that the next six to nine months would be critical to Basra and the UK legacy. The UK needed “to maintain a big operation here during that period – and indeed somewhat expand it”. The level of risk was likely to increase in the short term with the planned military surge (Operation Salamanca, see Section 9.5), but the reinforcement of the UK military presence in the BPC from 430 to 600 with the arrival of an additional Warrior company would mean better patrolling and harassment of potential firing points.

456. On 1 September, Mr Casey sent Mrs Beckett a paper on staff and security issues in Iraq.³⁰² The paper stated that:

- LE staff and contractors were particularly vulnerable;
- intimidation of LE staff had led to severe staff shortages;
- the number of LE staff in Basra had been reduced to the bare minimum;
- restrictions to mitigate the risks to UK-based staff were observed, “but erode further staff’s quality of life (and options to do anything other than work)”;
- nurses were available in Baghdad and Basra to monitor staff health and welfare;

³⁰¹ [Letter Marsden to Casey, 31 August 2006, ‘Basra: Post Security’.](#)

³⁰² Minute Casey to Private Secretary [FCO], 1 September 2006, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Visit to Iraq, 4-6 September’ attaching Paper, ‘Foreign Secretary’s Visit to Iraq: Background Brief’.

- all FCO UK-based staff worked six weeks on with 10 days off;
- FCO staff served no more than 12 months in Iraq, with the option to extend in exceptional circumstances;
- high staff turnover and decompression breaks were a major challenge;
- it remained difficult to attract new staff, especially at lower grades, despite the incentives (high allowances and decompression breaks); and
- FCO staff who did take up postings found it rewarding and almost all the current complement had extended or would extend beyond their initial six months.

457. Sir Peter Ricketts chaired a meeting with FCO, DFID and MOD officials on 1 September to review security at UK posts in Iraq.³⁰³ He informed Mrs Beckett that the meeting had seen no need to change Sir Michael Jay's four conditions for any FCO member of staff serving in Iraq.

458. Sir Peter reported that there had been a roadside attack on an Embassy convoy in Baghdad on 31 August and a similar attack on a DFID convoy in Nasiriyah on 1 September. One CRG employee had been badly injured in the Nasiriyah attack. Other examples of the evolving threat and risks included increased indirect fire attacks on the compounds in Baghdad and Basra. As risks increased, security measures evolved to mitigate them, but Sir Peter had concerns about two issues:

- Pressure to accommodate increasing numbers of officials and/or military staff with space in Baghdad and Basra at a premium. Sir Peter had asked officials to consider whether any functions, particularly on the management side, could be outsourced or relocated.
- The vulnerability of the Basra Palace site. The helicopter air bridge was mission critical. Because of wider problems with MOD helicopter availability, the FCO had had to start the procurement process for a dedicated helicopter service paid for by the FCO.

459. Later in September, Mr Asquith, who had replaced Mr Patey as British Ambassador to Iraq, advised Sir Peter Ricketts that the two attacks on UK convoys demonstrated the effectiveness of the UK's risk management measures.³⁰⁴ The number of staff at post was evaluated continually to ensure they were able to contribute to post objectives.

460. Mr Asquith reported that space on the compound in Baghdad was at a premium, but the Embassy had not reached crisis point. He saw little scope for more outsourcing. Greater use of LE staff was the obvious option, but it was difficult to find Iraqi staff willing to work in the International Zone and, with no robust way of vetting new staff, there were questions of trust and security.

³⁰³ [Minute Ricketts to Foreign Secretary, 1 September 2006, 'Iraq: Security of Posts'](#).

³⁰⁴ Letter Asquith to Ricketts, 20 September 2006, 'Iraq: Security of our Embassy in Baghdad'.

461. Mr Asquith ended with the recommendation that the UK effort be seen in context:

“After the US we have the largest investment and the largest presence. Others look to us for direction. A major reduction in our resources risks being misunderstood as a signal of reduced commitment. Every prospective six months has been billed as a key period. But we have between now and next spring a clutch of determining events: the Baghdad Security Plan, constitutional review, oil law, amnesty, de-Ba’athification, provincial elections, International Compact, security transition ... I will continue to evaluate the risk and the level of resources.”

462. In his response to Mr Asquith on 9 October, Sir Peter Ricketts concluded:

“... you ... are right to underline the importance that is attached here to your teams’ work. But your staff’s safety must remain our paramount concern. Please do tell us immediately if you ever feel you are being pressured to take a risk with which you or your OSMs are uncomfortable.”³⁰⁵

463. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event commented that, by that time, London had an insatiable appetite for updates on progress, which, it was understood, had to be positive. They described a tension between reporting the situation as it was and maintaining morale.

The move from the Basra Palace site to Basra Air Station

464. On 22 September 2006, a US contractor working for the State Department was killed when a rocket hit non-hardened US accommodation on the Basra Palace site.³⁰⁶ The attack was the fourth on the compound in four days.

465. The IPU advised that, although all UK accommodation was hardened, it should not be considered mortar or rocket proof. During September, the proportion of rounds landing or exploding inside the compound had increased. The IPU reported that steps had already been taken to reduce staff exposure to the increased threat, including extended breaks from Basra. In view of the latest attack, it had had asked Dr Marsden to review those steps again and consider the scope for further drawdown.

466. DFID officials sent advice in parallel to Mr Benn.³⁰⁷

467. At DOP(I) on 12 October, Ministers expressed concern that the security situation in Basra meant UK staff were “in danger, and unable to function effectively”.³⁰⁸ There was “a serious question mark over whether or not HMG had the right to ask them to stay

³⁰⁵ [Letter Ricketts to Asquith, 9 October 2006, ‘Iraq: Post Security’.](#)

³⁰⁶ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to Foreign Secretary, 22 September 2006, ‘Iraq: Basra Palace Compound: Security’.](#)

³⁰⁷ Minute MENAD [junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 22 September 2006, ‘Iraq: Basra – Security Incident’.

³⁰⁸ Minutes, 12 October 2006, DOP(I).

in such circumstances”. Many local staff had been killed or injured, or had left because of security concerns.

468. On 20 October, DOP(I) agreed that the FCO would lead urgent work on the security of staff in Basra, identifying options, costs and risks for discussion at the next meeting.³⁰⁹

469. On 24 October, Mr Casey sent Mrs Beckett a paper³¹⁰ on the future of the UK civilian presence at the Basra Palace site, which, he explained, reflected “Ministers’ clear wish to take action immediately to draw down the number of civilian staff working from that site”.³¹¹

470. In the paper, the IPU stated:

“The threat to our civilian staff operating from the Basra Palace Compound (BPC) has risen steadily over the last year, progressively constraining our operations ... **We are now at the point where, without effective military action to reduce the IDF threat, our operations from BPC face an unacceptable level of risk.**

“We need to respond. We have four broad options:

- a) Continue to run all our civilian operations from BPC ...**
- b) Start a phased reduction in staff at BPC now ...**
- c) Withdraw our entire civilian operation from BPC now,** moving only a very small number to BAS [Basra Air Station], and taking the bulk out of theatre ...
- d) Withdraw our civilian presence from Southern Iraq altogether.**

“Until now we have recommended that we maintain our civilian operations at BPC, despite the deteriorating security situation. We have recently launched a major, integrated military and civilian effort in Basra – Op SINBAD/Better Basra [see Section 10.2] – which is designed to produce sustainable change in the city and to achieve transition to Iraqi-led security responsibility. The civilian component is critical to the success of this effort.

“But in the last month the security threat has become so acute that, **unless current trends can be reversed, in particular by direct action to reduce IDF,** the risks to our civilian staff in BPC can no longer be justified. We could suffer a catastrophic incident, as the US has, at any time. The US has just decided to scale back their BPC operation to a minimum.

“**We therefore recommend Option (b).** This will further constrain our work, with some negative impact on SINBAD/Better Basra ...

³⁰⁹ Minutes, 20 October 2006, DOP(I).

³¹⁰ Dated 25 October, one day later than the covering minute.

³¹¹ Minute Casey to Private Secretary [FCO], 24 October [2006], ‘DOP: Political Strategy & Basra Palace Site’.

“But it will help reduce our staff’s exposure, without completely abandoning the BPC – which in public terms, and our relations with Coalition allies, would be very damaging. By phasing the drawdown of police advisers in particular, we can largely preserve their critical contribution to SINBAD for the moment.”³¹²

471. The IPU proposed that, moving as quickly as practicable:

- a) All **FCO** staff other than a core of Consul General, Deputy CG, Arab media spokesman, Management Officer, Overseas Security Manager and Technical Works Supervisor would relocate to BAS;
- b) The **DFID** team at BPC would reduce to one;
- c) The entire **PRT** would be transferred to BAS. This will be a major logistical undertaking and will take time to effect;
- d) The **Police** team would reduce in the next month by around 14 officers. Three of these officers would relocate to BAS. The rest would leave theatre. This would retain just enough officers in the city to provide essential support to Op SINBAD ...
- e) The **Prisons** team would leave theatre, pending progress on the Basra Central Prison Project;
- f) The 25-strong **Control Risks** close protection team would be reduced, since all road moves will now be in Warriors;
- g) The 10-strong **KBR** [Kellogg Brown & Root] **life support** team would be reduced.

“Excluding the perimeter guard force ... this will mean a **reduction in the civilian headcount at BPC from 104 to around 35**. Some 35 staff would relocate to BAS.

“The 92-strong Kroll **perimeter guard force will have to remain**. As long as we have a civilian presence in BPC, the requirement to protect the perimeter of our part of the compound will remain.”

472. DFID officials put separate advice to Mr Benn, agreed with the FCO, on the implications of the FCO plan for DFID staff in Basra.³¹³

473. It is not clear whether the IPU paper was sent to DOP(I).

474. At DOP(I) on 26 October, Ministers stated that, because of increasing concern about the security of civilian staff in Basra, the FCO “would be consulting urgently” on recommendations for the phased withdrawal of staff from the Basra Palace site to both Basra Air Station and out of Iraq.³¹⁴

³¹² [Paper Iraq Policy Unit, 25 October 2006, ‘Iraq: Basra Palace Site’.](#)

³¹³ Minute MENAD [junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 25 October 2006, ‘Iraq – Basra: Staff Security & Basra Palace Site’.

³¹⁴ Minutes, 26 October 2006, DOP(I).

475. At the ISG on 27 October, Mr Simon McDonald, FCO Iraq Director, reported that the security situation in Basra had deteriorated to the point where Mrs Beckett had decided it would be necessary to withdraw the majority of civilian staff from the Basra Palace site.³¹⁵ Mr Martin Dinham, DFID Director Europe, Middle East and Americas, explained that Mr Benn agreed with this view. Sir Nigel Sheinwald confirmed that Mr Blair would be content to accept Mrs Beckett's judgement on the matter.

476. On 29 October, 17 Iraqi interpreters working for a British company at the police training college in Shaiba were murdered.³¹⁶

477. Mr Blair was informed on 3 November that most UK staff had withdrawn from the Basra Place site, leaving a core team of six political officers and 15 police training contractors. MND(SE) was working hard to reduce the threat from indirect fire.³¹⁷

478. The wider implications of the withdrawal are addressed in Section 9.5.

479. On 16 November, Mrs Beckett informed DOP(I) that the withdrawal had been implemented more quickly than envisaged because of security conditions.³¹⁸

480. Mrs Beckett told the Inquiry:

“... we had our own internal advice and the relevant member of staff had been out to Basra and taken a look at the situation and had come back full of concerns. Concerns that were not totally shared by the people on the ground ...

“So Michael Jay came to see me and told me that he was concerned about the welfare of staff and we had quite a long conversation about it, and, of course, both felt that this was absolutely paramount and that we had to consider what we could and should do.

“In the process of that consideration ... we also took advice from the people on the ground ... they didn't take quite such a grim view of the situation. They felt that there was still a good deal they could contribute, that there were adjustments that they could make, that the security situation could be improved and they wanted to do that.”³¹⁹

481. An IPU paper, 'Basra: Objectives and Presence in 2007', was prepared for the 7 December DOP(I).³²⁰ Mr Casey explained to Mrs Beckett that the paper was intended to share FCO thinking with other departments, including the MOD, which had been asked to produce a note in parallel on the UK military posture in Basra in 2007.

³¹⁵ Minute [Cabinet Office junior official] to Sheinwald, 30 October 2006, 'Iraq Strategy Group, 27 October'.

³¹⁶ Minute Banner to Prime Minister, 3 November 2006, 'Iraq Update & Hadley Brief, 3 November'.

³¹⁷ Minute Banner to Prime Minister, 3 November 2006, 'Iraq Update & Hadley Brief, 3 November'.

³¹⁸ Minutes, 16 November 2006, DOP(I).

³¹⁹ Public hearing, 26 January 2010, pages 7-8.

³²⁰ [Minute Casey to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 1 December 2006, 'Iraq: Future of our Presence in Basra'](#).

482. In the paper, the IPU explained that:

“The political and security context for our civilian operations in southern Iraq is changing significantly. The heightened security threat, which forced us to draw down staff from Basra Palace in October, shows no sign of abating. We expect security responsibility in Basra to be transferred to the Iraqis in spring 2007. And MOD are considering a major reposturing of UK forces in the coming months, with direct implications for civilian operations.

“... In the political and security environment we are likely to face, what can we realistically hope to deliver? What civilian resources do we need to deliver those objectives, and where should they best be deployed?”³²¹

483. The IPU strongly recommended that the UK “maintain a civilian effort in Basra province during 2007”. The intention was to co-locate as much as possible of the civilian effort with MND(SE) at Basra Air Station, where plans were being pursued to construct suitable hardened facilities, without closing off immediately the option of returning to the Basra Palace site in future.

484. The IPU explained that the current PJHQ proposal was to close all bases in Basra City by April 2007 and to consolidate at Basra Air Station. Two military bases would close during January/February. The Basra Palace base, which was essential for sustaining the civilian presence, would close by 1 March. If Ministers agreed those proposals, there would be just 12 weeks to move personnel and equipment from the Basra Palace site to Basra Air Station: “an extremely tight timetable, given the operational constraints in theatre”.

485. The IPU advised that there was no prospect of being able to recommend to Ministers a return to full staffing at the Basra Palace site in the near future. It was equally clear that there was “a powerful and urgent imperative for us to get our in-country civilian operations back up to strength as quickly as possible, to deliver in the critical period ahead”.

486. The IPU added that conditions for staff at Basra Air Station would be “much tougher” than at the Basra Palace site:

“Travel to/from Basra will become much harder. We are likely to face staff recruitment and retention challenges. Space will be limited. With only 54 hardened units of accommodation we will need to make difficult choices about priorities.

“But against that, there will be significant advantages in co-location with the military – making possible a more cohesive approach than is currently possible from different sites in Basra.”

³²¹ Paper IPU, 1 December 2006, ‘Basra: Objectives and Presence in 2007’.

487. Introducing the paper at DOP(I) on 7 December 2006, Mrs Beckett stated that the decision to drawdown from the Basra Palace site had been right.³²² Work in hand suggested that the majority of civilian staff should be relocated to Basra Air Station, but urgent work was needed to make it fit for purpose, and moving staff there would undoubtedly make it a more attractive target for insurgents. Whitehall departments needed to co-ordinate plans and engage with the US.

488. A joint PCRU/DFID report on refocusing civilian efforts in Basra, produced on 19 December 2006, stated:

“It is worth noting that the rapid (unavoidable) drawdown from Basra Palace did raise concerns among MND(SE) partners about civilian commitment and the physical move to Basra Air Station has required considerable time and attention ... Construction of hardened accommodation on the FCO site at BAS is under way ... but the pace of the build may slip ... Claims on accommodation must be seen in the ‘round’ of a total demand which exceeded supply.”³²³

489. Sir Peter Ricketts told the Inquiry:

“When it became clear that the Armed Forces would in due course be moving out of the Basra Palace in the centre of Basra, and that became increasingly clear in the latter part of 2006, I was clear that our Consulate [the British Embassy Office] had to either shut and go back to Baghdad or operate out of the Air Station.”³²⁴

Sustaining the UK civilian presence during 2007

490. On 22 January 2007, Dr Marsden reported that the number of IDF attacks on the Basra Palace site had been high and steady since October, but January was set to be a record month.³²⁵ Attacks since 15 January had also been more accurate. Dr Marsden’s OSM and Post Security Officer felt that “we are beginning to push our luck”.

491. The FCO SOSA visited Baghdad and Basra from 23 January to 1 February.³²⁶ He reported that the security situation throughout Iraq had deteriorated significantly since the last visit by an OSA in September 2006.

492. In Basra, indirect fire on the Basra Palace site had reached record levels that month. Attacks on the Contingency Operating Base (COB, the renamed Basra Air Station) were increasing, but mainly inaccurate. The SOSA was “not overly concerned” about the security of the small UK COB compound as it was on a protected military

³²² Minutes, 7 December 2006, DOP(I).

³²³ [Letter Foy to Marsden, 19 December 2006, ‘Refocussing civilian efforts in Basra in the run up to PIC’ attaching Paper Foy and DFID \[junior official\], ‘Refocussing civilian efforts in Basra in the run up to PIC’.](#)

³²⁴ Public hearing, 2 February 2010, page 11.

³²⁵ [Letter Marsden to McDonald, 22 January 2007, ‘Basra Palace: Response to Increased IDF Threat’.](#)

³²⁶ Minute SOSA to Asquith, 5 February 2007, ‘Visit to Baghdad and Basra’.

base, but made a number of recommendations for improving security at the COB, the Basra Palace site and two other locations in central Basra.

493. In Baghdad, the SOSA's main concern was the security of the International Zone after the handing over of checkpoints to Iraqi control. The US would ensure that its Mission remained well protected and there was a danger that the UK compound would become the target by default. The SOSA recommended:

- that a more senior member of the Embassy staff (he suggested the Deputy Head of Mission) attend meetings of the US-led International Zone security committee; and
- implementation of a number of urgent steps to strengthen and harden physical security on the UK compound.

494. In Basra by 15 March, most staff had left the Basra Palace site and the move to the COB was on track for completion by the end of the month.³²⁷ The UK military were expected to remain at the Palace until 1 August.

495. Some DFID members of the PRT for whom there was insufficient hardened accommodation in the COB were based temporarily in a PRT office in Kuwait.³²⁸

496. Mr Casey informed Sir Peter Ricketts that the SOSA was content for the International Police Advisers (IPAs) employed by the contractor ArmorGroup to remain at the Provincial Joint Co-ordination Centre (PJCC) within the police headquarters, also known as the Warren, but confirmed that the arrangement would be kept under review because of concerns about the site's viability and the fact that it was co-occupied by the Iraqi Police.³²⁹ Because there was insufficient space in the FCO's new facilities for those IPAs located at the COB, they would be accommodated in a separate COB compound with a lower standard of overhead protection. Officials were satisfied that the arrangement met the FCO's duty of care obligations, subject to a written agreement with the company.

497. On 28 March, Sir Peter Ricketts informed the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee of the changes in location of the British Embassy Offices Basra and Kirkuk.³³⁰

498. Sir Peter described the chief benefits of relocation in Basra as consolidation of all major elements of the UK effort in southern Iraq in the same place and improved safety for staff.

³²⁷ [Minute Casey to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 15 March 2007, 'Iraq: Post Security Issues'](#).

³²⁸ Minute MENAD [junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 5 February 2007, 'Information Note: Security Update – Iraq'.

³²⁹ [Minute Casey to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 15 March 2007, 'Iraq: Post Security Issues'](#).

³³⁰ Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Minutes of Evidence, 19 November 2007, *Letter to the Chairman from Sir Peter Ricketts, KCMG, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28 March 2007*.

499. The move from Kirkuk to a temporary site at the Khanzad Hotel in Erbil had been precipitated by the US decision to relinquish the site in Kirkuk on which the British Embassy Office had been located. One benefit for UK staff would be the better security environment in Erbil.

500. On 22 April, the Chief Overseas Security Manager (COSM) at the British Embassy Baghdad reported the first IDF attack in many months in which rounds had impacted inside the Embassy compound.³³¹ Basic procedures in the Embassy had worked well:

“The incident was well controlled by the Embassy Operations Room, staffed by CRG ... The Garda World Gurkha Guard Force were excellent in their cordon and search operation. All wardens should also be congratulated on the speedy manner in which they conducted the head count. I was therefore able to give the FCO Response Centre in London an accurate report that all were safe and well within 15 minutes of the first impact.”

501. The COSM concluded with a number of lessons to be learned locally, including the need for an urgent review of the provision of “Duck and Cover” shelters and for staff to be patient while searches were carried out.

502. The British Embassy Office site on the Basra Palace site was handed over to the UK military on 26 April.³³² Mr Robert Tinline, Deputy Consul General in Basra and Mr Etherington’s successor as Head of the Basra PRT, reported that over 1,200 rockets and mortars had been fired at the Basra Palace site since attacks had increased in September 2006 and that the site had been hit 70 times:

“We were fortunate that none of our staff were killed or injured. (Others in other parts of the compound fared less well.) But we also made our own good fortune. Four accommodation ‘pods’, the bar, the gym and both the main office buildings received direct hits – but because they were hardened, no serious injuries resulted. Six of the reinforced windows were hit by shrapnel – none gave way. Mortars landed one side of ‘Hesco’ sandbag walls, leaving people the other side unharmed.”

503. Mr Tinline explained that the whole Basra Palace site was scheduled to be handed back to the Iraqis in late summer. The Iraqi authorities were expected to assume full security responsibility for Basra province at about the same time.

504. On 21 May, Mr Des Browne, the Defence Secretary, requested additional funds from the Treasury for hardened accommodation to protect troops at the COB; April had seen a threefold increase in the number of IED attacks (see Section 14.1).³³³

³³¹ [Email FCO \[junior official\] to All Staff \[British Embassy Baghdad\], 22 April 2007, ‘IDF Attack 21st April 2007 – Follow Up Actions’.](#)

³³² [eGram 17758/07 Basra to FCO London, 30 April 2007, ‘Basra: Move of the British Embassy Office’.](#)

³³³ Letter Browne to Timms, 21 May 2007, ‘Urgent Operational Requirement: Hardened Accommodation in Iraq’.

505. Mr Stephen Timms, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, approved the request on 30 May, but asked Mr Browne to take a government-wide view of how to allocate the funds, working with Mrs Beckett and others.³³⁴

506. The next day, Mrs Beckett submitted a parallel request for additional funds for an urgent programme of security works at the British Embassy Baghdad to meet the increased threat that would follow Iraqisation of security in the International Zone.³³⁵ Mrs Beckett explained:

“The £23m work in Baghdad ... will only be affordable if other departments who use the compound are prepared to contribute their full share ... Of ‘teeth’ staff on the compound, and contractors involved in operational delivery (such as police advisers), fewer than 50 percent are FCO ... Of course, there are also large numbers of contractors who provide security and life support, which is a shared benefit.

“If we are not able collectively to make this investment, we would have to look hard at how we could continue to operate safely and sustainably, meeting our duty of care to all compound users and residents ...”

507. Mr Timms replied on 19 June. He welcomed FCO efforts to reduce and absorb costs and agreed that the FCO should “work with other departments to agree joint funding”.³³⁶ He expressed willingness to agree a request to use End-Year Flexibility³³⁷ “if, after agreeing contributions with other departments and taking all viable steps to reduce and absorb this pressure, the costs cannot be managed within your capital budget this year”.

508. The limited availability of hardened accommodation at the COB and the lack of space to build more caused growing concern as the frequency and accuracy of IDF attacks increased.³³⁸

509. On 20 April, the IPU explained to Sir Peter Ricketts that IPAs employed by the FCO contractor ArmorGroup were housed in the Skylink commercial caravan park, which offered a lower standard of protection from IDF attacks. The Skylink accommodation no longer presented an acceptable level of risk. In response, the FCO intended:

“... to continue to exert downwards pressure on overall civilian staff numbers in Basra, so as to allow us to move all our IPAs into our new compound as soon as possible ... To this end, we and post will continue to look critically at all civilian slots,

³³⁴ Letter Timms to Browne, 30 May 2007, ‘Hardened Accommodation in Iraq’.

³³⁵ [Letter Beckett to Timms, 31 May 2007, ‘Urgent Security Works at the British Embassy Baghdad’.](#)

³³⁶ [Letter Timms to Beckett, 19 June 2007, ‘British Embassy Baghdad’.](#)

³³⁷ In the period covered by the Inquiry, the Treasury allowed departments to carry forward unspent funds from one financial year to the next under the End-Year Flexibility (EYF) system. Unspent funds would otherwise have to be returned to the Treasury.

³³⁸ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 20 April 2007, ‘Accommodating ArmorGroup IPA at the Contingency Operating Base in Basra’.](#)

and take an aggressive approach to further reducing our footprint wherever and whenever possible (including downsizing the IPA contingent itself).

“This is a difficult balancing act: our civilian staff play a critical role in securing the progress necessary to complete our overall mission. Pulling too many out too quickly will undermine our chances of success, and potentially prolong the need for our presence. But we will aim to get everyone into fully hardened accommodation by 31 July. In early August our military will leave Basra Palace and we can expect IDF rates at the Air Station [COB] to increase further, as it becomes the sole target for such attacks.”

510. The IPU explained that, in the meantime, the FCO was taking steps to reduce the risk to those accommodated on the Skylink site. If personnel based there were injured or killed, the FCO could be open to claims of negligence if it failed to demonstrate that it had fulfilled its duty of care obligations. The FCO Legal Advisers’ view was that the measures taken and ArmorGroup’s explicit written agreement to the arrangement would put the FCO on strong ground in refuting such claims.

511. The IPU warned that if the FCO was to stop use of the Skylink accommodation it would have to remove the vast majority of the IPAs from Basra or make “deep cuts” to other parts of the mission, severely disrupting work in Basra at a critical time.

512. On 30 April, there was a direct hit on the ArmorGroup IPA office.³³⁹ The unhardened room was not occupied at the time and there were no casualties. Two IPAs in the adjacent cabin were unharmed. On the basis of reports from the OSM, Mr McDonald issued instructions to Basra that all personnel under FCO duty of care should move to hardened accommodation immediately.

513. The British Embassy Office Basra sent proposals for a reduction in personnel “to a level that should provide adequate security and acceptable living conditions for all personnel operating from the COB, while maintaining operational effectiveness”. The FCO would reduce from 12 to 10 and the Control Risks security team from 32 to 24, subject to a review by the Overseas Security Adviser later in the month. Those reductions would allow the police teams to remain at existing levels and allow three members of the PRT to return to Basra, increasing its numbers from 11 to 14.

514. Mr Benn expressed concern to DFID officials that the appropriate levels of protection were not yet in place.³⁴⁰

515. Officials explained that all staff under DFID’s duty of care had been under hard cover for some time: a pre-condition for their move from the BPC to the COB. FCO and DFID staff were, however, still eating in the unhardened military dining facility.

³³⁹ Minute IPU [junior official] to PS/PUS [FCO], 1 May 2007, [untitled].

³⁴⁰ Email [DFID junior official] to Baugh, 2 May 2007, ‘Basra: Move of the British Embassy Office’.

The hardened dining area was due to be completed by mid-July, but contingency plans were being put in place should IDF attacks prohibit use of the military facility.

516. Ministers discussed security for civilian staff at DOP(I) on 11 May.³⁴¹ Mr Benn expressed concern that hardened dining facilities were not yet available.

517. In his valedictory report to Mr David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, on 16 August, Mr Asquith paid tribute to the work of LE and UK-based staff.³⁴² LE staff had:

“... struggled daily to our offices, in Baghdad, Basra and when we were in Kirkuk, through the wreckage that Shock and Awe and subsequent decisions produces. They have risked their lives. Some have lost them. All have lost a friend or relation. All have suffered massive upheaval ... I hope that ... the decision will be the right one when eventually Ministers address collectively how to provide protection to those who supplicate us.”

518. On UK-based staff, Mr Asquith wrote:

“By the end of a tour in any one of our three posts in Iraq, an officer experiences what elsewhere takes three or four years. Their professionalism and fortitude is of the highest order. Their determination to secure a better future for Iraq, in the face of daily frustration and barbarity, is a source of wonderment – particularly against a background when resources and attention are being diverted elsewhere.”

519. In advance of a Ministerial meeting planned for 19 July, FCO and MOD officials produced a joint paper setting out the latest “assessments and plans on security transition and the associated reposturing and drawdown of UK troops in Basra” (see Section 9.6).³⁴³

520. The paper had been discussed, in draft, at the ISG on 9 July, where it was agreed that the departure from the Basra Palace site and the Warren should happen simultaneously.³⁴⁴

521. In the paper, officials explained that the next key decision for Ministers was the timing of the withdrawal from the Basra Palace site, the “most heavily mortared and rocketed place in Iraq”. This was complicated for a number of reasons, including the impact on the UK’s SSR effort in Basra, currently co-ordinated from the PJCC, where 100 UK troops and seven UK police advisers were based. The threat to those staff if there were no significant MND(SE) presence at the Basra Palace site would be impossibly high because “there would be no quick way to get reinforcements to the site or to evacuate UK personnel in an emergency”. Officials concluded that a withdrawal

³⁴¹ Minute [DFID junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 16 May 2007, ‘Information Note: Security Update – Iraq’.

³⁴² [Letter Asquith to Miliband, 16 August 2007, ‘Iraq: Valedictory’.](#)

³⁴³ [Paper FCO and MOD, 12 July 2007, ‘Iraq: transition in Basra’.](#)

³⁴⁴ Minute Cabinet Office [junior official] to McDonald, 11 July 2007, ‘Iraq Strategy Group, 9 July’.

from the Basra Palace site would mean closing the UK base at PJCC, and so halting SSR work and losing “situational intelligence within Basra City”.

522. The UK military handed over the PJCC to Iraqi control on 26 August.³⁴⁵ The Basra Palace site followed on 2 September. Over 5,000 UK military, the British Embassy Office, the Basra PRT and the US Regional Embassy Office were now located at the COB.

523. In December 2007, FCO Iraq Group reviewed the status of the British Embassy Office Erbil.³⁴⁶ Mr Frank Baker, Head of Iraq Group, advised Dr John Jenkins, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, that the British Embassy Office should remain at the Khanzad Hotel despite concerns about security and value for money. Mr Baker explained that the Khanzad office achieved a score well inside the “red zone” on the FCO risk matrix. Staff in Erbil would continue to look for better short-term alternatives while preparing the business case for a long-term presence in Erbil.

524. Dr Jenkins advised Dr Kim Howells, Minister of State for the Middle East, and Sir Peter Ricketts that it was “a tough call” whether to remain in Erbil:

“There is a serious duty of care issue. The costs of maintaining the consulate in Erbil flow from this. On the other hand it does a serious job of work. The French are looking to establish a mission there. My view is that we should accept the current level of risk and maintain our presence while actively looking for other sites (which may include co-location with the French).”

525. In the first week of December, Sir Peter Ricketts visited Baghdad and Basra with Mr Bill Jeffrey, the MOD PUS, and Ms Susan Wardell, DFID Director General Operations.³⁴⁷

526. On his return to London, Sir Peter advised Mr Miliband that the most important issue to resolve was the future of the UK presence in Basra. Mr Brown, now Prime Minister, had announced a continued UK military presence until late 2008 and Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, Chief of the Defence Staff, intended that the UK military should leave soon after that. Mr Brown had also set a high level of ambition for the UK contribution to economic regeneration, but the UK civilian presence was entirely dependent on the military for security and life support. Sir Peter warned: “If the military go, the civilians go, unless another very capable western military force replaces us.” He also warned that the Basra PRT was small and there was “a sense of planning blight” because of uncertainties beyond late 2008.

³⁴⁵ [eGram 36335/07 Baghdad to FCO London, 4 September 2007, ‘Basra: British Forces Hand Over the Final Base in Basra City’.](#)

³⁴⁶ Minute Baker to Howells, 5 December 2007, ‘Erbil: Consulate General’.

³⁴⁷ [Minute Ricketts to Foreign Secretary, 10 December 2007, ‘Visit to Iraq’.](#)

527. Without exaggerating the problem, Sir Peter also wanted Mr Miliband to be aware of:

“... tensions under the surface between some on the UK military side (more [Lieutenant] General [William] Rollo [Senior British Military Representative – Iraq] in Baghdad than [Major] General [Graham] Binns [GOC MND(SE)] in Basra)... who think that the civilians are moving too slowly and unimaginatively, and the UK PRT in Basra who feel that they have been turned on a sixpence from an expectation of closing down in the Spring of 2008 to a series of big new expectations, but not much more resources to deliver them. Des Browne has picked up this military view.”

528. Separately, Sir Peter Ricketts suggested to Mr Baker that improving conditions in Baghdad, though not Basra, called for a reassessment of policy on the length of postings.³⁴⁸ Many staff were highly motivated and able to cope with an extra six months, if not a second year: “Quite a head of steam is building up on this issue and it needs to be tackled.” Sir Peter also reported that Mr Christopher Prentice, British Ambassador to Iraq, had made a persuasive case for an increase in staff numbers as prospects improved and the pace of work began to increase.

529. Mr Miliband visited Baghdad, Basra and Erbil from 16 to 18 December.³⁴⁹ On return, he commented to Mr Brown: “I was struck in talking to members of our locally engaged staff in Baghdad how fearful for the future they remain – and how much they have personally borne and continue to bear.”

530. Mr Miliband was impressed by staff morale and the positive “can-do” attitude in all three UK posts. He suggested to Mr Brown that: “We should think about reflecting the role of our civilian staff more widely in future statements on Iraq to Parliament.”

531. Mr Tinline sent an annual review for the Basra PRT to the US Embassy in Baghdad on 19 December.³⁵⁰ He reported that:

“**Keeping going** has been a huge challenge. The team spent three months crammed four to an 8 metre x 2 metre pod and seven months under increasingly heavy rocket attack ... And for most of the year we did not know whether we would still be in Basra in six months’ time. The burden has been greatest on our local staff. Our legal assistant was killed in April, followed by his father the week after he attended one of our legal training events. Others have been threatened. They appreciate that the British assistance scheme [for LE staff] explicitly includes them. Throughout the spirit and support within the whole team has been tremendous.”

532. Mr Tinline added that one challenge lying ahead was putting staff on a “sustainable long term footing (several members have already done two years and we are carrying some gaps on the rule of law side)”.

³⁴⁸ [Minute Ricketts to Baker, 12 December 2007, ‘Visit to Iraq: Administration Points’.](#)

³⁴⁹ Letter Miliband to Prime Minister, 27 December 2007, ‘My Visit to Iraq: 16-18 December’.

³⁵⁰ Letter Tinline to Powers, 19 December 2007, ‘Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team in 2007’.

533. The Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme is addressed later in this Section.

The Charge of the Knights and the UK military drawdown

534. Section 9.6 describes the changes brought about by the Charge of the Knights, the Iraqi military operation in March 2008 to drive Shia militias out of Basra.

535. Mr Keith MacKiggan, Head of the Basra PRT from the end of September 2008, was one of several witnesses to describe the operation's impact:

“... post-Charge of the Knights, really the only constraint on our movement around the city and the wider province was the availability of military assets ... over time, even that became less of a constraint.”³⁵¹

536. The FCO SOSA visited Baghdad with a DFID security co-ordinator and a second FCO official from 15 to 18 October 2008.³⁵² He reported that there had been a dramatic reduction in terrorist incidents after the US surge, but that the threat to civilian staff remained as before. Of particular concern was the use of the Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar (IRAM), which was more effective and accurate than IDF from long range.

537. The SOSA advised that CRG was at the limit of its capacity. It was supporting 120 civilian staff with numbers intended for 80. If there was an increase in UK civilian staff or a change in security requirements because the US decided to withdraw from checkpoints in the International Zone as part of the transition to Iraqi security control, GRG assets would need to increase.

538. After visiting Basra from 19 to 21 October, the SOSA advised that the surge had led to a significant reduction in terrorist incidents, but that the threat to staff remained unchanged.³⁵³ He highlighted the threat of IED and IDF attacks and the “high possibility of kidnap”.

539. The visit raised concerns about the condition of DFID and FCO vehicles in Baghdad and Basra.³⁵⁴ The inspectors recommended regular spot checks and the installation of additional security equipment.

540. During October, the FCO and DFID reverted to local authorisation by the Consul General and the DFID Head of the Basra PRT of moves outside the COB.³⁵⁵ All moves had been authorised from London since the deterioration of the security situation in 2005.

³⁵¹ Public hearing, 7 January 2010, page 10.

³⁵² Letter SOSA to Prentice, 6 November 2008, ‘Visit to Baghdad’.

³⁵³ Letter SOSA to Haywood, 7 November 2008, ‘Visit to Basra’.

³⁵⁴ Minute Middle East and North Africa Department [junior official] to Brown, 6 November 2008, ‘Back to Office Report – Iraq Security Review’.

³⁵⁵ Minute Middle East and North Africa Department [junior official] to Lowcock, 13 October 2008, ‘Iraq: Movements Approval’.

541. In March 2009, with the departure of the DFID Head of the PRT and the transition to US leadership, DFID authority for moves off the COB was transferred to the Head of DFID Baghdad.³⁵⁶

542. Comments from witnesses who served in Iraq reinforced the impression of slowly improving transport provision.

543. Mr Tansley, Consul General in Basra from October 2005 to April 2006, told the Inquiry: “The thing that dominated our lives, was not money and people. It was helicopters.”³⁵⁷

544. Mr Asquith, British Ambassador to Iraq from August 2006 to August 2007, told the Inquiry that transport constraints inhibited movement between Baghdad and Basra:

“Not merely was it difficult to get down there, since we were dependent, at that stage, upon helicopter trips out of Baghdad to the airport and then to Basra, and the military facilities weren’t always ready for that ...

“It was also difficult to move around Basra ...”³⁵⁸

545. Ms Kathleen Reid, Head of DFID Basra from August 2007 to September 2008, explained that:

“[Major] General [Barney] White-Spunner [GOC MND(SE)] ... made a commitment ... that they were there to support. Whatever we needed in terms of assets, he would make that happen, and I have to say, always came good on that ...”³⁵⁹

546. Mr Prentice, British Ambassador from September 2007 to November 2009, stated:

“... if we wanted to get to Basra, we needed to have a military asset. Under our duty of care regulations, we couldn’t use the emerging commercial flights, which towards the end of my period were available ... So we had to depend on helicopters and military lift. But during my time we also had use of US civilian aircraft through the US Embassy. They kindly made those available to us occasionally. So physical movement to and from Basra I would say was improving during my time but was still difficult.”³⁶⁰

547. In October 2008, FCO officials started to consider the future of the UK’s network of posts in Iraq after the military drawdown in 2009.³⁶¹ The preferred option was to maintain the status quo in Baghdad and Erbil, with a reduced presence in Basra, in order to strike “the right balance between strategic policy delivery requirements and financial pressures”.

³⁵⁶ Minute Lowcock on Minute MacKiggan to Lowcock, 30 March 2009, ‘Iraq: Basra Off-COB Movements Approval’.

³⁵⁷ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 72.

³⁵⁸ Public hearing, 4 December 2009, page 28.

³⁵⁹ Private hearing, 24 June 2010, page 30.

³⁶⁰ Public hearing, 6 January 2010, pages 4-5.

³⁶¹ Paper Iraq Group, October 2008, ‘Iraq Strategy from 2009: Implications for FCO’.

548. Sir Peter Ricketts supported that conclusion “from the perspective of our relations with Iraq”, but asked that FCO Ministers be given the opportunity to “consider the relative importance of continuing very high levels of FCO spending in Iraq as against other priorities”.³⁶² Decisions should not be pre-empted by Whitehall processes before that had happened. The FCO’s corporate systems were “not well developed for making those decisions about relative priorities across the network”, but there would be an opportunity for the Board to look at the issue later at the end of November.

549. Sir Peter was “struck by the extremely high cost of maintaining a presence in Erbil”. He did not believe it was possible to justify on value for money grounds a large capital investment in the city. If the UK was to remain, it had to be on the basis of co-location with another EU country.

550. On Basra, Sir Peter expressed scepticism about what a very small post, with declining interest from other departments, could achieve. Ministers needed to be given the option of closure. If they would not accept that, the FCO should review after 12 months whether staff had been able to make any difference in Basra.

551. Officials informed Mr Miliband on 8 December that the FCO Board had decided on 28 November that Ministers should be presented with two options for Basra: a mini-mission within a secure US military perimeter, to be reviewed again in 2009, or closure when UK forces left.³⁶³ There was a strong case from a policy perspective for retaining the post, but Ministers would want to consider value for money in the light of wider cost pressures. Mr Brown and DFID and Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Ministers were thought to be in favour of keeping Basra open.

552. Officials explained that NSID(OD)³⁶⁴ would discuss Iraq and Afghanistan on 9 December, but that there would not be time for substantive discussion of the post-drawdown Iraq strategy. Mr Brown would invite Mr Miliband to seek agreement by correspondence.

553. NSID(OD) discussed Iraq on 9 December 2008.³⁶⁵

554. Papers provided for the meeting included ‘Iraq: arrangements for transition’.³⁶⁶ On the network of posts, the paper stated:

“FCO will retain a substantial Embassy in Baghdad at roughly current levels (20-25 FCO UK-based staff), a small post in Erbil (4 UK staff – to be reviewed again in March 2009); and – subject to Ministers’ views – a small post in Basra (3-4 UK staff, down from 9 at present) until at least March 2010. Non-staff running costs in

³⁶² [Minute Ricketts to Lyall-Grant, 10 November 2008, ‘Iraq Strategy from 2009’.](#)

³⁶³ Minute IPU [junior official] to Private Secretary [FCO], 8 December 2008, ‘NSID, 9 December: Iraq: Steering Brief’.

³⁶⁴ The Overseas and Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee on National Security, International Relations and Defence (NSID(OD)) was the successor to DOP(I) as the principal forum for Ministerial discussion on Iraq.

³⁶⁵ Minutes, 9 December 2008, NSID(OD) meeting.

³⁶⁶ Paper Cabinet Office, 8 December 2008, ‘Iraq: arrangements for transition’.

Financial Year 2008/09 are £55m. These should reduce to below £50m in 2009/10. The majority of these are recovered by FCO from cost-sharers (other departments, programme budgets, tenants).”

555. On 13 January 2009, Mr Miliband’s Private Office circulated a draft strategy for “UK policy towards and relations with Iraq following military drawdown”.³⁶⁷ It had been agreed by officials from all interested departments and by Mr Miliband.

556. Annex C set out proposals for three posts in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil:

- Baghdad. Any significant disengagement would reduce the UK’s influence and be seen as an acknowledgement of failure. The FCO assessed that the security situation allowed road moves between the Embassy and the airport, rather than the RAF helicopter air bridge, but that Iraqisation of security in the International Zone from 2009 would require additional investment in security measures.
- Basra. The FCO did not believe it would be cost-effective to maintain the same level of civilian presence after the departure of UK combat forces. The US was likely to become the public face of the Coalition in southern Iraq and the security situation did not yet permit travel between Basra and the COB without military assistance. The FCO proposed reducing the number of UK-based FCO staff from nine to three or four; DFID would not keep resident staff in Basra after June 2009, but would pay the cost of two “virtual” slots to guarantee accommodation for visiting staff.
- Erbil. The policy case for retaining a UK presence was strong, but the cost per head of operating in Erbil was extremely high and the location in the Khanzad Hotel was not sustainable on security grounds. The FCO intended to work on a more sustainable and cost-effective arrangement.

557. Mr Alistair Darling (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), Mr John Hutton (the Defence Secretary) and Mr Douglas Alexander (the International Development Secretary) all agreed to the proposed strategy.³⁶⁸

558. Mr Baker visited Basra from 15 to 18 February 2009.³⁶⁹ He reported to Dr Jenkins that the security situation continued to improve:

“I spent a day driving around Basra, including a visit to a date farm outside the town in an area we could not have thought of visiting even three months ago ... The improvement in security has been mirrored on the COB, where body armour is no longer required to be carried while on the base.

“While it is true that the key enabler for recent progress was Charge of the Knights, it was our reaction to those events which was critical. It would have been easy to

³⁶⁷ [Letter Hickey to Catsaras, 13 January 2009, ‘Iraq: strategy’ attaching Paper ‘Iraq: a review of strategy’.](#)

³⁶⁸ Letter Jordan to Hickey, 26 January 2009, ‘Iraq strategy’; Letter Ferguson to Catsaras, 29 January 2009, ‘Iraq: strategy’; Letter Wright to Catsaras, 5 February 2009, ‘Iraq strategy’.

³⁶⁹ Minute Baker to Jenkins, 19 February 2009, ‘Iraq: Visit to Basra’.

have taken that opportunity to disengage with Basra. Instead we recognised that we could take advantage of the improving security situation ...”

559. The UK handed over the command of MND(SE) to the US on 31 March.³⁷⁰

560. An unattributed FCO review of lessons to be learned from the UK’s experience in Basra from late 2008 included a number of observations on civilian personnel:

- “FCO (and other civilian departments) need to build on the frameworks for risk ownership and management which have been put in place over the last five years to allow maximum operational flexibility on the ground consistent with our duty of care, including through the provision at an early stage in the deployment of protective assts eg armoured transport.”
- “The FCO was unprepared for the sort of operation that was to be undertaken, with the result that, in the early stages (but almost six months after the invasion) FCO staff were being sent into the field without computers, communication equipment, satisfactory communications arrangements (personal email accounts were used throughout, though some classified communications became available during 2004) and so on. Their military and DFID counterparts were better provided for.”³⁷¹

Attracting volunteers

561. Between 2003 and 2009, departments faced a range of difficulties recruiting sufficient volunteers with the right skills and experience for civilian roles in Iraq. Problems included:

- the absence of an established co-ordinating mechanism for UK civilian recruitment;
- the absence of a deployable reserve of experts in post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction;
- a shortage of Arabic speakers;
- imprecise and changing job descriptions;
- high turnover of staff on short deployments;
- delays caused by pre-deployment training;
- concerns among potential volunteers, their families and friends about deteriorating security;
- extraction of volunteers from existing jobs;
- negative perceptions of the career impact of a posting to Iraq;

³⁷⁰ Minute Johnstone to PS/SofS [MOD], 1 April 2009, ‘CDS visit to Iraq (Basra) to attend the MND(SE) transfer of authority ceremony – 31 Mar 09’.

³⁷¹ Paper [FCO], [undated], ‘Iraq: What Went Wrong in Basra?’ attaching Paper, ‘Reflections on Basra and the lessons to be learned from the FCO’s experience in Iraq’.

- hostility in some departments to Iraq deployments; and
- Iraq fatigue.

562. In response to those constraints on recruitment:

- The Government took steps to establish a UK cadre of deployable civilian experts as part of a strategic review of the UK's approach to stabilisation and reconstruction. That process is addressed in Section 10.3.
- Individual departments introduced a range of ad hoc incentives to volunteer.

563. With the exception of problems associated with deploying volunteers from UK police forces, addressed in detail in Section 12.1, the Inquiry has seen no indication that difficulty attracting volunteers contributed to the delays in the deployment of UK civilians to Iraq in the early months of the CPA.

564. On 25 July 2003, Sir Michael Jay reported that, since his request for volunteers on 22 April, the Government had trained and deployed “over 100 civilian staff from sixteen different branches of government”, an exercise he described as having “no modern precedent”.³⁷²

565. A Treasury official recalled in mid-2004 that he had been very impressed by the turnout at an early meeting in the Treasury for people thinking of volunteering to go to Iraq:

“We had some 60 or so people arrive for that meeting – a very high quality response – in fact such a good response that we couldn't meet everyone's desire to go out to Iraq at that point.”³⁷³

566. By autumn 2003, as Ministerial pressure to deploy greater numbers of civilians grew, departments faced increasing difficulty attracting volunteers. Ministers and officials considered a range of incentives to aid recruitment.

567. The AHMGIR on 6 November 2003 discussed the need for CPA(South) to be staffed “properly and quickly” and requested a report on recruitment.³⁷⁴

568. Mr Desmond Bowen, Head of the Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat (OD Sec), advised:

“It has not proved easy to recruit staff to serve in Iraq, despite financial inducements. Successful candidates need to have the right technical skills, aptitude for building Iraqi capacity and willingness to work in a difficult environment.”³⁷⁵

³⁷² [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 25 July 2003, 'Iraq: UK support for reconstruction'](#).

³⁷³ Paper Radio Technical Services, 19 July 2004, 'Transcript of Treasury Seminar Held in London on Monday, 19 July 2004'.

³⁷⁴ Minutes, 6 November 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

³⁷⁵ [Letter Bowen to Owen, 14 November 2003, 'Iraq: CPA \(South\) Staff'](#).

569. Mr Bowen reported that: “Extracting people from current jobs, security training and the logistics of deployment often take longer than we would want.”

570. In November 2003, the FCO Iraq Operations Unit (IOU) advised Sir Michael Jay that recruitment and succession planning were “difficult”.³⁷⁶ A number of volunteers had dropped out in recent weeks. Staffing requirements were “just about manageable” but would become more difficult if security deteriorated.

571. At a meeting with Sir Michael Jay on 25 November, Sir Hilary Synnott reported vacancies in “key areas” in Basra and advised that, unless there was “a more positive approach to recruitment, the whole policy risked failure”.³⁷⁷

572. Sir Hilary reported that he had discussed the issue with Mr Straw, who had suggested that “the [FCO] administration (and by extension other departments in Whitehall) should try to encourage people by pointing out the career advantages”. Sir Hilary had suggested paying people more.

573. Sir Michael Jay told Sir Hilary Synnott there were drawbacks to those proposals:

“The strong view hitherto in Whitehall had been that all postings to Iraq should be volunteers. Andrew Turnbull had also taken the view that we should not try to pay people the market rate to get them there. This would work for the private sector, but not for us with our duty of care to staff, which was uppermost in the minds of a number of my Permanent Secretary colleagues ... It was important to maintain Whitehall solidarity if possible.”

574. On 5 December, Sir Hilary Synnott advised that recruitment had been made more difficult by “the widely held perception that secondment to Basra might involve danger, discomfort and long hours with little reward (although seen from here, some of these concerns are exaggerated)”.³⁷⁸ Sir Hilary expressed sympathy with the view put in London that imprecise and changing job descriptions presented an additional obstacle, but argued that tasks could not be defined until there was an expert on the ground:

“We should not become mesmerised by job descriptions. The main thing is to have relatively expert people on the ground in sufficient numbers and quickly. Resourceful officers will find plenty to do for themselves. Contracts need to be sufficiently flexible to allow for this.”

575. In his valedictory on 26 January 2004, Sir Hilary Synnott expressed frustration at the slow deployment of staff, complicated by the short tours which constantly led to gaps between appointments:

“... it was brought home to me that officials could not be deployed like the military, despite notional mobility obligations; that the contracting processes to employ

³⁷⁶ [Minute Parham to PS/PUS, 25 November 2003, ‘Iraq – Sir H Synnott’s call on the PUS today’.](#)

³⁷⁷ [Minute Jay to Parham, 25 November 2003, ‘Iraq: Call by Sir Hilary Synnott’.](#)

³⁷⁸ [Telegram 51 Basra to FCO London, 5 December 2003, ‘South Iraq: Before and After Transition’.](#)

non-official civilians were lengthy; that these had to be followed by pre-deployment training which was only intermittently available; and that, crucially, departments' duty of care constrained recruitment ... [I]n these circumstances, "as fast as possible" was simply not fast enough."³⁷⁹

576. In his memoir, Sir Hilary described the shortage of human resources and expertise as "the greatest single deficiency of our civilian operation":

"It is now clear that there were two main reasons for this. Partly it was a result of the excessive priority which was, and still is, placed on the security of civilian public servants ...

"But a more fundamental reason for the short supply of personnel and other resources stemmed from a lack of political direction ... The Army could, as always, be relied upon to find solutions for themselves, albeit cut according to their overstretched means. But in the civilian domain, Blair's exhortations and verbal commitments were not reflected in exceptional measures such as identifying and encouraging volunteers by means of trawls of Embassies around the world, fast-track recruitment procedures, or new management and co-ordination systems across government departments."³⁸⁰

577. Mr James Tansley, Consul General in Basra from October 2005 to April 2006, told the Inquiry:

"Under our current terms and conditions of service you can't tell someone in the Foreign Office to go to Basra. It's a voluntary thing, and that was the Foreign Office's policy. No matter how you present it, being told you are going to be sitting in a fortified camp, being mortared every evening and probably not seeing daylight for a number of – not so much daylight, but not seeing the outside world for six weeks at a time, is not a particularly good sell, particularly if you feel that no one in London appreciates what you are doing."³⁸¹

578. Asked whether he had the right team to do what was needed, Mr Tansley replied: "The incentives weren't there."

579. Ms Lindy Cameron, Deputy Head of DFID Baghdad from January to November 2004 and Head of DFID Iraq from November 2004 to August 2005, told the Inquiry:

"Late 2003 before I got there and early 2004, it was quite hard for us to get the right people. It's important not to underestimate the impact that the bombing of the Canal Hotel had on willingness of staff to come and work in Iraq ... I recall having to brief staff before they arrived that they had to be aware that friends and family would be

³⁷⁹ [Telegram 10 CPA Basra to FCO London, 26 January 2004, 'Basra Valedictory' \[Parts 1 and 2\]](#).

³⁸⁰ Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain's Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

³⁸¹ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 72.

quite aggressive with them about why it was they wanted to put themselves at risk to do something that many people considered to be something which was a mistake.”³⁸²

580. Mr Tim Foy, Head of DFID Iraq from August 2005 to August 2006, told the Inquiry:

“Generally speaking, I think we did reasonably well in terms of acquiring core staff from DFID, certainly in the early years. I think it’s got progressively harder as the engagement has progressed because the lustre of going has gone there.”³⁸³

581. The recruitment of UK police officers for deployment to Iraq faced additional obstacles.

582. CC Kernaghan, holder of the International Affairs portfolio for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) from 2001 to 2008, told the Inquiry that the impact of a posting to Iraq on police officers’ careers had been a significant obstacle to effective recruitment and deployment. He had considered it his responsibility to point out to potential recruits that Iraq might not be a good career move.³⁸⁴

583. CC Kernaghan added that the police experience had not been entirely negative. After a while, the positive testimonies of returning officers had started to encourage potential recruits: “I actually found it marginally easier to deploy people. They were not affected by the big picture.”

584. Former Chief Superintendent Dick Barton, UK Chief Police Adviser in Iraq from 2006 to 2007, told the Inquiry that “it was made quite clear to me that there were no guarantees regarding postings or jobs on my return”.³⁸⁵

585. The resource cost to the contributing police force was also a constraint on recruitment. ACC Smith told the Inquiry: “Some forces, particularly the larger metropolitan, refused to allow serving officers to deploy.”³⁸⁶

586. Government departments took a number of steps to encourage staff to volunteer for Iraq, including:

- financial allowances;
- decompression breaks;
- assistance with post-Iraq job placements; and
- temporary promotion.

587. Incentives to attract UK volunteers were not introduced uniformly across government. Differences in the terms and conditions applied by different organisations persisted throughout the Iraq campaign.

³⁸² Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 79.

³⁸³ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 67.

³⁸⁴ Public hearing, 23 July 2010, page 68.

³⁸⁵ Statement, 7 June 2010, page 2.

³⁸⁶ Statement, 25 June 2010, page 11.

588. In November 2003, FCO officials started to consider additional incentives to attract the growing number of volunteers needed to fill civilian roles in Iraq and to be able to replace them every few months for the foreseeable future.

589. On 3 November 2003, the IOU informed Sir Michael Jay that civil service secondees in Iraq received allowances worth about £1,500 a month, depending on grade.³⁸⁷ By comparison, FCO and DFID contractors earned up to £1,000 a day. The IOU advised:

“There is no sign, yet, that money is a significant factor in finding civil service volunteers for Iraq. But we may have to consider some improvement in the financial terms if we find it increasingly difficult to recruit the civil service staff we need over the next few months.”

590. DFID’s November 2004 ‘Guide to Overseas Terms and Conditions for Long-term Assignments in Iraq’ explained:

“DFID’s work in Iraq is very high profile and has assumed major corporate importance. Working in Iraq is dangerous and the conditions are difficult. We need staff with appropriate skills, e.g. programme management, and a high degree of self-motivation to carry out this work. So, we have devised a package of allowances and benefits specifically to attract such people and meet their needs.”³⁸⁸

591. The details provided covered financial, travel and leave entitlements, health care, insurance, accommodation and security.”

592. Hardship allowances for Iraq were said to be high compared with other countries, at £26,900 per annum in November 2004.

593. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event who served in Iraq between mid-2004 and mid-2007 viewed the financial package available to civilians positively, but expressed some resentment towards “overpaid” private sector contractors on “extraordinary” daily rates.

594. In 2003 the FCO introduced the “Golden Ticket” for staff deployed to Iraq for three months or longer.³⁸⁹ The Golden Ticket gave the holder priority over other applicants when applying for their next job. It remained valid until a substantive job was secured.

595. The November 2004 text of the standard letter issued to FCO staff posted to diplomatic missions in Iraq stated: “HR and the wider Office value the contribution you have made, and we hope that this will go some way to recognising that.”³⁹⁰ It also

³⁸⁷ Minute Parham to PS/PUS, 3 November 2003, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staffing’.

³⁸⁸ [Paper DFID, 1 November 2004, ‘Working for DFID: Guide to Overseas Terms and Conditions for Long-term Assignments in Iraq’.](#)

³⁸⁹ [Paper Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 25 October 2004, ‘Iraq Pre-Deployment Brief’.](#)

³⁹⁰ Letter [FCO junior official], 17 November 2004, ‘Posting to British Diplomatic Missions in Iraq’.

explained that a posting to Iraq would not be counted as one of the maximum of two overseas postings usually allowed by the FCO before staff had to return to London.

596. The Golden Ticket policy remained unchanged in 2005.³⁹¹

597. An official from the FCO HR Directorate told Mr Asquith in June 2006 that staff in Basra had asked whether the Golden Ticket really meant anything.³⁹² The official had explained to staff that the ticket was not a guarantee of a dream posting but “an added extra”. It was important that staff obtained timely, good quality appraisals of their performance in Iraq to support job applications.

598. The Golden Ticket was still on offer in January 2008, with an additional caveat:

“You will be able to ‘cash in’ your ticket when you next bid for jobs. A Golden Ticket will give your bid priority over other officers’ bids *provided you are considered equally credible in the job in other respects.*”³⁹³

599. In August 2008, an official in the FCO Human Resources Directorate informed DFID that although the Golden Ticket had not been abolished formally, “we recognise that it is increasingly difficult to deliver and the staff in post also recognise this”.³⁹⁴

600. Participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event who had been posted to Iraq during the CPA period commented that some people had been “pressured” to volunteer for tours in Iraq with the offer of a Golden Ticket, but nobody knew of anyone rewarded with a favourable posting on their return. Some said they had not had jobs held open for them during their absence because of cost-saving pressures.

601. Members of the group also commented that many in their home departments did not want to hear about their experiences on return from Iraq because of the negative perceptions of the conflict in departments and the wider public.

602. Participants who served in Iraq from mid-2004 to mid-2007 said that the career impact of a posting to Iraq was often more negative than positive. There was a perception that human resources departments did not recognise adequately the skills acquired and that the career benefits had been oversold during recruitment. Some returnees felt their departments saw them as something of a problem. The MOD was a notable exception, where skills had been recognised and there had been a positive career impact.

603. Some non-MOD participants also commented that performance in jobs following an Iraq posting was often poor. Possible contributory factors included low motivation and lack of understanding by subsequent managers of what staff had been through.

³⁹¹ [Paper \[unattributed\], 25 November 2005, ‘Terms and Conditions: Temporary Duties to Iraq’.](#)

³⁹² [Minute \[FCO junior official\] to Asquith, 4 July 2006, ‘Visit by HR Manager to Basra 14-19 June 2006’.](#)

³⁹³ [Paper FCO, January 2008, ‘Terms, Conditions and Allowances in Iraq’.](#)

³⁹⁴ Email FCO [junior official] to FCO [junior official], 8 August 2008, ‘Think piece on post-Iraq jobs’.

604. The Inquiry has seen evidence that temporary promotion was widely used in the MOD as an additional incentive for recruitment of volunteers.

605. In late 2007, Mr Jon Day, MOD Director General Operational Policy, commented unfavourably on the large number of MOD civilians given “T&G [temporary and geographical] promotion well above their grade”.³⁹⁵

606. Participants at the civilian outreach event suggested that, between 2007 and 2009, it had become more difficult to recruit suitable candidates. There was concern that availability rather than suitability became the deciding factor, and that some posts had been overgraded to attract applicants.

607. The US also experienced difficulty filling positions in Iraq.

608. In June 2004, the US General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that the CPA “had generally operated with about one-third of its direct positions vacant”.³⁹⁶ Reasons suggested for the shortfall included the hardship of the posting, the security situation and budgetary constraints.

609. The RAND history of the CPA stated that the CPA suffered severe shortages of trained and experienced personnel throughout its existence, with a number of sectors, including police and justice, “chronically undermanned”.³⁹⁷ Contributory factors included rapid staff turnover, the CPA’s inability to keep track of the staff it had, and its failure to identify requirements still to be met.

610. In January 2006, the Office of the Special Inspector for Iraq Reconstruction concluded that a number of circumstances had inhibited effective workforce planning, including:

- the wide-ranging role of the CPA;
- the CPA’s temporary status;
- deteriorating security;
- inaccurate pre-conflict assumptions about Iraq’s bureaucracy;
- limited sources of personnel;
- constantly changing requirements; and
- inconsistent inter-agency co-ordination.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ [Minute DG Op Pol to 2nd PUS \[MOD\], 9 November 2007, ‘MOD Civilians in Operational Theatres’.](#)

³⁹⁶ *Rebuilding Iraq. Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues*, US General Accounting Office Report to Congressional Committees, June 2004, page 39.

³⁹⁷ Dobbins J, Jones SG, Runkle B & Mohandas S. *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority*. RAND Corporation, 2009.

³⁹⁸ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, January 2006, *Iraq Reconstruction, Lessons in Human Capital Management*.

Seniority

611. Ministers and officials frequently expressed concern about the difficulties faced by the UK in deploying the right people to positions where they would be able to exert UK influence in a US-dominated environment and achieve lasting impact in Iraq.

612. The issue arose in a number of different contexts. It appears not to have been addressed systematically.

613. The appointment of Major General Tim Cross as the senior UK member of ORHA in February 2003 is addressed earlier in this Section.

614. Section 9.2 describes the appointment of his successor, Mr Andy Bearpark.

615. In the Annotated Agenda for the AHMGIR on 22 May 2003, officials advised that Mr Bearpark needed to be given the right job to “maximise UK influence in ORHA”.³⁹⁹

616. Mr Bearpark was subsequently appointed CPA Director of Operations and Infrastructure. He arrived in Baghdad on 16 June.

617. Section 9.2 describes how, although UK officials in Whitehall regarded Mr Bearpark as the UK’s senior representative in the CPA, Mr Bearpark saw his primary loyalty as lying with the CPA and Ambassador Bremer.

618. Several weeks after Mr Bearpark’s arrival in Baghdad, the Government agreed that a senior UK figure should be appointed to head CPA(South).

619. On 10 July, the AHMGIR agreed that:

- Secondments to the CPA should be maintained at “approximately the current level”, but matched more closely to requirements, with more specialist than policy staff.
- The UK effort in CPA(South) should be increased “as required”, including through the appointment of a “suitably strong UK figure” to replace Ambassador Olsen.⁴⁰⁰

620. On 11 July 2003, Ms Hewitt advised Mr Blair of the need “to ensure that we are seconding sufficiently senior people to the CPA”. It was noticeable that the US was sending more senior people than the UK.⁴⁰¹

621. Shortly afterwards, the IPU put forward recommendations for CPA staffing based on the principle that the UK should seek to exert influence at “all levels”.

These included:

- filling gaps, including at a senior level, in UK coverage of SSR, the economic ministries and the oil ministry;

³⁹⁹ Annotated Agenda, 22 May 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁰⁰ Minutes, 10 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁰¹ [Letter Hewitt to Prime Minister, 11 July 2003, ‘Report of My Visit to Baghdad’](#).

- appointing a senior figure to lead CPA(South), where there were already 15 UK secondees; and
- leadership of four of the 18 CPA GTs scheduled to begin operations in September, with deployment starting in late August.⁴⁰²

622. On 25 July, Sir Michael Jay informed Sir Andrew Turnbull and Permanent Secretaries that Ministers had decided the UK would maintain “approximately the current level of overall commitment” with a focus in Baghdad on Security Sector Reform, the economic ministries and the oil sector, a “stronger lead” in CPA(South) and leadership of four CPA GTs.⁴⁰³

623. Sir Hilary Synnott arrived in Basra as Head of CPA(South) on 30 July.⁴⁰⁴

624. On 24 September, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Iraq, commented that the UK “has not yet put the intensity of resources into the civilian side of our operation, in terms of both personnel and project money, to convince the Americans that our analysis ... has to be listened to” (see Section 10.1).⁴⁰⁵

625. Sir Andrew Turnbull and Mr O’Donnell discussed the seniority of UK secondees to the CPA on 11 November.⁴⁰⁶ They observed that the recent reorganisation of the CPA (see Section 10.1) had left the UK with no UK officials at Director level and concluded that: “It was difficult to continue to send staff as secondees if they were left with low level roles only.”

626. Although the Treasury and Bank of England deployed only junior officials to Iraq, they were noticeably effective (see Section 10.1).

627. A Treasury official speaking at a Treasury seminar in July 2004, said that securing people with the right skills had been “paramount” in Iraq:

“... we didn’t have many people to deploy so we took care to second people who could add value, and we are very fortunate in having a skill set within the Treasury that was able to deploy effectively in the circumstances.”⁴⁰⁷

628. Seniority was not a guarantee of influence.

629. In August 2003, officials informed Ministers that the UK was “seeking to engage the US Administration and CPA leadership over oil sector issues in order to gain influence

⁴⁰² Annotated Agenda, 17 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting attaching Paper Iraq Policy Unit, 14 July 2003, ‘Ad Hoc Ministerial Meeting: 17 July, (Annex C) Future Staffing of the CPA’.

⁴⁰³ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 25 July 2003, ‘Iraq: UK support for reconstruction’](#).

⁴⁰⁴ Synnott H. *Bad Days in Basra: My Turbulent Time as Britain’s Man in Southern Iraq*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2008.

⁴⁰⁵ Teleletter Greenstock to Sheinwald, 24 September 2003, [untitled].

⁴⁰⁶ Minute [unattributed and undated], ‘Sir Andrew Turnbull’s Bilateral with Gus O’Donnell 11 November 2003’.

⁴⁰⁷ Paper Radio Technical Services, 19 July 2004, ‘Transcript of Treasury Seminar Held in London on Monday, 19 July 2004’.

over decisions and policy” (see Section 10.1).⁴⁰⁸ Two “senior people” were joining the CPA Oil Team, including Mr Terry Adams as the CPA Oil Technical Expert. The CPA had welcomed Mr Adams’ appointment, but had been “less than enthusiastic” about the second UK appointment.

630. TPUK informed Mr Blair on 10 October that the DTI’s efforts to understand and influence CPA policy on oil and gas had been “consistently unsuccessful” until Mr Adams’ arrival. Mr Adams’ appointment had improved the DTI’s understanding to some extent, although officials believed that the CPA had restricted Mr Adams’ access to information and decision-making meetings.⁴⁰⁹

631. On 14 October Ministers were informed that Mr Adams was “routinely excluded from some meetings”.⁴¹⁰

632. A further instance of US resistance to senior UK appointments occurred in January 2004, when the Iraq Senior Officials Group concluded that, given the US lead in the media sector, there was little scope for UK involvement, and that the US was resisting the secondment of senior UK staff (see Section 10.1).⁴¹¹

633. At the end of January 2004, the US asked for UK help in staffing the Program Management Office (PMO) that had been set up to oversee CPA reconstruction funds (see Section 10.1).⁴¹²

634. UKTI contracted two individuals to work in the PMO, initially for three months. The first deployed in early March 2004, the second in early April.⁴¹³

635. In early June, UKTI began considering whether to continue to fund the two contractors.⁴¹⁴

636. A UKTI official set out the arguments for Mr Mike O’Brien, FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, on 21 June:

“We can claim indirect benefit to UK plc from these consultants, but it is difficult to quantify any direct commercial benefit. PMO procurement still (rightly) has to go through a full competitive process ... But these consultancies have earned us a great deal of goodwill from PMO senior management, ensured a UK voice at the highest levels of the organisation, and [have been] a useful but unacknowledged source of commercial information.”⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁸ Annotated Agenda, 7 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁰⁹ [Letter Zimmer to Rycroft, 10 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Update on Commercial Issues’ attaching Paper UKTI, 10 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Update on Commercial Issues’.](#)

⁴¹⁰ Annotated Agenda, 14 October 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴¹¹ Letter Cabinet Office [junior official] to Sheinwald, 8 January 2004, ‘Iraq: senior officials group’.

⁴¹² Minute UKTI [junior official] to PS/Sir Stephen Brown, 2 July 2004, [untitled].

⁴¹³ Minute UKTI [junior official] to PS/O’Brien, 21 June 2004, [untitled].

⁴¹⁴ Minute Lusty to Fletcher, 9 June 2004, ‘Iraq: UKTI consultancy support for the PMO’.

⁴¹⁵ Minute UKTI [junior official] to PS/Mr O’Brien, 21 June 2004, [untitled].

637. The official recommended that, given the difficulty in identifying any direct commercial benefit to the UK and the high cost of the contractors, UKTI should not agree to the US request to extend the contractors' contracts.

638. Discussions within UKTI and between UKTI, the FCO and DFID failed to identify further funding for the posts.⁴¹⁶

639. In November 2004, in response to Mr Blair's suggestions that the UK needed to find more effective ways of getting the US to spend its funds more quickly and with greater impact, Mr Benn explained that Mr Bill Taylor, the US head of the Project Contracting Office (PCO), which had taken over some of the functions of the PMO after the transfer of sovereignty in June 2004, "has declined our offer of a senior reconstruction specialist but we are offering technical help instead" (see Section 10.2).⁴¹⁷

640. Witnesses to the Inquiry offered contrasting views on the success of the UK's effort to deploy the right people to the right positions in Iraq.

641. Sir David Richmond told the Inquiry that the CPA generally received the people it needed from the UK:

"I think we did pretty well on that ... [T]here was a sort of little bit of a generation gap, perhaps inevitably, given the security circumstances, in that you got a large tranche of relatively young people, because they were single and didn't have families and children to worry about ... We also had quite senior people, whose families had grown up, again less concerned. So there was sort of a missing middle to some extent, but I think that's probably inevitable in the situation."⁴¹⁸

642. Mr Bearpark was less sanguine. He highlighted the effect of the imbalance between military and civilian numbers. Because civilians could not cover all the meetings taking place each day that were relevant to their work, "99 military planners are going away saying, 'DFID is useless' and only one of them is admitting that DFID does actually know what it is talking about". That systemic problem had been resolved very quickly in Bosnia in 1994 and 1995:

"... whatever your limited civilian resource is ... it must match exactly into where you insert it into the military machine. If you can only afford one person, that person has to be the equivalent of the Commanding General. If you can afford three people, you can place them two ranks down, and if you can only afford one junior person, that person must be on the personal staff of the Commanding General."⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Minute UKTI [junior official] to PS/Mr O'Brien, 13 August 2004, 'UK secondees in the Project and Contracting Office (PCO) Baghdad'.

⁴¹⁷ Letter Benn to Blair, 10 November 2004, [untitled].

⁴¹⁸ Public hearing, 26 January 2011, page 78.

⁴¹⁹ Public hearing, 6 July 2010, page 97.

643. In his valedictory as Head of the IPU in May 2005, Mr Crompton criticised the FCO’s “inability (or unwillingness)” to redeploy senior staff at short notice:

“In summer 2003 we carried short gaps in both Baghdad and Basra at critical times, absences which damaged our reputation around Whitehall ... If the FCO aspires to be the lead on post-conflict issues, it needs to be willing to redeploy senior staff immediately from other positions, leaving gaps if necessary.”⁴²⁰

644. Mr Tinline, who served in Basra from 2007 to 2008, told the Inquiry that recruitment was less of a concern than it might have been because of the security situation:

“... if the security constraints had been less, I think a lot of these things would have been far bigger issues. Because the security constraints were such, we didn’t actually need that much staff. We couldn’t actually do that much. So the sort of lost opportunity was in fact minimal.”⁴²¹

Skills

645. Between 2003 and 2009, UK Ministers and officials expressed concern about a shortage of UK Arabic speakers and of expertise in a number of fields associated with reconstruction and stabilisation.

646. The Government’s response to the shortage of reconstruction and stabilisation expertise is addressed in Section 10.3, which considers the creation of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit and its successor, the Stabilisation Unit.

647. Several witnesses to the Inquiry commented on the shortage of Arabic speakers deployed to Iraq throughout the period covered by the Inquiry.

648. Sir Mark Lyall-Grant, FCO Political Director from February 2007 to October 2009, who was not an Arabic speaker, explained that he had three experts on the Middle East working for him who were Arabic speakers: Mr McDonald, Dr Jenkins and Mr Prentice.⁴²²

649. Mr Tansley, Consul General in Basra from October 2005 to April 2006, told the Inquiry that he was the only Arabic speaker at the British Embassy Office Basra during his time there.⁴²³ He explained that, not only was living in Basra more restrictive than in Baghdad, but there was also:

“... a view, in purely career terms that the high profile work ... was being done up in Baghdad, liaising with ministers, most of whom spoke English and were all western educated and quite smooth, suave and sophisticated, compared with the politicians we had to deal with down in Basra.

⁴²⁰ [Minute Crompton to Sawers, 4 May 2005, ‘Iraq: Reflections’](#).

⁴²¹ Private hearing, 24 June 2010, page 89.

⁴²² Public hearing, 20 January 2010, page 5.

⁴²³ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, pages 70-72.

“So in many ways it was a certain sort of person who would have enjoyed his time or her time in Basra. I think there were those who did. I think I would have liked it if the Foreign Office could have come up with another Arabist.

...

“As I said, I think we could have had more impact in terms of personnel if we had people who were a bit more specialist in the region and who spoke Arabic, and if we could have got people to come at the time when I most needed them.”

650. Mr Nigel Heywood, Consul General in Basra from April 2008 to August 2009, told the Inquiry that he had one UK-based Arabic-speaking slot on his staff and a locally engaged political adviser who acted as interpreter.⁴²⁴ Mr Heywood suggested that there was a competitive advantage to be gained from having Arabists in an environment like Iraq, where other countries did not have any on their staff.

651. Mr MacKiggan, Head of the Basra PRT from 2008 to 2009, did not speak Arabic, and worked through interpreters.⁴²⁵ He told the Inquiry that it was necessary to prioritise skills and that it was difficult to find the person who had all the skills you were looking for in an environment like Iraq.

652. Shortage of Arabic language skills was also a consistent theme among participants at the Inquiry civilian outreach event.

653. The Inquiry has seen no evidence that any Kurdish speakers were deployed, or available to be deployed, by either the FCO or the MOD between 2003 and 2009.

654. In March 2002, FCO Research Analysts hosted a discussion on Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in the UK involving representatives of industry and the academic community.⁴²⁶ The event raised concerns about the shortage of Arabic speakers in a range of institutions, including the FCO, and the decline in the teaching of Middle Eastern studies and languages in the UK. Some Middle Eastern languages, including Kurdish, were not being taught at all in the UK. Participants warned that, when money was tight, language teaching was often the first area to suffer.

655. In 2007, the FCO closed its Language Centre.⁴²⁷ The British Academy’s 2013 report on languages in UK diplomacy and security described the closure as “the low point of what had been a gradual decline in language skills amongst diplomats”. The decline had been particularly marked among languages that were difficult to learn, including Arabic.

⁴²⁴ Public hearing, 7 January 2010, page 55.

⁴²⁵ Public hearing, 7 January 2010, page 56.

⁴²⁶ *The Middle East Quarterly*, Volume 10, Number 2, Spring 2003, *Middle Eastern Studies in the United Kingdom*.

⁴²⁷ British Academy, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, November 2013.

656. In 2011, Mr William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, told the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) inquiry into the role of the FCO in UK government that he wanted language expertise and regional knowledge to be “re-accentuated” in the FCO.⁴²⁸

657. Two witnesses to the FAC inquiry argued that there was a disjuncture between Mr Hague’s emphasis on language skills for UK diplomats and decisions to cut government support for the teaching of modern languages in UK universities.⁴²⁹

658. Dr Christian Turner, FCO Director Middle East and North Africa, informed the FAC that the FCO had taken a number of steps to improve Arabic language skills:

- restoration of the length of full time Arabic training to 18 months;
- more opportunities for staff in London to learn Arabic and maintain existing skills; and
- a 40 percent increase in “Arabic speaker capacity” in Middle East and North Africa posts compared to 2010.⁴³⁰

659. In its 2012 report on British foreign policy and the Arab Spring, the FAC concluded that the FCO had “significantly degraded” its language capacity by 2010, but had since recognised the need to improve Arabic language skills.⁴³¹

660. At the opening of the new FCO language school on 19 September 2013, Mr Hague described expertise in a foreign language as “one of the fundamental skills of our diplomats”:

“It makes them vastly more effective at communicating the viewpoint of the United Kingdom. And it is vital to understanding the political mood in different countries and to spotting trends or anticipating crises.

...

“It helps us, for example to identify and influence individuals and groups playing a significant part in shaping events, such as in the context of the Arab spring. Arabic is the fastest growing language on social media platforms globally, and we need good language skills to tap into this rich conversation and to put across the UK position.

“Language skills are invaluable when trying to understand and predict the behaviour of countries that do not have transparent, democratic political systems, and where reliable information is harder to come [by] but vitally important to British companies or to our security interests.

⁴²⁸ Seventh Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Volume I, Session 2010-2012, *The Role of the FCO in UK Government*, 12 May 2011, page 70.

⁴²⁹ Seventh Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Volume I, Session 2010-2012, *The Role of the FCO in UK Government*, 12 May 2011, page 70.

⁴³⁰ Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2012-2013, *Written Evidence from Dr Christian Turner, Director, Middle East and North Africa Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, 7 July 2011.

⁴³¹ Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2012-2013, *British Foreign Policy and the ‘Arab Spring’*, 19 July 2012, pages 22-23.

...

“With 40 classrooms we have space here to train up to 1,000 full and part-time language students over the course of 12 months, in up to 80 different languages from Arabic to Zulu. We will be offering 70,000 hours of teaching each year, not just for the men and women of the Foreign Office, but to those of other government departments if they wish to take advantage of our services.

...

“So we are also increasing the number of jobs overseas for which language skills are required in key parts of our overseas network. We’ve brought in a 20 percent increase in the number of posts for speakers of Latin American Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic, and a 40 percent increase in the number of Mandarin speakers.”⁴³²

661. In his speech, Mr Hague described the new language facility as just one part of “the biggest drive to enhance the diplomatic skills of the Foreign Office that the department has ever seen”. A stronger culture of learning and expertise was part of a “quiet revolution” that included “a greater emphasis on history and the retention and sharing of knowledge and expertise”. Changes included moving the FCO’s historians “back into the heart of the Foreign Office” and attaching greater importance to the work of Research Analysts.

662. The British Academy welcomed the opening of the new FCO language school, but warned that significant work was needed to embed the changes and reverse the decline.⁴³³

663. By November 2003, the UK military was also facing a shortage of Arabic speakers and interpreters.⁴³⁴

664. The Chiefs of Staff raised the shortfall in the number of linguists available at their meeting on 16 July 2003.⁴³⁵ General Sir Michael Walker, Chief of the Defence Staff, directed Lieutenant General Robert Fry, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments), to establish the exact requirement and where the linguists might be found.

665. In December 2003, MOD officials informed Lt Gen Fry that, in addition to “tactical linguist requirements” in military units, Op TELIC had a requirement for 39 linguists on six-month deployments.⁴³⁶ By November 2003, officials expected that requirement would last three to four years.

⁴³² Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Rt Hon William Hague MP [from *GOV.UK*], 19 September 2013, *Foreign Secretary opens Foreign Office language school*.

⁴³³ British Academy, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, November 2013.

⁴³⁴ Minute ACDS(Ops) to All TLB Holders, 19 November 2003, ‘Provision of Arabic Interpreters for Op TELIC’.

⁴³⁵ Minutes, 16 July 2003, Chiefs of Staff meeting.

⁴³⁶ Minute DJtCts-DCMCDACSO1 to DCDS(C), 3 December 2003, ‘Op TELIC – Augmentation of Linguists’.

666. Officials explained that the search for Arabic speakers across the three services had exhausted the pool of suitably qualified regular soldiers, and the mobilisation of reserves had exhausted the pool of linguists in the Territorial Army (TA). Training individuals to the level required for the 39 core posts took 10-12 months.

667. MOD officials explained that allocating 18 of the 39 posts to civilians offered a partial solution, but there was still a need to fill the remaining 21 posts every six months for the foreseeable future. Proposals included:

- an increase in the provision of training by the Defence School of Languages;
- expansion of the pool of TA linguists;
- further civilianisation;
- a request for FCO assistance, judged unlikely to succeed because of the FCO commitment to the CPA; and
- redeployment of Arabic-speaking Defence and Military Attachés at British Embassies, thought likely to damage relations with FCO staff in those Embassies and affect working relationships with host countries.

668. It is not clear from the papers seen by the Inquiry which, if any, of those recommendations was implemented during Op TELIC.

669. In early 2004, the press reported that several language students at UK universities were putting their degrees on hold to work in Iraq as interpreters and translators for the UK military.⁴³⁷ By mid-February, 16 students had been employed, with five already working in Iraq.

670. MOD guidance on the military contribution to peace support operations published in June 2004 made only passing references to language skills. It stated:

“The ability to negotiate and mediate will place a premium on basic language skills. However, working through interpreters is currently more usual and therefore should be practised before deployment.”⁴³⁸

671. The absence of clear UK military doctrine on language capability was addressed in 2013.⁴³⁹ A Joint Doctrine Note on linguistic support to operations stated that the military:

- had only “a modest standing language capability ... not well placed to support operational planning or high readiness deployment needs”; and
- had been “inherently slow to build capability for enduring operations”.

⁴³⁷ *The Guardian*, 18 February 2004, *Language students to help army in Iraq*.

⁴³⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Joint Warfare Publication 3-50: The Military Contribution to Peace Support Operations*, June 2004.

⁴³⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Note 1/13: Linguistic Support to Operations*, March 2013.

672. In 2013, the growing recognition of the importance of language skills was reflected in the opening of the new Defence School of Language and Culture 2013.⁴⁴⁰

673. The British Academy's 2013 report on the need for languages in UK diplomacy and security attributed the MOD's change of approach directly to lessons learned in the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns.

674. Both the FCO and the Armed Forces failed to anticipate or prepare for the surge in demand for Arabic speakers in Iraq.

675. In its 2013 report, the British Academy described some of the steps taken by the MOD to generate language capacity quickly, but stated that, of the organisations consulted, only the secret intelligence agencies appreciated the need for and difficulty of ensuring sustainability of supply and surge capacity, especially for rare languages.⁴⁴¹

676. The British Academy added that there appeared to be "little co-ordination across government to identify language needs and no overall strategic approach to enable future needs to be met." The report proposed more flexible working across departments, allowing staff with language skills to be seconded for specific projects, such as engaging with hard to reach groups. The new FCO language centre was identified as a significant opportunity for pooling resources.

Tour length and continuity

677. The difficult working conditions for civilians in Iraq were reflected in short tour lengths and frequent leave breaks. Different departments adopted different arrangements throughout the Iraq campaign.

678. Officials expressed concern about the impact of those arrangements, including:

- breaks in continuity;⁴⁴²
- loss of momentum;⁴⁴³
- lack of institutional memory;⁴⁴⁴ and
- insufficient local knowledge.⁴⁴⁵

679. Participants at the Iraq Inquiry civilian outreach event also referred to reduced credibility with external interlocutors.

⁴⁴⁰ British Academy, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, November 2013.

⁴⁴¹ British Academy, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, November 2013.

⁴⁴² [Telegram 10 CPA Basra to FCO London, 26 January 2004, 'Basra Valedictory' \[Parts 1 and 2\]](#).

⁴⁴³ [Minute Etherington to \[Cabinet Office junior official\], 17 May 2006, 'Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team \(PRT\): Challenges and Opportunities'](#).

⁴⁴⁴ [Telegram 77 Basra to FCO London, 12 July 2004, 'Basra: Creating and Supporting a new Consulate'](#).

⁴⁴⁵ [Minute Hatfield to Loudon, 25 April 2005, 'Visit to Iraq'](#).

680. An initial tour length of three months for the first wave of secondees to the CPA was extended to six months in July 2003.⁴⁴⁶

681. The FCO pre-deployment letter for November 2004 stated that: “In light of the dangers and discomforts a posting to Iraq is six months with the option of a further six months thereafter.”⁴⁴⁷ In addition to the FCO’s normal and overseas leave, staff would be entitled to an extra 10 days’ leave each year.

682. DFID’s November 2004 ‘Guide to Overseas Terms and Conditions for Long-term Assignments in Iraq’ explained that DFID postings were for up to 12 months with a rota of six weeks on, two weeks off, away from Iraq.⁴⁴⁸

683. In April 2005, the MOD considered introducing longer tours to mitigate some of the effects of the short tour length (six months with a 10-day break half way through).⁴⁴⁹ Mr Richard Hatfield, MOD Personnel Director, reported that many MOD staff in Iraq were willing to do a second tour, or suggesting that slightly longer tours might be more effective, if more difficult to sell to potential volunteers. Mr Hatfield recognised the possible advantages of longer tours, particularly where continuity or local knowledge was at a premium. He proposed that the MOD take “a slightly more ‘mix and match’ approach about tour patterns, taking account of both the individual’s circumstances/ desires and the nature of the post”.

684. In May 2006, Mr Mark Etherington, Basra PRT Team Leader, reported that:

“The military component of the PRT – roughly a third – is invaluable, but cannot act as a repository of expertise because tour lengths are short. This civilian core must be large enough to withstand the turbulence of the six-and-two week leave system ... or we risk a loss of momentum.”⁴⁵⁰

685. In December 2007, Sir Peter Ricketts called for a reassessment of policy on the length of postings to Baghdad.⁴⁵¹ Many staff were able to cope with an extra six months, if not a second year: “Quite a head of steam is building up on this issue and it needs to be tackled.”

686. Tour lengths remained unchanged. The January 2008 version of the FCO terms and conditions for postings to Iraq stated:

“In light of the associated dangers and discomforts of living in Iraq, a posting to Iraq is six months with the option of a further six month extension. As you know, Iraq

⁴⁴⁶ Minutes, 10 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁴⁷ Letter [FCO junior official], 17 November 2004, ‘Posting to British Diplomatic Missions in Iraq’.

⁴⁴⁸ [Paper DFID, 1 November 2004, ‘Working for DFID: Guide to Overseas Terms and Conditions for Long-term Assignments in Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁴⁹ [Minute Hatfield to Loudon, 25 April 2005, ‘Visit to Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁵⁰ [Minute Etherington to \[Cabinet Office junior official\], 17 May 2006, ‘Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team \(PRT\): Challenges and Opportunities’.](#)

⁴⁵¹ [Minute Ricketts to Baker, 12 December 2007, ‘Visit to Iraq: Administration Points’.](#)

remains a dangerous place, but the FCO has taken measures to minimise the risks to its staff, and will keep those measures under constant review. This is a volunteer only posting.

...

“Extensions beyond 12 months are rare and only granted if there are compelling operational reasons.”⁴⁵²

687. Staff were not permitted to bid for consecutive jobs in Iraq and/or Afghanistan with a combined duration of over 12 months “while these posts are at a security level warranting close protection teams and decompression breaks”.

688. The 2008 terms and conditions also stated that the length and frequency of decompression breaks were linked to the security situation and could change during a posting. The interval between decompression breaks was set at between six and seven weeks. In special circumstances, staff could seek authority to spend eight weeks at post without a break.

689. The Inquiry received a range of views on the merits of different models.

690. Mr MacKiggan, Head of the Basra PRT from 2008 to 2009, told the Inquiry:

“I think nine to 12 months should be the norm, perhaps even the minimum, because it takes time to develop relationships ... It is partly relationships with ... locals ... It is also about relationships between different parts of government.”⁴⁵³

691. Mr Tansley endorsed the MOD model:

“Comparing terms and conditions of service between the FCO and the political advisers who were attached to MND(South East), I would have preferred perhaps an arrangement that the POLADs had, which I thought was more effective than what the FCO was doing, both in terms of the level on health and safety reasons, what they could and could not do, in terms of how often they had their decompression breaks.”⁴⁵⁴

692. All three working groups at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event debated the merits of different tour lengths, including the impact on civilian-military relations, business continuity, relationships with external partners and the impact on individuals and their families.

693. Participants who had served in Iraq during the CPA period commented that 12 months was the maximum time during which personnel could remain effective. Six weeks on and two off (6+2) was seen as an effective model. Tours were complicated

⁴⁵² [Paper \[unattributed\], January 2008, ‘Terms, Conditions and Allowances in Iraq’](#).

⁴⁵³ Public hearing, 7 January 2010, page 51.

⁴⁵⁴ Private hearing, 22 June 2010, page 71.

by the difficulty of getting out of Iraq, resulting in people not taking their leave, and by the shortage of staff to cover work while people were on leave.

694. Those who had been in Iraq between mid-2004 and mid-2007 commented that covering absences under the 6+2 model required a much higher degree of flexibility than was normal for the civil service, and that two-week absences had a negative impact on civilians' credibility with external interlocutors, including the UK military. 6+2 had the advantage that it allowed those with families to deploy and made it possible to sustain tours of one to two years, providing greater continuity than the six months (with a one-week break) served by MOD civilians.

695. There was also thought to have been an impact on relationships with Iraqi interlocutors, who were frustrated with frequent and apparently ill-planned changes of UK personnel. In some cases there was a suspicion that Iraqis had exploited the situation, for example by misrepresenting what had been agreed previously.

696. Some individuals who had been in Iraq from mid-2007 suggested that, at least initially, departments were too rigid about tour lengths. Those wanting to extend beyond 12 months had been forced by their departments to return. Different tour lengths for MOD civilians continued to inhibit business and the building of relationships during this period. The group concluded that different jobs called for different tour lengths.

Learning operational lessons

697. Between 2003 and 2009, departments debriefed some civilian staff returning from Iraq in order to learn operational lessons from their experience.

698. Departments took steps to improve the debriefing process, but do not appear to have established a comprehensive or consistent approach.

699. At the AHMGIR on 24 July 2003, Mr Straw asked the Cabinet Office and the IPU to devise a debriefing system for secondees to Iraq.⁴⁵⁵

700. On 7 August, officials informed the AHMGIR that the IPU was debriefing the first wave of returning UK secondees to the CPA.⁴⁵⁶

701. The FCO drew on the contributions of returning secondees for its November 2003 review of pre-deployment training and terms and conditions for civilian staff, described later in this Section.⁴⁵⁷

702. Separately, the Cabinet Office Corporate Development Group (CDG) began assessing the benefits of CPA secondments to staff and departments. The aim was

⁴⁵⁵ Minutes, 24 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁵⁶ Annotated Agenda, 7 August 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

⁴⁵⁷ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 11 November 2003, 'Security of UK Civilian Secondees in Iraq' attaching Paper, 'Iraq: Civilian Staff: Training, Briefing, Security and Insurance'](#).

to report to Ministers in November, drawing on responses to a questionnaire to be given to secondees within a month of their return from Iraq.⁴⁵⁸

703. Mr Straw told Cabinet on 27 November that he had spoken to some 60 UK staff at CPA headquarters in Baghdad, whose “extraordinary stoicism”, commitment and contribution should be recognised.⁴⁵⁹ There was, however, a sense that staff from departments that did not normally send people on overseas postings were not properly appreciated by those departments, either while in Iraq or on their return. Mr Straw asked colleagues to ensure Permanent Secretaries were “managing and supporting” their seconded staff and suggested that regular contact should be maintained between departmental top management and their secondees.

704. On 1 December, Mr John Barker, a Director in the Cabinet Office Corporate Development Group, updated Sir Andrew Turnbull on responses to the questionnaire given to returning UK secondees to the CPA.⁴⁶⁰ Mr Barker reported:

“So far we have only had eight questionnaires returned. Although they have raised a small number of niggles for example in relation to visa problems in Kuwait delaying travel arrangements and to difficulties in getting help to arrange flights home, the overall response has been positive. Volunteers have enjoyed the experience, learned from it, felt proud to have been involved, enjoyed the comradeship and will be happy to recommend others to go out there. None of the questionnaires mention concerns about treatment on return to their department.

“There may of course be people who have not let us know of difficulties ...”

705. Mr Barker proposed that Sir Andrew Turnbull write to Permanent Secretaries, reminding them that:

“... colleagues are doing a splendid job in very trying circumstances and will be developing their competences in many of the areas we would want them to. We should ensure that their contribution is recognised and that they do not have grounds for believing that their careers have suffered because of being there.”

706. Sir Andrew Turnbull wrote to Permanent Secretaries on 3 December.⁴⁶¹ He reported that Ministers greatly appreciated the “courage, persistence and determination” of staff in Iraq and felt more could be done to recognise what they were achieving:

“Please encourage your Human Resources and Communications teams to address this, for example by generating reports for your house journals, sending messages

⁴⁵⁸ [Minute Dodd to Barker, 4 August 2003, ‘Iraq: feedback from secondees’](#).

⁴⁵⁹ Cabinet Conclusions, 27 November 2003.

⁴⁶⁰ [Minute Barker to Turnbull, 1 December 2003, ‘Iraq Volunteers’](#).

⁴⁶¹ [Letter Turnbull to Phillips, 3 December 2003, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staffing’](#).

of support and appreciation to secondees, and feeding stories to local newspapers and radio stations (as our military colleagues often do so well) ...

“We should also ensure that the experience gained by secondees in Iraq is valued properly, and reflected in their appraisals and future career development ...”

707. In July 2004, after the disbanding of the CPA, the Treasury held a seminar to learn lessons from the UK’s contribution to the rehabilitation of Iraq’s economic and financial administration during the CPA period.⁴⁶² Treasury and Bank of England secondees to the CPA spoke at the seminar, which was attended by Mr Brown, Mr Boateng, Sir Michael Jay and Mr O’Donnell.

708. After the seminar, Mr O’Donnell saw the secondees to the CPA “to talk about their time there and the lessons we can have”.

709. Several participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event said that the Inquiry’s event was the first time they had been asked to talk about their experiences. Most of those who had served in Iraq during the CPA period felt let down. They felt that departments had not tried to make use of the knowledge they had acquired or to bring them into strategy discussions. Most of the participants had not had a post-tour debriefing. There was a feeling at the civilian outreach event that the Whitehall approach to human resources, leaving individuals to look after themselves, was not appropriate for this sort of expeditionary civilian deployment.

710. After a visit to Iraq in April 2005, Mr Hatfield reported that the MOD needed:

“... to make more active use of operational veterans to sell the prospect of a deployed tour to potential volunteers – their enthusiasm is catching and they are well placed to supply answers about both the real and imaginary concerns people may have about what is involved.”⁴⁶³

711. Mr Hatfield also reported that:

“The Ambassador [Mr Chaplin] was ... interested in our arrangements for debriefing – which at present it seems the FCO do not do. I suspect that we need to be a bit more systematic here, too. Debriefing is therapeutic as well as potentially informative – and may also help to identify any individuals with aftercare needs.”

Staff welfare

712. The FCO, the MOD and DFID provided different pre-deployment training for staff posted to Iraq.

⁴⁶² Paper Radio Technical Services, 19 July 2004, ‘Transcript of Treasury Seminar Held in London on Monday, 19 July 2004’.

⁴⁶³ [Minute Hatfield to Loudon, 25 April 2005, ‘Visit to Iraq’](#).

713. Periodic efforts to synchronise approaches did not produce consistency across departments.

714. In October 2003, COBR commissioned an FCO-led review of training, security and insurance for UK civilians serving in Iraq to “ensure that there is consistency across all government departments seconding staff and consultants”.⁴⁶⁴

715. Sir Michael Jay sent the findings to Permanent Secretaries and the heads of organisations with secondees in Iraq on 11 November 2003.⁴⁶⁵

716. The paper stated that, before deployment to Iraq, staff from the FCO and other government departments (excluding DFID), and individuals contracted by the FCO, attended a security-focused training course at the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre in Nottingham (Chilwell). The initial course included:

- “• Medical and dental examination
- Inoculations
- Intelligence Brief
- NBC [nuclear, biological and chemical] kit issue and familiarisation
- Foreign Weapon familiarisation
- Issue of body armour and helmet, boots, kit bag etc
- Conduct after Capture
- Law of Armed Conflict
- Mine Awareness.”

717. The course had been “improved and adapted” at FCO request to include:

- “• Cultural Awareness Brief
- Hostage Situations
- Environmental Health
- Combat First Aid.”

718. The course also included a briefing by the FCO Iraq Directorate on working and living conditions, including a “preliminary security briefing”. Modules on NBC, “Conduct after Capture” and “Law of Armed Conflict” had been dropped.

719. The paper stated that, when no course was available at Chilwell, secondees attended an equivalent course provided by a private sector company. In a few cases, including that of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the requirement for pre-deployment training had been “overridden”, but it was Iraq Directorate’s “firm policy to insist that all secondees receive such training”.

⁴⁶⁴ Minute OD Secretariat to Sheinwald, 28 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Review of Security Arrangements for UK Staff’.

⁴⁶⁵ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 11 November 2003, ‘Security of UK Civilian Secondees in Iraq’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staff: Training, Briefing, Security and Insurance’.](#)

720. The paper also stated that the MOD arranged its own training and briefing. For recent deployments, that had matched the FCO arrangements, although MOD staff continued to receive NBC training.

721. DFID training followed the same principles, but was provided by the private sector because those courses were more frequent.

722. The paper stated that debriefing of secondees on their return from Iraq indicated that they received good preparation “now that some deficiencies in the Chilwell course ... have been dealt with”. Feedback from staff still in Iraq “confirms that the training has been useful and appropriate”.

723. Concerns about the Chilwell course resurfaced in the MOD in 2005. After visiting Iraq in April 2005, Mr Hatfield reported that the course did not seem to be working:

“Apart from the cultural brief, hardly a good word was said about it. To be fair, it was not designed for civil servants. As a result of my discussions with our Ambassador [Mr Chaplin], I think the solution might be to join with the FCO who have their own preparatory course.”

724. In June 2006, the MOD established the Support to Operations (S2O) programme in response to lessons learned from the deployment of civilians on Op TELIC.⁴⁶⁶ The programme’s aim was “to develop a more capable deployable civilian workforce, to reduce the risk to deployed civilian staff and to ensure MOD is meeting its duty of care to those deployed”.

725. S2O was designed as a “single portal” for all deployed civil servants and visitors to operations, to ensure they had been adequately trained, were medically fit and had the appropriate equipment before deployment.⁴⁶⁷

726. The MOD told the Inquiry that S2O oversaw both pre- and post-deployment processes, with much emphasis on the support to families.⁴⁶⁸

727. Mr Martin Howard, MOD Director General Operational Policy, visited Basra and Baghdad from 17 to 20 January 2007.⁴⁶⁹ He reported to Vice Admiral Charles Style, DCDS(C), that the MOD POLAD team in Basra and the MOD training team in Baghdad were in “good spirits” and found their roles challenging and interesting, but felt that:

- pre-deployment training and briefing were not adequate;
- their accommodation and support package was not comparable to that received by FCO and DFID staff;
- succession planning was not adequate; and

⁴⁶⁶ [Paper Support to Operations, 23 November 2007, ‘Project Management Plan’.](#)

⁴⁶⁷ [Minute \[unattributed\] to PS/PUS \[MOD\], 4 December 2007, ‘TELIC Visit – Support to Operations Brief’.](#)

⁴⁶⁸ Paper [unattributed and undated], ‘MOD Operational Deployment Frameworks for MOD Civilians for the period 2003-2009’.

⁴⁶⁹ Minute DG OP POL/IRAQ to DCDS(C), 26 January 2007, ‘DG OP POL’s Iraq Visit Report’.

- they were not valued on return and did not get enough assistance finding a new position.

728. Mr Howard undertook to write to PJHQ about those issues.

729. The Inquiry has not seen any further material addressing those issues.

730. Participants at the civilian outreach event described the setting up of the S2O programme as a significant turning point for the MOD, rectifying problems with the previous system under which there had been no centralised unit for managing MOD civilian deployments.

731. Those deployed during the CPA period characterised training and the issuing of personal security equipment as ad hoc, with practice varying between departments. Several mentioned that military body armour was too big and heavy for people not used to it, and compared it unfavourably with the lighter armour issued to the media and some US civilians.

732. Participants who served in Iraq between 2004 and 2007 described pre-posting arrangements as ad hoc and haphazard. The MOD was felt to have performed better than the FCO, particularly after the creation of S2O in 2006. FCO participants were particularly critical of FCO workforce planning, including line managers' responsibility for recruiting their own staff, which did not work well when they were in theatre.

733. Participants at the outreach event who had been in Iraq between 2007 and 2009 saw no consistency in the pre-deployment preparation offered by different departments, but commented that there had been improvements to the security course at Chilwell.

734. Living conditions for personnel seconded to ORHA in April and May 2003 were difficult. Maj Gen Cross told the Inquiry:

“The reality was the living conditions [for ORHA personnel] were pretty atrocious, and although somebody like myself who had done a number of operations was relatively comfortable, for a lot of people just surviving was pretty hard work.”⁴⁷⁰

735. As early as June 2003, concerns emerged that civilian personnel deployed to Iraq were not prepared for the conditions they would encounter.

736. A DFID contractor seconded to CPA(South) asked the DFID Iraq Directorate to inform new consultants of the conditions in Basra, in particular the challenges of the working environment, climate and conditions.⁴⁷¹ One consultant had serious health issues and no medical insurance.

737. The PJHQ recruitment notice for civilian postings to Iraq published in July 2005 stated that applicants would need to be “fit and healthy, often to a higher standard than

⁴⁷⁰ Public hearing, 7 December 2009, page 50.

⁴⁷¹ Email [DFID contractor] to DFID [junior official], 14 June 2003, 'Secondments to CPA S'.

would be needed for a sedentary job in the UK ... Unfortunately individuals with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes ... and individuals who have severe allergies cannot be deployed.”⁴⁷²

738. The November 2005 version of the FCO terms and conditions for postings to Iraq advised that the FCO had contracted a private company, Frontier Medical, to provide primary health care services at posts in Iraq.⁴⁷³ Secondary care was managed by International SOS using the 24-hour FCO Healthline. Close protection personnel were all first aid trained.

739. The terms and conditions stated: “The onus is on you to behave responsibly whilst at post with regard to your own health, in order to make sure you are as fit as possible at all times.” Failure to act on the advice of the OSM, security personnel or Frontier Medical would be dealt with in a “firm manner”.

740. On 16 February 2006, the FCO Human Resources Directorate (HRD) reviewed procedures for hostile environment training and medical clearance in response to “concerns that some FCO personnel on posting to, or visiting, Iraq are not capable of meeting the physical requirements”.⁴⁷⁴ Officials agreed a number of procedural changes, including new requirements that:

- the FCO Medical Examiner would confirm whether an officer was fit to go to Iraq before, not after, the posting board made the appointment; and
- hostile environment course instructors would comment on whether an officer was fit to deploy.

741. On 26 February, Mr Robert Gibson, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy Baghdad, expressed concern about civilian staff already at post: “We judge subjectively that their fitness levels are low and their lack of speedy mobility might pose a danger to themselves and others.”⁴⁷⁵

742. In June 2006, as part of its review of the security of staff and missions in Iraq, the IPU updated Sir Michael Jay on the measures in place to assess the health of FCO staff before, during and after deployment to Iraq:

- All potential applicants were required to complete a pre-posting fitness questionnaire. Their applications would not be processed until occupational health doctors had confirmed applicants’ suitability.
- Successful applicants were required to attend hostile environment training. If the course organisers had concerns about an individual’s ability to cope with “extreme conditions”, the posting could be cancelled.

⁴⁷² Paper PJHQ, July 2005, ‘Defence Instructions and Notices: PI 70-05: Short Operational Tours (SOTs) – Appointments on Behalf of Chief of Joint Operations (CJO)’.

⁴⁷³ [Paper \[unattributed\], 25 November 2005, ‘Terms and Conditions: Temporary Duties to Iraq’](#).

⁴⁷⁴ Minute IPU [junior official], 16 February 2006, ‘Iraq Hostile Environment Training & Medical Clearance: Record of the Meeting Held on 16 February 2006’.

⁴⁷⁵ Email Gibson to [FCO junior official], 26 February 2006, ‘Staff: fitness levels’.

- “[H]ealth surveillance” was carried out on arrival in Iraq and at quarterly intervals “in liaison with Frontier Medical, Capita and HRD”.
- Three months after completion of the tour, Capita interviewed the officer to assess the impact of the posting.⁴⁷⁶

743. The IPU explained that pre-posting procedures were “rigorously followed” for FCO staff, but it had been “unable to confirm this to be the case ... for other government departments”. There had been a few cases where individuals the FCO would not consider medically fit to serve in Iraq had arrived at post or medical teams had identified their medical problems at post at the last minute.

744. The IPU advised that the FCO did not have the resources to carry out medical screening and hostile environment training for all government staff deployed to Iraq. Instead it would:

“... write to those departments and contractors most concerned, setting out our procedures and recommend that they either institute something similar or ensure their staff sit the Offshore Operators Association Medical. This is a rigorous medical required for staff working on oil rigs ...”

745. In June 2006, a member of the FCO HR Directorate briefed two Frontier Medical staff in Basra on the FCO’s process for pre-posting medical clearance.⁴⁷⁷ During the discussion, it emerged that concerns persisted about the fitness of some contractors working for the FCO and other departments. The Frontier Medical staff also suggested that non-FCO personnel should have to pass a medical similar to that required for FCO staff as a condition of employment in Iraq. The FCO Iraq Directorate was reported to be pursuing the issue.

746. In July 2006, DFID officials explained to Mr Benn that, although DFID staff were covered by FCO procedures in most areas, that was not the case for pre-deployment procedures.⁴⁷⁸ In the light of FCO concerns about the physical fitness of some DFID contractors, DFID had taken a number of steps, in consultation with the FCO, to tighten up pre-deployment medical fitness clearance and hostile environment training, including:

- asking staff to complete the FCO-led fitness pre-assessment form for postings to Iraq;
- discussing with the firms recruiting contractors the possibility of all staff undergoing a pre-assignment medical with a specialist organisation, rather than obtaining medical clearance from their GP;

⁴⁷⁶ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS/PUS \[FCO\], 30 June 2006, ‘Iraq: Review of Security’ attaching Paper Iraq Policy Unit, June 2006, ‘Review of Security of Staff and Missions in Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁷⁷ [Minute \[FCO junior official\] to Asquith, 4 July 2006, ‘Visit by HR Manager to Basra 14-19 June 2006’.](#)

⁴⁷⁸ [Minute MENAD \[junior official\] to PS/Secretary of State \[DFID\], 14 July 2006, ‘Information Note: Security Update – Iraq’ attaching Paper, ‘DFID planned improvements to pre-deployment procedures July 2006’.](#)

- considering the possibility of introducing additional psychological assessments;
- making available a number of counsellors with security clearance; and
- improving Iraq-specific hostile environment training to include a fitness assessment.

747. In November, a representative of Frontier Medical in Iraq responded to concerns expressed by a junior official in DFID about medical fitness requirements.⁴⁷⁹ He reported that: “Despite our frequent requests the FCO has still not clarified any set criteria for medical fitness for deployment to this theatre.” In contrast, DFID had “instigated quite strict medical assessments prior to deployment ... undertaken by an independent company, who have so far proved to be excellent”.

748. Departments also provided psychological support to civilians deployed to Iraq.

749. On 5 March 2004, Mr Philip Parham, Head of the FCO Iraq Operations Unit (IOU), sent Sir Michael Jay a contingency plan for the FCO’s response in the event of an attack that incapacitated the senior UK leadership in Baghdad or resulted in the death or injury of five or more UK civilian staff in Iraq.⁴⁸⁰ The plan built on existing FCO procedures. Objectives included:

- “• ensure that all civilian staff in Iraq are promptly informed of what has happened, what remedial action is being taken, and what services and options are available to them;
- assess the attack’s psychological impact on staff and advise whether staff should remain or be withdrawn.”

750. The October 2004 version of the FCO pre-deployment briefing pack for staff from all departments and contractors referred to the availability of a trauma risk management (TRiM) interview for those exposed to “specific events”.⁴⁸¹ The briefing also listed the range of medical and counselling services available, some of them 24 hours a day, and gave contact details for the information network set up “to inform and support” the relatives and friends of people serving in Iraq.

751. During the drawdown from the Basra Palace site in October 2006, the FCO confirmed that TRiM assessment was open to staff from other departments and contractors.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Email [Frontier Medical] to [DFID junior official], 30 November 2006, ‘Medical Fitness Requirements for Baghdad’.

⁴⁸⁰ Minute Parham to PS/PUS, 5 March 2004, ‘Iraq – Contingency Plan’.

⁴⁸¹ [Paper Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 25 October 2004, ‘Iraq Pre-Deployment Brief’](#).

⁴⁸² Email Middle East and North Africa Department [junior official] to Anderson, 27 October 2006, ‘Basra drawdown’.

752. At the same time, DFID introduced its own counselling service for civilians returning from fragile states.⁴⁸³

753. DFID officials recommended that service in November when approached by consultancy firms asking what counselling or debriefing was available to staff recently withdrawn from the Basra Palace site.⁴⁸⁴

754. Details of the new service were sent to DFID staff in London and Iraq on 28 November.⁴⁸⁵ Staff would be expected to attend debriefing counselling sessions as part of existing security and medical procedures, in order to complement pre-deployment medical clearance and the facilities provided in Iraq by Frontier Medical.

755. DFID's Procurement Group agreed that the service should be made available to contractors on an exceptional basis, reflecting the particular conditions in Iraq, and should not set a precedent for other countries.⁴⁸⁶

756. Participants at the Inquiry's civilian outreach event commented on the range of security and welfare support offered by different departments before, during and after deployment.

757. Non-MOD participants who had served in Iraq between mid-2004 and mid-2007 reported that support in Iraq was poor. Staff were not briefed on what to expect psychologically and there was criticism of the fact that Deputy Heads of Mission were not trained as TRiM assessors or taught actively to look for stress warning signs in their staff. Non-MOD staff had to take the initiative to find support if they needed it. Participants also commented that there seemed to be no structured post-deployment follow-up, although there was some suggestion that the FCO support had improved by the first half of 2007.

758. Participants also commented on the serious damage caused to staff morale when senior staff without the right interpersonal skills were deployed to Iraq. FCO staff suggested that the "can do" approach of FCO senior management limited its ability to recognise when tasks might be impossible and to provide appropriate support to staff.

759. Dr Nemat Shafik, DFID Permanent Secretary from March 2008 to March 2011, told the Inquiry:

“When we select people for these postings, we do look at ... their personal qualities and their emotional resilience, and they do get pre-deployment training and a bit

⁴⁸³ Email [DFID junior official] to [DFID junior official], 2 November 2006, 'Welfare – Basra – DFID Consultants'.

⁴⁸⁴ Email [DFID junior official] to [PA Consultants], 6 November 2006, 'Counselling services for DFID Basra Enterplan consultants'.

⁴⁸⁵ Email [DFID junior official] to Iraq Programme Team London, 28 November 2006, 'New procedures & services – Staff Welfare – Iraq'.

⁴⁸⁶ Email [DFID junior official] to Baugh, 5 June 2007, 'Welfare arrangements for consultants – Cost management'.

of psychological profiling, to see if they have the tenacity and resilience to be able to work in such tough environments.

“We also make sure to support them when they are there. So – particularly after security incidents, we make sure that our welfare people and our counselling services are available to them to deal with any concerns that they have, but it is providing emotional support.”⁴⁸⁷

760. Civil servants deployed to Iraq were covered for death and injury by the provisions of the Civil Service Pension Scheme.⁴⁸⁸

761. In June 2003, Treasury Solicitors advised DFID that its duty of care in Iraq did not extend to “the provision of personal accident insurance against special risks arising out of postings or travel overseas or, for that matter, advising employees to obtain appropriate insurance cover”.⁴⁸⁹

762. In October 2003, COBR commissioned an FCO-led review of training, security and insurance for UK civilians serving in Iraq to “ensure that there is consistency across all government departments seconding staff and consultants”.⁴⁹⁰

763. On 11 November, Sir Michael Jay reported to Permanent Secretaries and the heads of other organisations with personnel serving in Iraq that the review had found “no material gaps or inconsistencies” between departments, except in the case of insurance, where there was a difference between arrangements for MOD civilians and other civil servants.⁴⁹¹

764. Sir Michael enclosed a paper summarising the death and injury provisions of the Civil Service Pension Scheme and the advice on life insurance offered to secondees by the FCO, the MOD and DFID. The paper explained that the FCO advised secondees from the FCO and other government departments (excluding DFID and the MOD) to check whether their life insurance policies covered death in Iraq. If insurers required an extra premium to provide cover under an existing policy, the FCO would cover that cost for maximum life cover of four times the officer’s salary. If insurers were unwilling to provide cover, the FCO recommended taking out a new policy, on which the Iraq Directorate could offer advice. As long as the policy had a term of at least 10 years, the FCO would cover the costs on the same terms as for those paying extra premiums for existing policies.

765. The paper stated that DFID offered its staff the same support.

⁴⁸⁷ Public hearing, 13 January 2010, page 30.

⁴⁸⁸ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 11 November 2003, ‘Security of UK Civilian Secondees in Iraq’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staff: Training, Briefing, Security and Insurance’.](#)

⁴⁸⁹ [Letter Treasury Solicitors \[junior official\] to Department for International Development \[junior official\], 25 June 2004, ‘Duty of care to staff in Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Minute OD Secretariat to Sheinwald, 28 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Review of Security Arrangements for UK Staff’.

⁴⁹¹ [Letter Jay to Chakrabarti, 11 November 2003, ‘Security of UK Civilian Secondees in Iraq’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staff: Training, Briefing, Security and Insurance’.](#)

766. The MOD provided additional cover. If an insurer rejected a claim on a secondee's life policy solely because the secondee was deployed to Iraq or travelling in an MOD aircraft, the MOD would pay the beneficiaries whatever sum they would otherwise have received from the insurer. The MOD would indemnify a secondee injured in Iraq on the same basis, but to a maximum of £50,000. Those indemnities were standard terms of MOD deployment to operational areas and not Iraq-specific.

767. The paper listed two discrepancies not mentioned in Sir Michael Jay's covering letter:

- DFID alone had encouraged staff to increase death benefit by making additional voluntary contributions to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.
- FCO and DFID contracts required contractors to take out personal accident and travel insurance before deployment. The full cost was reimbursed by the FCO and DFID up to a maximum death benefit of £300,000 (FCO) or £250,000 (DFID).

768. In May 2004, DFID reviewed insurance provisions for its staff working in or visiting dangerous locations.⁴⁹² The absence of adequate provision was said to be discouraging some existing staff from continuing to contribute to reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. Financial incentives were not thought to be an issue.

769. The review stated:

“Ministry of Defence research suggests that there is no significantly greater risk of death for service personnel embarking on operational deployment to dangerous locations compared to working in the UK. Our own discussions with the Government Actuary Department and the Office of National Statistics suggest that the probability of death or injury in Iraq or Afghanistan is too random to predict.”

770. DFID officials believed that there was a limited and, arguably, small additional risk of death and injury. DFID staff were generally “less exposed to the same risks as service personnel in Iraq/Afghanistan”. In line with its duty of care obligations, DFID had taken all reasonable steps to protect staff:

“However, in the prevailing circumstances in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is understandable that staff have reviewed their insurance cover ... And insurance companies have responded to the increased perception of a higher risk of death and injury ... by substantially increasing premiums ...”

⁴⁹² Minute MacDonald to PS/Suma Chakrabarti, 13 May 2004, ‘Insurance for DFID Personnel Working [in] or Visiting Dangerous Locations, Particularly Iraq and Afghanistan’.

771. The arguments for DFID providing additional cover were:

- to respond to “a partly irrational, but understandable, fear amongst our staff”: if DFID did not give them what they wanted, they would not go; and
- to allow for the difficulties and/or expense they faced in getting additional cover.

772. DFID officials discussed options with FCO and MOD counterparts and with the Treasury. Among the changes proposed was the introduction of the MOD policy of indemnifying secondees where an insurer rejected a claim. The FCO was reported to be considering the same options, but had put a decision on hold while it waited for the outcome of consideration by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board of a compensation payment for two employees killed in the bombing of the British Consulate General in Istanbul in 2003.

773. The Treasury approved the DFID proposals, but urged officials to continue discussions with the FCO and MOD “in the interests of joined-up government”.

774. Revised DFID provisions, including indemnity cover to a maximum of £300,000, were incorporated into the DFID terms and conditions for long-term assignments in Iraq published in November 2004.⁴⁹³

775. Participants at the civilian outreach event described a striking and persistent diversity of security and welfare support provided by different departments.

776. On 22 December 2006, Mr Bill Jeffrey, MOD PUS, sent Sir Peter Ricketts and Mr Chakrabarti an MOD study on the deployment of civil servants in operational theatres.⁴⁹⁴ The letter was also sent to Sir Gus O’Donnell, the Cabinet Secretary.

777. Mr Jeffrey reported that the study had looked in particular at co-ordination between different departments, their security advisers and providers. It had become apparent that:

“... there were different practices in different locations, both within and between departments ... but there must be scope for identifying and spreading best practice. For example, it may be useful for all to see the results of the risk assessment which the MOD has undertaken for each of the roles in which our civilian staff deploy.”

778. The paper recommended sharing best practice and taking advantage of economies of scale on pre-deployment training.

⁴⁹³ [Paper DFID, 1 November 2004, ‘Working for DFID: Guide to Overseas Terms and Conditions for Long-term Assignments in Iraq’.](#)

⁴⁹⁴ Letter Jeffrey to Ricketts, 22 December 2006, ‘Deployment of Civil Servants in Operational Theatres’ attaching Paper S2O, 30 November 2006, ‘A Report on Safety & Security of MOD Civil Servants on Operations’.

779. Mr Jeffrey explained that the paper proposed “a formal standing cross-Government group” on security and reported that he had agreed to create a new Directorate of Operational Deployment Capability in PJHQ to provide a single focus within the MOD.

780. Mr Jeffrey visited Iraq with Sir Peter Ricketts and Ms Susan Wardell, DFID Director General Operations, from 4 to 7 December 2007.

781. Mr Jeffrey’s briefing included a paper from Mr Jon Day, MOD Director General Operational Policy, about the use of MOD civilians in operational theatres.⁴⁹⁵ Mr Day expressed concern about “whether we are right to continue the current course in high risk environments such as Iraq and (increasingly) Afghanistan”. Concerns about security had led the FCO to spend £37 million per annum on close protection for their “relatively small number” of staff in Iraq. The security threat had also:

“... introduced a risk averse culture which is preventing MOD civilians embedded in the Embassy and working in the Iraqi MOD from doing their jobs effectively – to such an extent that I am increasingly inclined to start pulling them out.

“... [T]he growing difficulty we are having in filling posts suggests that some – many – will not be as suitable as we would wish. I am not at all sure that all of the civilians I met in Iraq would pass the new S2O fitness and health tests ...”

782. Mr Jeffrey described much of what was being done by MOD civilians in Iraq as “a legacy of the more benign environments of the Balkans and post-TELIC 1 euphoria”. Nobody appeared to be auditing the roles filled by civilians against the much more hostile conditions that had prevailed until recently in Iraq. Mr Jeffrey cited the example of civilian finance staff, whose roles could be taken by appropriately trained service personnel. The MOD should minimise the number of non-essential civilian posts in operational theatres. A small number of posts would have to be filled by civilians – POLADs and perhaps scientific and contracts staff – but the right people would not volunteer “simply for the money”. The MOD should “listen to what the current generation say will continue to motivate them”.

783. Mr Jeffrey advised discussing a coherent and sustainable approach to duty of care with the FCO, observing that “at present we are less risk aware than the FCO in Iraq but more risk aware in Afghanistan!”.

784. Mr Benn told the Inquiry:

“... you need to have a common approach for everybody, not a difference between departments and that includes a responsibility of the duty of care you have for consultants and contractors whom you have asked to come and work”.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ [Minute DG Op Pol to 2nd PUS \[MOD\], 9 November 2007, ‘MOD Civilians in Operational Theatres’.](#)

⁴⁹⁶ Public hearing, 2 February 2010, pages 43-44.

785. The Inquiry received conflicting evidence about whether those differences had been resolved.

786. Dr Shafik told the Inquiry:

“Peter Ricketts, the Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office, and Bill Jeffrey, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, and I, had a series of conversations about this over 2008 and we worked very hard to see whether we could develop a common duty of care regime for all civilians, and the security teams, particularly in the MoD and the FCO, worked very hard on this, and I’m sure they could give you more detail, but in the end of that process, we realised that our civilians are doing such different things that it didn’t make sense to have identical regimes.”⁴⁹⁷

787. Mr Bowen told the Inquiry:

“Duty of care was a problem, but it was a problem actually that was gripped, or we tried to grip it at a very senior level. Permanent secretaries were engaged in this, and tried to resolve issues.”⁴⁹⁸

788. Sir Suma Chakrabarti identified two key lessons about duty of care:

“One is about unifying our lengths, and the other is about trying to unify terms and conditions around staff security and duty of care. The latter has happened. So FCO and DFID have the same standards.”⁴⁹⁹

789. Sir Gus O’Donnell told the Inquiry that, after a trip to Helmand Province in Afghanistan with the FCO and MOD PUSs, he said to one of them: “One of the issues we really need to sort out here is terms and conditions for people sent abroad and duty of care issues.”⁵⁰⁰ Sir Gus concluded that terms and conditions were “not completely harmonised”. The process was “not finished yet, but I think it has made a lot of progress”.

790. In additional evidence to the Inquiry, Sir Gus O’Donnell stated:

“The FCO and MOD use different systems of risk assessment and management, reflecting the different roles, purposes, and levels of training for their personnel when deployed to high threat environments (DFID follow FCO arrangements). In all locations, security arrangements for military and civilian personnel are determined according to the threats present, and assessed on a case by case basis. There is no “standard” or “standards” of duty of care as the practical discharge of duty of care is case and context specific.

⁴⁹⁷ Public hearing, 13 January 2011, page 35.

⁴⁹⁸ Public hearing, 16 December 2009, page 76.

⁴⁹⁹ Public hearing, 22 January 2010, page 36.

⁵⁰⁰ Public hearing, 28 January 2011, page 85.

“The Building Stability Overseas (BSO) Board, made up of MOD, DFID and FCO Directors (including the previous Stabilisation Unit Board) oversees ongoing discussions between departments on duty of care, seeking to provide the best possible security arrangements for delivering coherent HMG effect and exploring opportunities for greater flexibility where circumstances allow ...

“However there do remain key differences between the FCO and MOD practices. In Afghanistan, FCO civilians use close protection bodyguards, while MOD civilians rely on military protection. Pay and allowances, duration of postings, R&R arrangements as well as compensation and insurance arrangements vary across all departments, often reflecting differing roles of personnel. As noted earlier, in all locations, security arrangements are determined according to the threats present, and assessed on a case by case basis.”⁵⁰¹

The Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal

791. In May 2004, Mr David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, wrote to Mr Straw as Chair of the AHMGIR to propose that UK police officers and other civilians seconded to Iraq should be eligible for the Iraq campaign medal or a civilian equivalent.⁵⁰² Home Office officials had advised the police that UK police officers seconded to Iraq might be eligible for the Iraq Campaign Medal, but had since been advised by the Cabinet Office Ceremonial Secretariat that it was a military medal for which police officers were not eligible. Mr Blunkett suggested that would have been a reasonable position were the campaign medal awarded solely to members of the Armed Forces, but civilians serving directly with the Armed Forces in support of Op TELIC were also eligible. It was “abundantly clear that our civilians in Iraq run risks to their own lives often comparable to those faced by the military, and certainly probably [sic] greater than in civilian deployments almost anywhere in the world”.

792. Mr Blunkett warned that the repercussions for the police, who had been given to understand that they were eligible, “could be very serious”. He recommended that the eligibility criteria be changed or a new medal created.

793. Mr Straw commended Mr Blunkett’s letter to Mr Douglas Alexander, Minister for the Cabinet Office, and sent it to Mr Blair. Mr Straw stated: “I believe that the recognition of all personnel serving directly in support of government policy in Iraq, whether serving in Jordan or Iraq, should be appropriately rewarded.”⁵⁰³

794. Sir Andrew Turnbull put three options to Mr Blair:

- extending the Iraq campaign medal to include other civilians, which was not supported by the military;

⁵⁰¹ Letter O’Donnell to Aldred, [undated], ‘Iraq Inquiry’ attaching Paper Cabinet Office, 7 March 2011, ‘Iraq: Inquiry further questions for the Cabinet Secretary’.

⁵⁰² [Letter Blunkett to Straw, 17 May 2004, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁰³ [Letter Straw to Alexander, 8 June 2004, ‘Honouring Service in Iraq’](#).

- a new medal to recognise civilian service in Iraq, which would create pressure for a series of other medals, including for past campaigns; and
- use of the Humanitarian Service Medal, approved in principle by the Queen in 1999, which could provide appropriate means for rewarding civilian service in Iraq and have longer-term application.⁵⁰⁴

795. Mr Benn supported the idea of a separate civilian medal.⁵⁰⁵ He also requested either greater flexibility in the allocation of honours to DFID, which, he said, only received a small number, or an additional special list for Iraq.

796. Mr Hoon told Mr Blair that he had “no difficulty with marking the contribution made by civilians abroad”, but could not support use of the military campaign medal.⁵⁰⁶ He recommended an urgent review by the Cabinet Office Honours and Decorations Committee of ways to provide wider recognition of civilian service “appropriate to the fast moving situations in which we are increasingly likely to find ourselves”.

797. Mr Blair asked the FCO to seek approval from the Queen for a special civilian medal for Iraq and endorsed Mr Hoon’s separate proposal for a wider review.⁵⁰⁷

798. Mr Blair announced the Queen’s approval of the new medal in Parliament on 30 June:

“We should pay tribute ... to the many British public servants, policemen and women and volunteers, so ably led by David Richmond, the UK Special Representative, who played a crucial role in helping the Iraqi people to rebuild their lives under difficult and stressful conditions. Her Majesty the Queen has graciously agreed that their extraordinary contribution should be recognised with the award of a special civilian medal.”⁵⁰⁸

799. FCO officials explained to Sir Michael Jay in July 2004 that eligibility criteria, periods of qualifying service and details of the medal design were still to be worked out.⁵⁰⁹ Late October 2004 was suggested as a possible date for a further public announcement, because of the “not inconsiderable work required to produce the Civilian Iraq Medal from scratch”.

800. The first set of eligibility criteria proposed by the FCO Iraq Directorate in January 2005 excluded locally engaged staff and sub-contractors not directly employed by the UK Government.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁴ [Minute Turnbull to Prime Minister, 11 June 2004, ‘Recognition for Service in Iraq’.](#)

⁵⁰⁵ [Letter Benn to Alexander, 16 June 2004, \[untitled\].](#)

⁵⁰⁶ [Letter Hoon to Blair, 17 June 2004, ‘Recognising Non-military Service in Iraq’.](#)

⁵⁰⁷ [Letter Quarrey to Owen, 21 June 2004, ‘Recognition For Civilian Service in Iraq’.](#)

⁵⁰⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 June 2004, column 285.

⁵⁰⁹ Minute Protocol [junior official] to APS/PUS [FCO], 12 July 2004, ‘Iraq: Special Honours List and Special Civilian Medal’.

⁵¹⁰ Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to PS [FCO], 18 January 2005, ‘Iraq Civilian Medal’.

801. Sub-contractors, who included guards employed by Control Risks Group and ArmorGroup, were excluded on the grounds that the numbers involved would “very significantly increase production costs” and “risk devaluing the medal”. The Iraq Directorate also observed that most sub-contractors “already receive considerable financial reward for their efforts”.

802. The proposal also excluded UK police officers employed at the Jordan International Police Training Centre. While recognising that the police officers who set up the centre had volunteered for service in Iraq, were expecting to be deployed there, and worked, initially, in physically difficult conditions, the Iraq Directorate advised that service in Iraq had carried an entirely different level of risk.

803. A revised proposal, including sub-contractors, was put to Mr Straw in February.⁵¹¹ Officials advised that:

“Although these guards are well paid for their work, we believe that the risks that they undertake merit their inclusion. They are an essential part of our operation. Posts argue strongly that to exclude them would damage morale and create divisions.”

804. Mr Straw was “generally content” with the proposal, but asked whether a “blanket exception” for LE staff was fair.⁵¹²

805. The paper prepared by the FCO for the Cabinet Office in July 2005 included sub-contractors, but not LE staff.⁵¹³

806. The FCO paper listed the “risks and rigours” facing civilians who had served in Iraq since 2003:

“RISKS

- Overall a high risk to personnel both on and off duty.
- High risk of rocket and mortar attack on all civilians, both in office and staff accommodation.
- High risk of attack by IED (improvised explosive devices), VBIED (vehicle borne improvised explosive devices) and suicide car bombers, when travelling in official transport on the ground.
- High risk of attack by individual suicide vest bombers.
- High risk of attack from surface to air weapons when travelling in either RAF or Army helicopter flights.
- High risk of kidnapping.

⁵¹¹ Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to PS [FCO], 16 February 2005, ‘Iraq Civilian Medal’.

⁵¹² [Manuscript comment Siddiq to Crompton, 24 February 2005, on Minute Iraq Directorate \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 16 February 2005, ‘Iraq Civilian Medal’.](#)

⁵¹³ [Paper FCO, July 2005, ‘Memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Iraq Civilian Medal’.](#)

- High risk of injury/fatality from becoming involved in civil disturbances or violent attacks, including muggings.
- High risk of contraction of endemic diseases. Extensive range of inoculations required. Malaria prophylaxis required in many areas (mosquitoes present throughout Iraq).

RIGOUR

- Basic infrastructure lacking, damaged or in disrepair.
- Personnel required constantly to live and work in an extremely hostile and dangerous environment.
- Constant requirement to carry or wear heavy, restrictive and uncomfortable body armour and helmet.
- Personnel required to work and live in hardship conditions, (until recently in Basra, but still in Baghdad: shared accommodation and communal washing/toilet facilities) in unsocial circumstances, with very limited amenities and near non-existent social facilities.
- Severe restrictions on movement. All movements outside secure area are in armoured vehicles with armed Close Protection Teams.
- Hostile climate, with high temperatures sometimes in excess of 50 degrees Celsius in the summer. Frequent sandstorms, which further impede movement of personnel.”

807. The FCO estimated that the number eligible, which was likely to increase as new personnel were deployed, was approximately:

- 550 civilian public servants;
- 60 contractors not involved in the provision of security, mostly employed by the FCO and DFID;
- 850 security-related contractors; and
- 80 police officers.

808. The Ceremonial Secretariat of the Cabinet Office and the MOD raised questions about the absence of any reference to NGOs and aid or charity workers.⁵¹⁴

809. In December 2005, FCO officials advised Ministers that the award, now referred to as the Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal (IRSM), should not be given to aid workers and NGO personnel on the grounds that it could compromise their independence and have a negative impact on their security. NGOs and aid organisations working in Baghdad would be encouraged to consider nominating individuals for the six-monthly honours lists.

⁵¹⁴ Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to PS [FCO], 15 December 2005, 'Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal (IRSM)'.

810. Officials also recommended that LE staff employed at the British Embassy Baghdad and British Embassy Offices Basra and Kirkuk since May 2003 should receive a certificate commending each individual's contribution to the reconstruction of Iraq.

811. Mr Benn recommended that, before Ministers took a final decision, the main NGOs should be contacted to confirm that they did not want their personnel to receive the award.⁵¹⁵ That consultation process, which was carried out by DFID and took several months, reaffirmed the FCO's advice that individuals working for NGOs should not be eligible.

812. Dr Howells approved the FCO's eligibility criteria for the IRSM on 19 May 2006.⁵¹⁶

813. In April 2006, with the details of the medal still not agreed, Acting ACC Barton, Chief Police Adviser – Iraq (CPA-I), reported that awards to UK police officers serving in Iraq remained a “bone of contention”.⁵¹⁷ Several staff had commented that police officers and FCO staff did not receive the Op TELIC campaign medal. ACC Barton proposed to award every member of staff who served three months in Iraq a Contingent Commander's Certificate of Merit. Commendations would be reserved for outstanding commitment or acts beyond the call of duty. Serving officers would also receive a letter to their Chief Constable. Retired officers would be sent a testimonial letter.

814. The Cabinet Office submitted the July 2005 FCO paper to the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in August 2006, after the negotiation of a number of amendments.⁵¹⁸

815. The Secretary to the Committee explained in a covering note that:

“No civilian medal has ever been awarded for civilian service in a war zone. It is therefore important that this case is considered carefully. It is essential that members of the military who have been awarded the military medal should not feel that they are disadvantaged by the application of less rigorous standards to a parallel medal for civilians and members of the military in non-operational roles.

“The situation in Iraq has been unprecedented in terms of the number of civilians who have been involved in reconstruction and the transition to democracy ...

“These civilians have volunteered for this work. The work has been generally well-rewarded financially. A concern of the MOD is the fact that the military have been haemorrhaging personnel who leave the forces to become highly paid security contractors in Iraq. There is some discomfort over the prospect of these people becoming eligible for a medal on the same basis as their former colleagues.”

⁵¹⁵ Minute Iraq Directorate [junior official] to PS/Dr Howells, 17 May 2006, 'Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal (IRSM)'.

⁵¹⁶ Manuscript comment [Dr Howells' Private Office] on Minute Drake to PS/Dr Howells, 19 May 2006, 'Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal (IRSM)'.

⁵¹⁷ [Report Barton, 20 April 2006, 'Situational Review of the United Kingdom Civilian Police Mission in Iraq'](#).

⁵¹⁸ [Paper Ceremonial Secretariat \[junior official\], 9 August 2006, 'Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal'](#).

816. The IRSM was introduced in January 2007.⁵¹⁹ It was decommissioned in 2013.⁵²⁰

817. The FCO told the Inquiry that “around 4,100” medals were awarded.⁵²¹

818. A small number of recipients criticised the administration of the medal.

819. In June 2008, Sir Peter Ricketts received an email from a recipient of the IRSM, who believed that the medal’s value as a good way of honouring those who served in Iraq had been “somewhat diminished by the manner in which it is administered”.⁵²² The individual recognised that work was in hand in the FCO to improve administration of the medal, but criticised the fact that individuals had to fill out an application form, received the medal in a Jiffy bag, and that there was no presentation ceremony.

820. Sir Peter commented to the IOU: “I don’t want any medals sent in Jiffy bags unless staff specifically ask for that.”⁵²³

821. In his reply to the original email, Sir Peter explained that the application form provided the FCO with important documentation for auditing purposes.⁵²⁴ Presentation of the medal was complicated by the need to balance the wishes of those who wanted to receive theirs quickly, without great ceremony, and those preferring to wait for a more formal ceremony, at post or in London. Dr Howells and Sir Peter had hosted a reception for London-based recipients of the first batch of medals in 2007. A second reception was planned for later in 2008.

822. There were some critical comments about the medal from participants at the Inquiry’s civilian outreach event, including that it had been sent in a rolled up brown envelope, addressed to “Dear Colleague” and not even signed by the Permanent Secretary. One participant had refused to accept a medal on the grounds that the qualification was simply to have been in Iraq for a minimum period.

Locally engaged staff

823. UK government departments and the UK military employed Iraqi citizens in various capacities from 2003 onwards, including as supervisors of reconstruction projects, interpreters and office staff.

824. As security deteriorated and the mobility of UK personnel became increasingly constrained, locally engaged (LE) staff and contractors became critically important to the UK reconstruction effort.

⁵¹⁹ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, *The Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal*, January 2007, Cm 7000.

⁵²⁰ Foreign & Commonwealth Office [from GOV.UK], 1 July 2013, *Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal to be decommissioned*.

⁵²¹ Email FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 15 March 2016, ‘Iraq Reconstruction Service Medal’.

⁵²² Email FCO [junior official] to Ricketts, 4 June 2008, ‘Iraq Reconstruction Medal’.

⁵²³ Email FCO [junior official] to FCO [junior official], 13 June 2008, ‘Iraq Reconstruction Medal’.

⁵²⁴ Email FCO [junior official] to FCO [junior official], 17 June 2008, ‘Iraq Reconstruction Medal’.

825. Concern about the safety of LE staff emerged in September 2003.⁵²⁵

826. On 18 September, during a visit to Baghdad, Mr Benn was told by UK secondees to the CPA that “there was increased nervousness amongst Iraqi staff about doing their jobs. Daily lives were difficult and the UN bombing [on 19 August 2003] had increased these tensions.”⁵²⁶

827. Mr Dinham told the Inquiry that, during 2006 and 2007, access to a number of infrastructure projects was so difficult that “we had to arrange to work through local contractors ... taking videos, taking digital images, contacting us by email, meeting them in safe locations so we could actually supervise at one remove”.⁵²⁷

828. Sir Suma Chakrabarti paid tribute to the bravery of local staff:

“Some quite innovative project management techniques had to be applied when staff could not get out of the Consul General’s office to go and monitor progress on some of the infrastructure programmes. I have to say something about the courage of our Iraqi staff, actually, in helping with a lot of that until they also faced threats as well and then we had to stop employing them.”⁵²⁸

829. On 20 April 2006, Mr Robin Lamb, British Consul General in Basra, reported that law and order in Basra had deteriorated over the preceding few weeks and that:

“Most of our critical local staff (ie those who interpret or conduct external business for us) now consider it too dangerous to come into work ...

“We are taking steps to manage LE staff’s perceptions. We judge that the risk to them is probably lower than they believe, and we have designed ways of working to lower their exposure (flexible patterns, shifts, rotations). But it is hard to argue with the facts on the ground. Murders have spiked in the last three weeks and there is evidence that interpreters associated with MND(SE) and the wider Coalition have been targeted.

...

“We judge that local staff will feel safe to return to work when the Council boycott [see Section 9.4] is lifted ... Local staff tell us that they think it will be easier for them once relations with the Council are restored ...

“DFID see their situation slightly differently ... Although two of DFID’s local partners have been threatened, the risks to them are not as great as to our permanent local

⁵²⁵ Minute [DFID junior official] to Drummond, 25 September 2003, ‘Hilary Benn’s Meeting with UK Secondees to CPA-HQ in Baghdad, 18 September’.

⁵²⁶ Minute [DFID junior official] to Drummond, 25 September 2003, ‘Hilary Benn’s Meeting with UK Secondees to CPA-HQ in Baghdad, 18 September’.

⁵²⁷ Public hearing, 17 December 2009, page 43.

⁵²⁸ Public hearing, 22 January 2010, pages 33-34.

staff ... Key local government politicians and officials are more willing to engage with DFID than with the UK military and FCO.”⁵²⁹

830. On 25 April, DFID officials advised Mr Benn that two LE staff working for the UK at the Basra Palace site had left Iraq in fear of their lives after being followed home from work.⁵³⁰ The incident had caused concern among other LE staff, who had been given the remainder of the week off. All local staff continued to have “standing permission not to come to work if they felt unsafe”. The situation was to be reviewed once it was clearer how many local staff considered it safe to return to work and it was possible to assess the impact on the DFID programme.

831. Mr Benn commented: “The right approach – our local staff have shown a lot of courage and deserve all our support.”⁵³¹

832. On 18 June, an LE member of staff at the British Embassy Office Basra was murdered. His wife, also a local member of staff, was seriously injured.⁵³²

833. On 29 June, local staff working for the British Embassy Office Basra were advised that they could take the available severance package if they no longer felt safe working there.⁵³³ They were told there might come a point when their employment would have to be terminated because of the risk to their safety, but the Embassy Office judged that point had not yet been reached.

834. During the second half of 2006, FCO and DFID officials exchanged views on departments’ duty of care to LE staff.

835. Ms Diana Brookes, FCO Legal Counsellor, advised FCO officials:

“The important point is that even if they [LE staff] have accepted the risks involved this does not absolve the FCO from liability in terms of duty of care in an individual case. If the view is taken that the risk is so great that LE staff should not continue working at this time then I do not see how we could be meeting our duty of care to them by allowing them to turn down the voluntary severance package. If the risk is that high then the severance package should be made compulsory for all LE staff, otherwise we risk the possibility of liability for breach of our duty of care if a further incident were to happen.”⁵³⁴

⁵²⁹ Letter Lamb to IPU [junior official], 20 April 2006, ‘Basra: Security and Drawdown’.

⁵³⁰ Minute DFID [junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 25 April 2006, ‘Basra Security and Staffing’.

⁵³¹ Manuscript comment Benn on Minute [DFID junior official] to PS/Secretary of State [DFID], 25 April 2006, ‘Basra Security and Staffing’.

⁵³² Minute Asquith to Private Secretary [FCO], 21 June 2006, ‘Assassination of Locally Engaged Staff in Basra’.

⁵³³ Email [Basra junior official] to [FCO junior official], 29 June 2006, ‘Local Staff’.

⁵³⁴ Email Brookes to [FCO junior official], 29 June 2006, ‘Local Staff’.

836. Ms Liz Davis, DFID Human Resources Director, advised DFID officials:

“It is our responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff. A failure to do so is a breach of our responsibilities in law and potentially a failure of our common law duty if we act negligently. This framework is not the same for the military. The test at law will be:

- have we assessed the risks,
- controlled those risks as far as possible,
- trained staff where appropriate,
- and monitored the issues.”⁵³⁵

837. Those responsibilities would normally be confined to “working time”, an approach Ms Davis did not believe to be reasonable in Iraq. Ms Davis advised that, as an employer, DFID could not be held responsible for the overall security situation, but that the picture was clouded by the wider role of the UK Government.

838. A table prepared by the British Council in July itemised some of the differences between the packages offered by the FCO and DFID (and the British Council), including grievance procedures, “security leave” and entitlement to termination benefits.⁵³⁶

839. By October 2006, all but one of the Iraqi civilian staff working at the Basra Palace site had been replaced by third country nationals because of “a growing campaign of intimidation at the hands of extremists.”⁵³⁷

Table 1: FCO LE staff in Baghdad and Basra, 2004-2008⁵³⁸

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Baghdad	370	34	34	35
Basra	251	22	2	2
Total	621	56	36	37

The Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme

840. In August 2007, faced with a further deterioration in security and growing press interest in LE staff,⁵³⁹ officials sought to establish “a coherent cross-Whitehall approach” to LE staff.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁵ Email Davis to Dinham, Foy, Shafik, 30 June 2006, ‘Local Staff’.

⁵³⁶ [Email Shafiq to Gibson, 26 July 2006, ‘TACOS for Iraq’.](#)

⁵³⁷ [Paper Iraq Policy Unit, 25 October 2006, ‘Iraq: Basra Palace Site’.](#)

⁵³⁸ [Letter Fraser to Aldred, 22 July 2013, ‘Iraq Inquiry: Deployment of Civilian Personnel: Statistics, Annex C – Iraq: Activity Recording – Schedule 5 Summary’.](#)

⁵³⁹ *BBC News*, 7 August 2007, *Interpreters ‘abandoned’ in Iraq*; *Times Online*, 7 August 2007, *Abandoned – the 91 Iraqis who risked all*.

⁵⁴⁰ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 1 August 2007, ‘Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff’.](#)

841. Mr Giles Lever, Head of the IPU, advised Mr Miliband that officials in the FCO, MOD, DFID, Home Office and Cabinet Office had found it difficult to agree a common approach:

- The FCO saw a strong moral, reputational and operational case for doing more to assist Iraqi staff facing security threats and those who had been forced to leave UK government employment due to security. The FCO had around 27 LE staff in Baghdad and estimated no more than 100 current and former staff in Basra would be eligible.
- DFID, with a very small number of LE staff, broadly shared the FCO view.
- The MOD had directly employed around 15,000 Iraqi citizens since 2003, and tens of thousands more through international or local contractors. It was “nervous about the resource implications for any commitment to do more for Iraqi staff”. The MOD was also concerned that any promise of assistance to LE staff (for example, asylum in the UK) would be “a catalyst for an exodus of staff” and “would undermine MND (SE)’s ability to operate effectively”.
- The Home Office was “predictably unwilling to contemplate any relaxation of the asylum/immigration rules for Iraqis who have worked for HMG, especially in view of MOD’s numbers”. It was also concerned that any change in policy “could act as a pull factor for a large number of Iraqis”.⁵⁴¹

842. On 7 August, the Cabinet Office advised Mr Brown that the numbers involved were large, policy differed between the FCO/DFID and the MOD, and “our current immigration/asylum policies mean that there are few straightforward options”.⁵⁴² The two principal alternatives were resettlement and financial assistance.

843. Three options were put forward for reducing the number of eligible staff to more manageable levels:

- Distinguishing between LE staff directly employed by the UK and those hired on a casual basis or via contractor. More than 15,000 Iraqi citizens would still be eligible, but a large number hired through international or local contractors would be excluded.
- Establishing a minimum level of service of perhaps 12 or 24 months. Depending on the timeframe, about 330 or 230 Iraqi citizens would be eligible.
- Prioritising interpreters and other white collar staff on the grounds that professional staff were mission critical and more closely identifiable with the UK. Questions of fairness could arise. Around 120 (12-month minimum service) or 100 (24-month minimum service) were estimated to be eligible.

844. Mr Brown asked the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate a Whitehall-wide review, reporting to the Defence, Foreign and Home Secretaries.⁵⁴³ The review should establish

⁵⁴¹ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to Private Secretary \[FCO\], 1 August 2007, ‘Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff’.](#)

⁵⁴² [Minute Turner to Prime Minister, 7 August 2007, ‘Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff’.](#)

⁵⁴³ [Letter Turner to Carver, 8 August 2007, ‘Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff’.](#)

a minimum threshold for assistance and consider whether more could be offered to a subset of Iraqi employees, against clear criteria and with possible resettlement in third countries. It should also consider the implications for UK operations in Iraq and elsewhere, and for UK asylum policy.

845. The ‘Review of Locally Engaged Staff’, written by the FCO with input from other departments, was sent to Ministers on 1 October.⁵⁴⁴ The review recommended the establishment of “discrete schemes to assist sub-sets of a) serving and b) former Iraqi LE staff”. Objective criteria, such as the length of service should be the main method for deciding which staff should be eligible.

846. The review stated:

“Because records of former staff, in particular the estimated 20,000 employed by MOD, are incomplete, it is extremely difficult to assess with any certainty the numbers of former staff who might be ... eligible ...”

847. Ministers agreed on 3 October that “the best solution was to offer assistance as an ex-gratia package, not as a reward for service, but with the implicit recognition that the uniquely difficult circumstances formed part of the justification for that package”.⁵⁴⁵

848. Ministers also agreed to set a minimum of 12 months’ service for serving staff and that for former staff, only the “professional cadres” would be eligible. The package would include financial assistance, resettlement in third countries and resettlement via the Gateway Protection Programme.⁵⁴⁶ On funding, the Home Office would offer £6 million from the annual Gateway budget. Additional costs should be met where possible by employing departments. In the MOD’s case that would entail a call on the Reserve.

849. Ministers met again on 8 October to reach agreement on whether existing staff should be offered the additional option of Exceptional Leave to Enter the UK direct from Iraq and, if so, how that would be funded.⁵⁴⁷ Ministers agreed that the MOD should be able to claim up to £20 million from the Reserve and would provide up to a further £5 million from its existing budgets.

850. Mr Brown announced the scheme to Parliament later on 8 October:

“I would ... like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of our civilian and locally employed staff in Iraq, many of whom have worked in extremely difficult circumstances, exposing themselves and their families to danger. I am pleased therefore to announce today a new policy which more fully recognises the

⁵⁴⁴ [Paper Cabinet Office, 1 October 2007, ‘Ministerial Meeting on Iraq Review of Locally Engaged Staff, Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff’.](#)

⁵⁴⁵ Minutes, 3 October 2007, Ministerial Meeting on Iraq – Review of Locally Engaged Staff.

⁵⁴⁶ The Gateway Protection Programme, introduced in 2004, is operated by the UK Government in partnership with UNHCR. It offers a legal route for a fixed number of refugees from different countries to settle in the UK each year.

⁵⁴⁷ Minutes, 8 October 2007, Ministerial Meeting on Iraq – Review of Locally Engaged Staff.

contribution made by our local Iraqi staff, who work for our armed forces and civilian missions in what we know are uniquely difficult circumstances. Existing staff who have been employed by us for more than 12 months and have completed their work will be able to apply for a package of financial payments to aid resettlement in Iraq or elsewhere in the region, or – in agreed circumstances – for admission to the UK. Professional staff, including interpreters and translators, with a similar length of service who have left our employ since the beginning of 2005 will also be able to apply for assistance.”⁵⁴⁸

851. Mr Miliband gave a fuller explanation in a Parliamentary Written Statement the next day.⁵⁴⁹

852. Neither the MOD nor the FCO was able to provide precise figures for the number of Iraqi citizens employed since 2003 and likely to be eligible under the scheme.⁵⁵⁰

853. At a Ministerial meeting to discuss LE staff on 18 September, Lord Drayson, Minister of State for Defence Equipment and Support, conceded that the MOD “had not done a good job on record keeping”. In discussion, Ministers commented that further work on the issue was “unlikely to deliver much more clarity given the nature of the records”.⁵⁵¹

854. On 30 October, Mr Miliband gave more detail on eligibility, the package on offer and application procedures:

“Both fairness and realism demand that we focus on that sub-set of staff who have had the closest and most sustained association with us, in circumstances which we judge to be uniquely difficult. We have therefore established clear and transparent eligibility criteria which are, as far as possible, objective in nature.

“... We need to preserve our ability to recruit and retain qualified staff ... Both the overall policy, and the design of the scheme in respect of serving staff have been designed with this in mind.

“Finally, we have taken into account the need to ensure that any assistance ... is practical, realistic and preserves the integrity of wider immigration and asylum policy ...

“The assistance ... is offered ex-gratia and goes above and beyond the confines of what is lawfully or contractually required.”⁵⁵²

855. On 19 December, Mr Tinline reported that implementation of the scheme was starting to work. All precedent-setting cases were referred to MND(SE) and London.

⁵⁴⁸ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 8 October 2007, column 23.

⁵⁴⁹ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 9 October 2007, column 27WS.

⁵⁵⁰ Minute [Cabinet Office junior official] to McDonald, 7 September 2007, ‘Iraq Senior Officials Group’.

⁵⁵¹ Minutes, 18 September 2007, Ministerial Meeting on Iraq – Review of Locally Engaged Staff.

⁵⁵² House of Commons, *Official Report*, 30 October 2007, column 30WS.

Many applications were “obviously inadmissible”, but a surprising number raised difficult questions. A number of principles had informed decisions:

- Individuals on Letters of Appointment who did not fulfil the “Eligibility criteria for former staff” were not eligible.
- Those still on the payroll on 8 August 2007 but not currently working because of threats should be counted as current staff.
- Those meeting the job criteria for only a brief period, such as providers of “occasional interpreting”, were not eligible, however long they had worked for the UK.

856. The first 18 “current staff” arrived in the UK from Basra on 8 April 2008.⁵⁵³ By 22 May, the UK had received 1,138 applications for assistance, of which 503 had been assessed as eligible, with almost half the successful applicants opting for the financial package.

857. In March 2009, Mr Miliband informed Ms Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, that an assessment of the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme by Home Office, FCO, MOD, DFID and Cabinet Office officials had concluded that it was “working well” and only “minor adjustments” were needed.⁵⁵⁴ Mr Miliband explained that he had agreed a recommendation to set a cut-off date after which new applications from “former” staff would not be accepted. He sought Ms Smith’s agreement to continue the scheme for serving staff, with a review of its future in September 2009.

858. On 23 March, Mr Miliband announced to Parliament that the scheme was “popular and effective” and would remain unchanged, but new applications from “former” staff (those who had left their jobs before 7 August 2007) would not be accepted after 19 May.

859. The scheme was closed to all applicants on 16 January 2011.⁵⁵⁵

860. The total number of individuals who have taken up the option to be resettled in the UK under the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme is 1,389 (see Table 2).⁵⁵⁶

Table 2: Iraqi citizens settled in UK under the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme

	Gateway	Direct entry
Principal applicants	183	186
Dependants	413	607
TOTAL	596	793

⁵⁵³ Letter Felton to Acland-Hood, 22 May 2008, ‘Locally Engaged Iraqi Staff Scheme: Progress and Next Steps’.

⁵⁵⁴ [Letter Miliband to Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 11 March 2009, ‘Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme’](#).

⁵⁵⁵ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 16 September 2010, column 58WS.

⁵⁵⁶ Email FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 15 February 2016, ‘Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme’.

UK civilian deployments to Iraq: statistics

861. The Inquiry asked government departments to provide quarterly data on the numbers, roles and location, of civilian staff and contractors deployed to Iraq between 2003 and 2009.⁵⁵⁷

862. In the case of the FCO, the request included information on secondees from other government departments for whom the FCO had duty of care responsibilities.

863. None of the three principal departments responsible for the deployment of civilians (the FCO, the MOD and DFID) was able to provide data in the form requested.

864. FCO data were drawn principally from the department's human resources (HR) database, Prism. An initial return covering the period from March 2003 to June 2009 was submitted to the Inquiry in 2011.⁵⁵⁸ In 2013, the FCO updated the figures for March 2004 to June 2009.⁵⁵⁹

865. The Prism figures indicate the number of FCO staff deployed to bilateral FCO missions in Iraq, but do not include FCO contractors, staff from other government departments for whom the FCO was responsible, or FCO staff seconded to ORHA or the CPA.

866. The FCO supplemented the Prism material with miscellaneous data from other sources, including telephone lists and policy documents, which provided occasional snapshots of overall numbers of civilians deployed by the FCO and other departments, excluding support for Op TELIC.

867. Sir Simon Fraser, the FCO PUS from 2010 to 2015, told the Inquiry that the FCO had learned lessons from the experience of Iraq and that "the current recording system in FCO is both more robust, more complete and more accurate than was previously the case".⁵⁶⁰

868. The MOD provided average quarterly figures for three groups of civilians deployed in support of Op TELIC: MOD staff; staff from other government departments; and contractors.⁵⁶¹

869. The figures for 2003 to 2006 are drawn from returns compiled by individual military units and based on physical counts of civilians present. The returns were collated by PJHQ.

⁵⁵⁷ [Letter Aldred to Heads of Iraq Inquiry Departmental Liaison Units, 8 April 2011, 'Iraq Inquiry – Role of Civilians in Iraq'](#).

⁵⁵⁸ [Letter FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 27 May 2011, 'Iraq Inquiry – Role of Civilians in Iraq' attaching Table, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁵⁹ [Letter Fraser to Aldred, 22 July 2013, 'Iraq Inquiry: Deployment of Civilian Personnel: Statistics'](#).

⁵⁶⁰ [Letter Fraser to Aldred, 22 July 2013, 'Iraq Inquiry: Deployment of Civilian Personnel: Statistics'](#).

⁵⁶¹ [Letter Ministry of Defence to Iraq Inquiry, 31 May 2013, 'Civilian Roles in Iraq'](#).

870. In 2006, the requirement to produce a combined total for the three groups of civilians lapsed, resulting in large gaps in the record for the later period. Figures for 2006 onwards were compiled for the Inquiry by the MOD from units' individual returns.

871. Mr Jon Thompson, the MOD PUS from 2012 to 2016, told the Inquiry:

“... I do not see any prospect of our being able to provide you with figures which we can guarantee to be comprehensive. I am at least assured that systems now in place would enable us to provide the current data for Afghanistan without difficulty.”⁵⁶²

872. The information provided by DFID was compiled from a number of sources, including duty of care sheets, contractors' records and medical spreadsheets.⁵⁶³

873. Mr Mark Lowcock, the DFID Permanent Secretary since 2011, explained that “achieving 100 per cent accuracy in this data would require a disproportionate amount of staff time (if it was possible at all)”, but expressed confidence that “the trends present in the data are reliable”.⁵⁶⁴

874. The Inquiry has produced a set of graphs and tables, drawing mostly on the data submitted by the FCO, the MOD and DFID, that gives a broad indication of overall numbers and trends.

875. Because of the limitations of the source material and the variety of sources used, the numbers quoted are approximate and, in some cases, are inconsistent with each other and cannot be reconciled.

876. Unless stated otherwise, all statistics in this Section exclude UK police officers deployed to Iraq in support of the SSR programme. The deployment of police officers is addressed in more detail in Section 12.1.

877. Figure 1 shows FCO,⁵⁶⁵ MOD⁵⁶⁶ and DFID⁵⁶⁷ civilian deployments to Iraq between March 2003 and June 2009.

878. The underlying data, reproduced in Table 7 at the end of this Section, show that between March 2003 and June 2009:

- The MOD deployed an average⁵⁶⁸ of 320 civilians to Iraq in support of Op TELIC at any one time.

⁵⁶² [Letter Thompson to Aldred, 8 July 2013, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁶³ [Email DFID to Iraq Inquiry, 5 May 2011, 'Iraq Inquiry – Role of Civilians in Iraq'](#).

⁵⁶⁴ [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁶⁵ [Letter FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 27 May 2011, 'Iraq Inquiry – Role of Civilians in Iraq' attaching Table, \[untitled\]](#); [Letter Fraser to Aldred, 22 July 2013, 'Iraq Inquiry: Deployment of Civilian Personnel: Statistics, Annex B – Iraq: FCO Staff in post on the last day of each quarter, 2003-04 to 2009-10'](#).

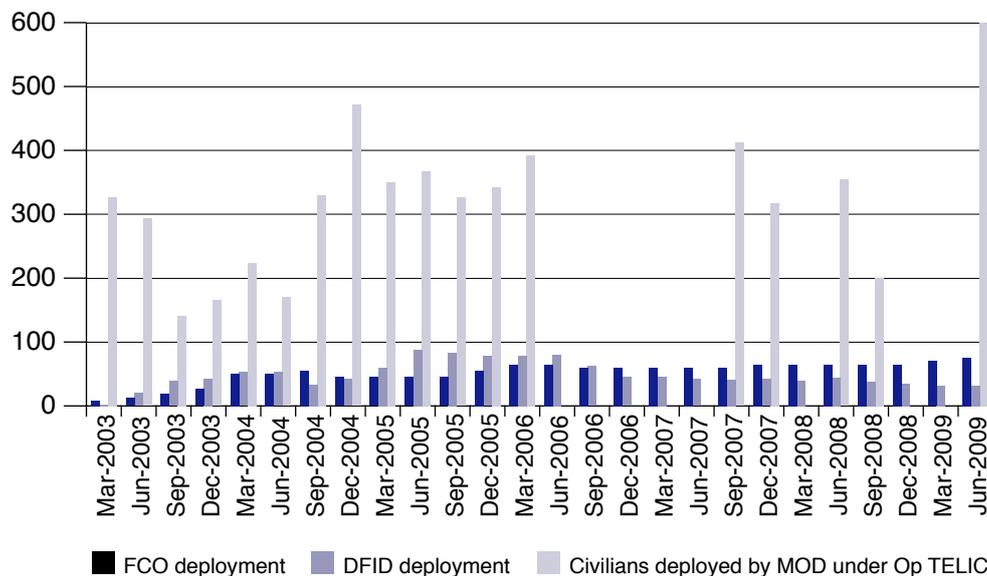
⁵⁶⁶ [Letter Ministry of Defence to Iraq Inquiry, 31 May 2013, 'Civilian Roles in Iraq'](#).

⁵⁶⁷ [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\] attaching Table, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁶⁸ All averages quoted in this Section are arithmetic means.

- The FCO and DFID deployed a combined average of 100 civilians (including DFID contractors, but excluding police, security contractors and officials from other government departments) for post-conflict reconstruction and the UK's bilateral representation in Iraq.
- There were two peaks in DFID's contribution to reconstruction:
 - 53 personnel from March to June 2004, towards the end of the CPA period; and
 - 88 personnel in June 2005.
- The number of DFID personnel fell significantly in the face of deteriorating security in late 2006.
- The number of FCO staff deployed to Iraq reached 50 towards the end of the CPA period and climbed to 75 in mid-2009.

Figure 1: Civilians deployed to Iraq by the FCO,⁵⁶⁹ DFID⁵⁷⁰ and the MOD,⁵⁷¹ 2003-2009



879. Table 3 shows estimates of the number of UK police officers deployed in Iraq on selected dates between July 2003 and April 2009 for which data are available.⁵⁷²

880. Section 12.1 also includes data on the number of UK police officers deployed to train Iraqi police at the police training facility in Jordan.

⁵⁶⁹ [Letter FCO to Iraq Inquiry, 27 May 2011, 'Iraq Inquiry – Role of Civilians in Iraq' attaching Table, \[untitled\]; Letter Fraser to Aldred, 22 July 2013, 'Iraq Inquiry: Deployment of Civilian Personnel: Statistics, Annex B – Iraq: FCO Staff in post on the last day of each quarter, 2003-04 to 2009-10'.](#)

⁵⁷⁰ [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\] attaching Table, \[untitled\].](#)

⁵⁷¹ [Letter Ministry of Defence to Iraq Inquiry, 31 May 2013, 'Civilian Roles in Iraq'.](#)

⁵⁷² This is an edited version of Table 6 in Section 12.1. Sources are explained in Section 12.1.

Table 3: UK police officers deployed to Iraq, 2003-2009

Date	Estimated total in Iraq
July 2003	4
October 2003	10
November 2003	10
December 2003	34
January 2004	34
March 2004	43
September 2004	43
October 2004	46
November 2004	44
May 2005	47
October 2005	47
December 2005	35
February 2006	33
April 2007	12
July 2007	17
November 2007	11
February 2008	5
March 2008 – April 2009	14

The UK civilian deployment during the CPA period, May 2003 to June 2004

881. During the CPA period⁵⁷³ the UK deployed:

- an average of 220 civilians in support of Op TELIC on any given day;
- 61 civilians to the CPA in May 2003, rising to 260 in April 2004;
- two police officers in support of the UK's SSR programme in Iraq in July 2003, rising to 37 in March 2004; and
- between four and eight staff to the British Office Baghdad.⁵⁷⁴

882. Table 4 shows the number and location of UK civilian secondments to the CPA between May 2003 and April 2004. In the absence of continuous data covering the whole period, the figures have been taken from four summaries prepared for senior officials and Ministers between May 2003 and April 2004.

⁵⁷³ The available data do not match precisely the dates of the CPA. Some earlier figures describe deployments to ORHA, before its absorption into the CPA.

⁵⁷⁴ All figures in this list exclude security contractors.

883. Secondments to the CPA appear to have peaked in April 2004, with approximately 260 UK civilians working for the organisation across Iraq.⁵⁷⁵

Table 4: UK secondments to the CPA

	22 May 2003⁵⁷⁶	25 July 2003⁵⁷⁷	14 January 2004⁵⁷⁸	21 April 2004⁵⁷⁹
Total UK secondments to the CPA	61	100	143	260
Baghdad	50	65	50	120
<i>percentage of UK total</i>	82	65	35	46
South	11	30	72	120
<i>percentage of UK total</i>	18	30	50	46
Other CPA	0	5 ⁵⁸⁰	21	20
<i>percentage of UK total</i>	0	5	15	8

884. The British Office Baghdad opened on 5 May 2003.⁵⁸¹ Originally staffed by a team of four, by late summer 2003 it had eight UK-based staff.

885. Information on the location of personnel outside Baghdad and Basra during the CPA period is sparse.

886. A contact list for UK personnel present in Iraq on 30 December 2003 listed 51 people (civilian and military) deployed to the CPA Governorate Teams (GTs) across Iraq:

- Basra 22 (including a UK military close protection team);⁵⁸²
- Dhi Qar 4;
- Wasit 6;
- Ta'Mim (Kirkuk) 7;
- Maysan 10 (including a UK military close protection team);
- Muthanna 1; and
- Erbil 1.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁵ [Letter Tebbit to Turnbull, 21 April 2004, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁷⁶ Annotated Agenda, 22 May 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting, 'Annex C, UK Secondees to ORHA'.

⁵⁷⁷ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 25 July 2003, 'Iraq: UK support for reconstruction'](#).

⁵⁷⁸ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 14 January 2004, 'Iraq – Civilian Staffing' attaching Paper, 'Iraq: Civilian Staffing'](#).

⁵⁷⁹ [Letter Tebbit to Turnbull, 21 April 2004, \[untitled\]](#).

⁵⁸⁰ Inquiry estimate. No figure was given by Sir Michael Jay, who referred to "small numbers" in CPA regional offices in central and northern Iraq.

⁵⁸¹ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to PS \[FCO\], 'Iraq: Briefing for Visit – 25-26 November 2003' attaching Paper \[unattributed\], 'Background on Other Issues'](#).

⁵⁸² The Basra Governorate Team was not part of CPA(South).

⁵⁸³ Paper [unattributed], 12 January 2004, 'UK Personnel Deployed (As at 30 Dec 03)'.

887. Excluding 27 members of UK military close protection teams and the CPA Regional Co-ordinator in Erbil, who was not a member of a GT, the total number of personnel deployed to the CPA GTs was 23:⁵⁸⁴ five in the Basra GT and 18 elsewhere.

888. Most of the 23 were from the MOD (a mix of civilian and military personnel), DFID and the FCO. The Governorate Co-ordinator for Dhi Qar was from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

889. There is no continuous set of data for the number of civilians deployed during the CPA period by UK government departments and organisations other than the FCO, the MOD and DFID.

890. A snapshot produced for the AHMGIR on 22 May 2003 listed 13 organisations other than the FCO, MOD and DFID with staff seconded to ORHA, and 11 “miscellaneous” secondees:

MOD	13
DFID	8
FCO	6
Department of Health (DoH)	6
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)	5
No.10 Communications Information Centre (CIC)	2
British Council	1
Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)	1
HM Customs and Excise (HMCE)	1
HM Treasury (HMT)	1
Highways Agency	1
Lord Chancellor’s Department (LCD)	1
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	1
Northern Ireland Office (NIO)	1
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)	1
Office of Telecommunications (OfTel)	1
Miscellaneous	11
Total	61 ⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ Sir Michael Jay quoted a figure of 21 personnel deployed to the GTs in his update for Permanent Secretaries on 14 January 2004. This is the figure quoted in Table 4.

⁵⁸⁵ Annotated Agenda, 22 May 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting, ‘Annex C: UK Secondees to ORHA’.

The post-CPA UK civilian deployment, July 2004 to July 2009

891. On 28 June 2004, the CPA handed over to a sovereign Iraqi government (see Section 9.3).

892. During the post-CPA period the UK deployed:

- an average of 372 civilians in support of Op TELIC on any given day;
- an average of 112 civilians to the UK's bilateral missions in Iraq, including the DFID offices in Baghdad and Basra, on any given day;
- 43 police officers in support of the UK's SSR programme in September 2004, falling to 13 in March 2008; and
- eight civilians to the Basra PRT from mid-2006.⁵⁸⁶

893. The UK civilian presence in Baghdad, previously split between the CPA and the British Office Baghdad, was consolidated in the new British Embassy Baghdad.

894. In Basra, UK civilians were deployed to the British Embassy Office and additionally, from April 2006, the UK-led Basra PRT.

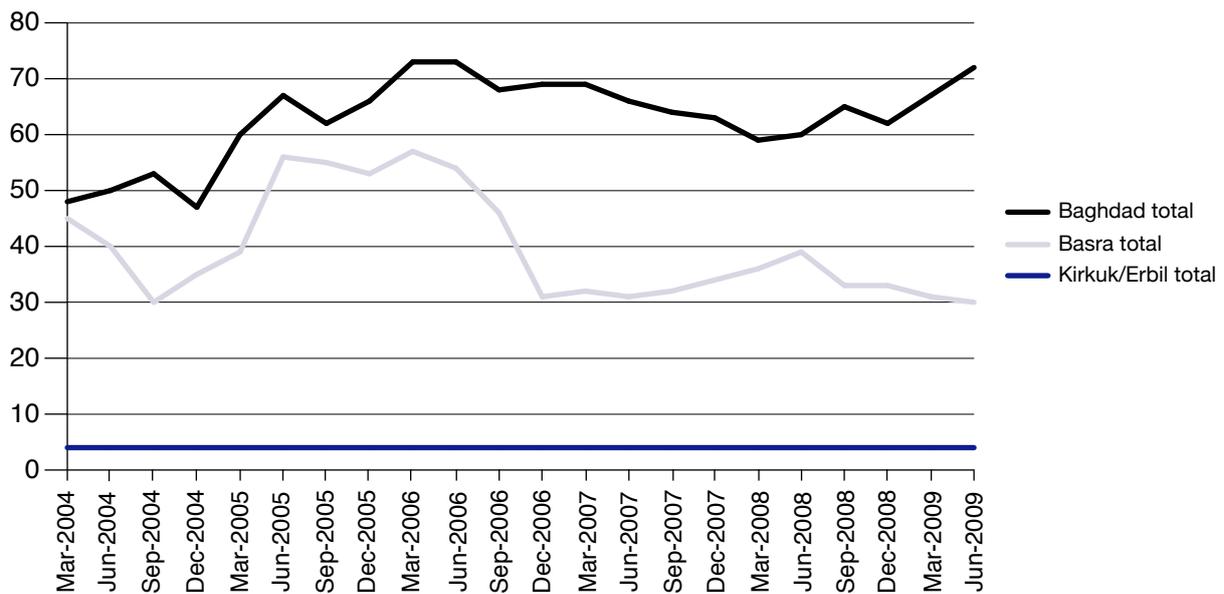
895. A second, smaller, British Embassy Office was opened in Kirkuk, alongside the US Regional Embassy Office (REO).⁵⁸⁷ In January 2007, the British Embassy Office Kirkuk was moved to Erbil after the US REO transferred to Kirkuk Regional Air Base.

896. Figure 2 shows the distribution of UK civilian personnel (including DFID contractors, but not civilians deployed on Op TELIC, police or security contractors) between Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk/Erbil during the post-CPA period. The underlying data are reproduced in Table 8 at the end of this Section.

⁵⁸⁶ All figures in this list exclude security contractors.

⁵⁸⁷ Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Minutes of Evidence, 24 March 2005, *Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, 2 November 2004.

Figure 2: FCO and DFID deployments to Iraq, 2004-2009⁵⁸⁸



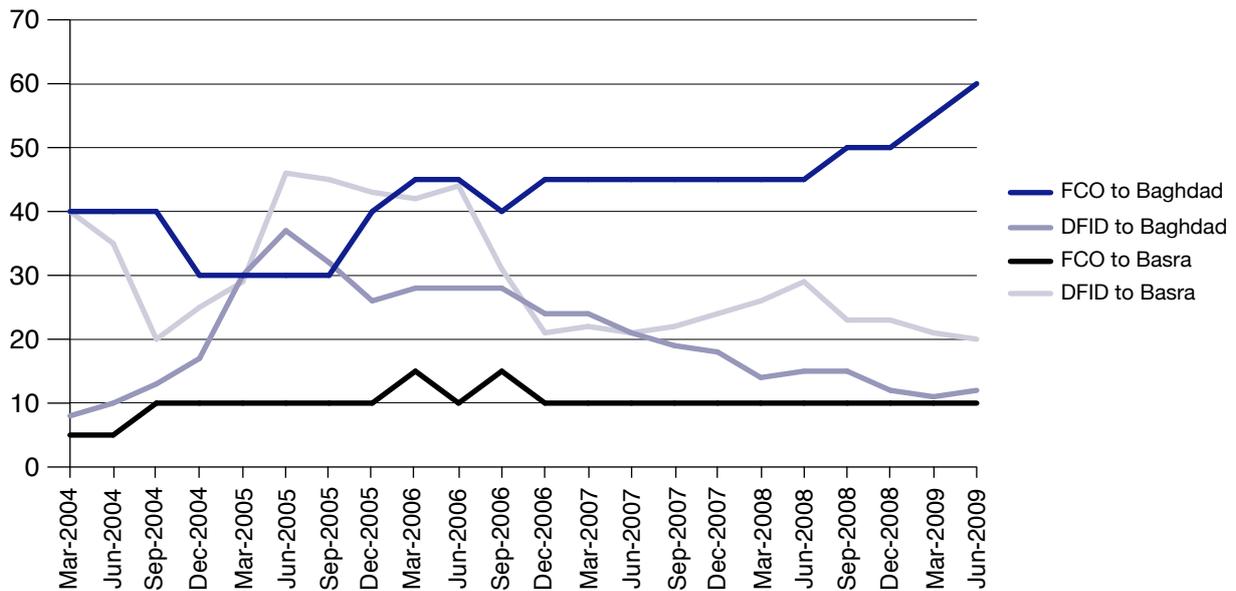
897. Figure 3 shows the relative contributions of the FCO and DFID in Baghdad and Basra:

- FCO personnel were concentrated in Baghdad (an average of 43, against 10 in Basra).
- FCO numbers in Baghdad doubled between March 2005 and June 2009, with no change in Basra.
- DFID deployed more personnel in Basra than Baghdad (an average of 30 in Basra against 20 in Baghdad).
- DFID numbers in Baghdad and Basra fell steadily from mid-2005, with an especially marked dip in Basra when security deteriorated in 2006.

898. The underlying data are reproduced in Table 8 at the end of this Section.

⁵⁸⁸ The Inquiry has inserted a figure of four for Kirkuk/Erbil throughout the period and assumed no increase in staffing during the move from Kirkuk to Erbil in January 2007. The FCO source material refers to “five or less” and double counts for Kirkuk and Erbil between December 2007 and June 2008, long after Kirkuk had closed.

Figure 3: FCO and DFID deployments to Baghdad and Basra, 2004-2009



899. There is no continuous set of data for civilians deployed by other departments or organisations during the post-CPA period.

900. In November 2004, Mr Straw sent details of all staff present at the British Embassy Baghdad and the British Embassy Offices Basra and Kirkuk on 24 October 2004 to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee.⁵⁸⁹

901. The list of staff, reproduced in full below, includes those deployed by the FCO, the MOD, DFID and other government departments and organisations. It is the most comprehensive record seen by the Inquiry of post-CPA civilian staff numbers.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Minutes of Evidence, 24 March 2005, *Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2 November 2004*.

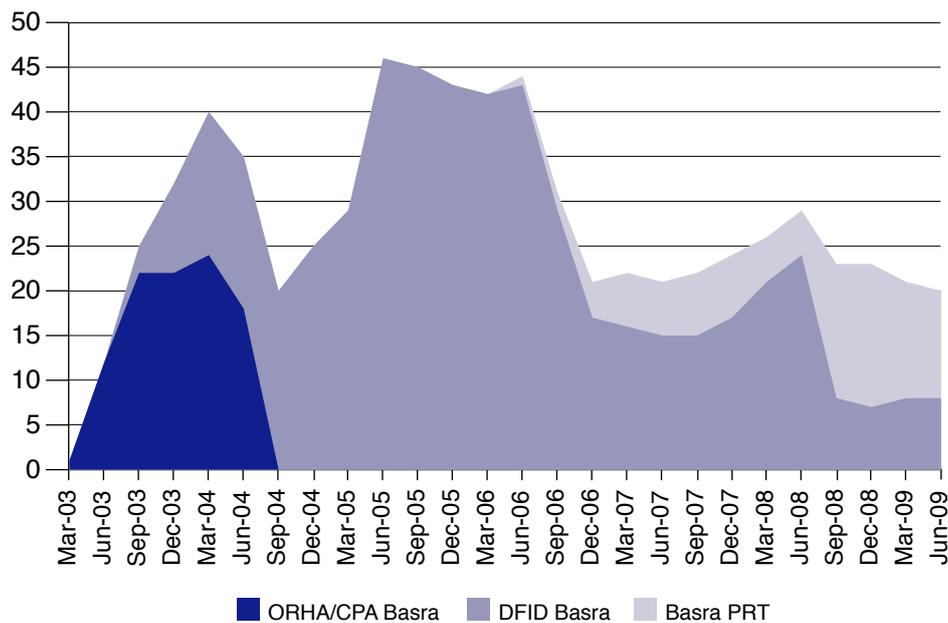
⁵⁹⁰ The staff list records officials visiting the Embassy and the Embassy Offices on a single day in October 2004. It does not include those on leave.

Baghdad		
Parent Department or Organisation	Number in Baghdad	Comment
FCO	30	Includes seconded staff from other government departments.
DFID	8	DFID core staff, includes two members of staff on secondment from other government departments and three on consultancy terms.
MOD	19	Eleven working from the Embassy. Five working on capacity-building in the Iraq MOD and three visiting.
Police Advisers	15	Capacity-building and advice.
Consultants	15	Fourteen working on capacity-building programmes and one visiting. One consultant seconded from the Department of Health.
No.10	1	Working with the Iraqi Government Communications Directorate.
UKTI	1	Working in the Embassy.
British Council	1	Managing a DFID project.
Crown Agents	2	Providing contracted services.
Frontier Medical	2	Contracted to provide medical services.
LE staff	36	
Total staff	116	
<p>These figures do not include the static guard force employed to protect Embassy (or Consulate) premises or the private security personnel responsible for personal security.</p> <p>The number of consultants in Baghdad is temporarily lower than usual at the moment and not representative of the overall commitment of UK resources in this area. The Police Advisers include one Canadian national for whom we have responsibility.</p>		
Basra		
Parent Department or Organisation	Number in Basra	Comment
FCO	14	Includes seconded staff from other government departments.
FCO contractors	2	
DFID	1	
DFID contractors	9	
Police Advisers	15	Mostly at Az Zubayr Regional Police Academy.
ArmorGroup Police Mentors	36	Most working from MNF bases.
Crown Agents	2	
Frontier Medical	2	
LE staff	22	
LE DFID contractor	1	
LE ArmorGroup Police	10	Most working from MNF bases.
Total staff	144	
Kirkuk		
<p>There is usually one UK-based (FCO) member of staff, the Consul General. From time to time, UK staff from elsewhere in Iraq make extended working visits to Kirkuk. There are two LE staff members employed in Kirkuk.</p>		
Total staff	3	(plus one visiting)

902. Figure 4 shows the number of DFID staff and contractors deployed to Basra between 2003 and 2009.

903. The underlying data, reproduced in Table 9 at the end of this Section, show that, between June and December 2006, DFID deployments to Basra more than halved, from 44 to 21.⁵⁹¹ The number of personnel recovered to 29 in June 2008, but never returned to the level seen between June 2005 and June 2006, or during the earlier CPA period.

Figure 4: DFID staff and contractors deployed to Basra, 2003-2009⁵⁹²



UK share of the Coalition civilian deployment

904. Data on civilian personnel compiled by the US Government during the CPA period shared many of the flaws of UK data for the same period. An audit of CPA personnel management by the Office of the CPA Inspector General in June 2004 found that:

“... by the end of January 2004, many distinct personnel tracking mechanisms appeared that were intended to provide accountability for select groups of individuals. In addition, contractors were tracking their own employees. As of March 8, 2004, the CPA believed it had a total of 1,196 personnel assigned to CPA operations in Baghdad. The CPA had been authorized 2,117 positions. The 1,196 included all military and civilian personnel assigned to CPA operations in Baghdad ...”⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\] attaching Table, \[untitled\].](#)

⁵⁹² [Letter Lowcock to Aldred, 24 June 2013, \[untitled\] attaching Table, \[untitled\].](#)

⁵⁹³ Office of the Inspector General Coalition Provisional Authority, Audit Report Number 04-002, 25 June 2004, *Management of Personnel Assigned to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, Iraq.*

905. The audit stated that CPA officials believed their rosters were 90 to 95 percent accurate, which implied that there could be more than 100 individuals not properly accounted for.

906. The audit found even less information about staff deployed outside Baghdad:

“CPA officials stated that if personnel departed Kuwait or other rear area to a forward site, other than Baghdad, such as Al Hilla, Basra or Erbil, in support of CPA Operations there were no reliable procedures to identify and account for these individuals. Additionally, personnel hired to work directly for Iraq ministries in Baghdad provide limited, if any, information to the CPA in Baghdad or Washington DC.”

907. A report to Congress by the US General Accounting Office (GAO) in June 2004 stated that the total number of CPA civilian and military personnel in Baghdad peaked at 1,239 in April 2004 (see Table 5).⁵⁹⁴ That figure was estimated to be about 90 percent accurate, reflecting the difficulty of tracking the arrival and departure of personnel. The GAO stated that no reliable data were available for the period before 1 March 2004.

Table 5: Composition of CPA support in Baghdad, April 2004

Type of personnel ⁵⁹⁵	Number employed	Percentage of total	Percentage of total excluding DoD military
Temporary US government employees	237	19.1	27.5
Non-US Coalition secondees	160	12.9	18.6
US secondees excluding Department of Defense (DoD)	208	16.8	24.1
DoD military	377	30.4	–
DoD civilian	81	6.5	9.4
Contractors	73	5.9	8.5
Iraqi expatriates from the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Council (IRDC)	27	2.2	3.1
Personnel “in process”	76	6.1	8.8
Total	1,239	100	–
Total excluding DoD military	862	–	100

908. The GAO reported that, although the total number of CPA staff fluctuated, the approximate composition remained steady:

- 28 percent from the US military;

⁵⁹⁴ US General Accounting Office Report to Congressional Committees, June 2004, *Rebuilding Iraq. Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues*.

⁵⁹⁵ As listed in the GAO report.

- 26 percent civilian secondees from US federal agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD);
- 25 percent contractors and temporary US government employees hired to work in the CPA; and
- 13 percent secondees from other Coalition countries.

909. A comparison of the very different US and UK data suggests that the 120 UK secondees in Baghdad in April 2004 (see Table 5) represented 14 percent of the CPA total of 862 (excluding DoD military) recorded in the GAO report to Congress, and 75 percent of the non-US Coalition contribution of 160.

910. In November 2003, 104 staff from eight countries were working in CPA(South) in Basra, of whom 48 (46 percent)⁵⁹⁶ were from the UK.⁵⁹⁷ The largest contributors after the UK were Italy and Denmark. It is not clear how many were from the US.

911. After the transfer of sovereignty in June 2004, the US established a Mission to Iraq, consisting of the Embassy in Baghdad and four Regional Embassy Offices (REOs) in Basra, Hillah, Kirkuk and Mosul.⁵⁹⁸

912. In addition to its bilateral diplomatic role, the new US Embassy in Baghdad included:

- a large executive secretariat to carry out the residual functions of the former CPA, which quickly reduced in size;
- the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO); and
- the Project and Contracting Office (PCO).⁵⁹⁹

913. In October 2005, the US announced the restructuring of part of the US Mission in Iraq as PRTs (see Section 10.2).⁶⁰⁰

914. By September 2006, nine PRTs and eight local governance satellite offices had been established. Seven PRTs were US-led, one (Basra) was UK-led and one Italian-led.

915. A South Korean-led Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) for the Kurdistan region was established in Erbil in February 2007, with two satellite offices.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁶ 18 of 48 UK civilian posts in CPA(South) were filled by the military.

⁵⁹⁷ [Letter Bowen to Owen, 14 November 2003, 'Iraq: CPA \(South\) Staff'](#).

⁵⁹⁸ United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, August 2009, *Review of the Roles, Staffing, and Effectiveness of Regional Embassy Offices in Iraq*.

⁵⁹⁹ United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, March 2005, *Review of Staffing at US Embassy Baghdad*.

⁶⁰⁰ US Department of State Archive, 19 October 2005, *Iraq and US Policy: Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Opening Remarks Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington DC, October 19 2005*.

⁶⁰¹ US State Department Archive, 1 February 2007, *Regional Reconstruction Team Holds Inauguration Ceremony*.

916. According to US data for 2005, 2006 and 2009, over 1,000 civilians from US Government agencies (including the State Department and USAID) were deployed to the Embassy, REOs and PRTs (see Table 6).

917. The figure of 1,000 excludes the large number of US civilian contractors employed by the US Mission. A July 2009 report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction recorded that, at that time, 4,079 US civilians were contracted to the State Department in Iraq, 34,846 to the DoD and 8,948 to other agencies, including USAID.⁶⁰²

918. Without detailed information on the jobs performed by UK and US contractors, it is not possible to be certain that they were deployed in equivalent roles or to draw a direct comparison between UK and US statistics.

919. A comparison of data from 2005, 2006 and 2009 suggests that the UK provided an average of approximately 6.5 percent of the combined total of US and UK government employees⁶⁰³ in post-CPA Iraq (see Table 6). When DFID (but not US) contractors are included, the figure is above 9 percent.

Table 6: US and UK civilian deployments to Iraq, 2005-2009

	March 2005	March 2006	July 2009
US civilian staff excluding contractors ⁶⁰⁴	1,058 ⁶⁰⁵	1,037 ⁶⁰⁶	1,176 ⁶⁰⁷
UK civilian staff excluding DFID contractors	55	75	97
US/UK total excluding DFID contractors	1,113	1,112	1,273
UK share of total excluding DFID contractors	4.9%	6.8%	7.6%
UK civilian staff including DFID contractors ⁶⁰⁸	103	134	106 ⁶⁰⁹
US/UK total including DFID contractors	1,163	1,181	1,285
UK share of total including DFID contractors	8.9%	11.3%	8.2%

UK civilian contractors

920. From 2003 to 2009, DFID consistently deployed significantly more contractors than civil servants to Iraq (see Figure 5). The underlying data are reproduced in Table 10 at the end of this Section.

⁶⁰² Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress, July 30, 2009*.

⁶⁰³ The calculation excludes US contractors, DFID contractors, UK security contractors, UK civilians supporting the military and UK police.

⁶⁰⁴ US-based government employees in the US Embassy, REOs and PRTs.

⁶⁰⁵ United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, March 2005, *Review of Staffing at US Embassy Baghdad*.

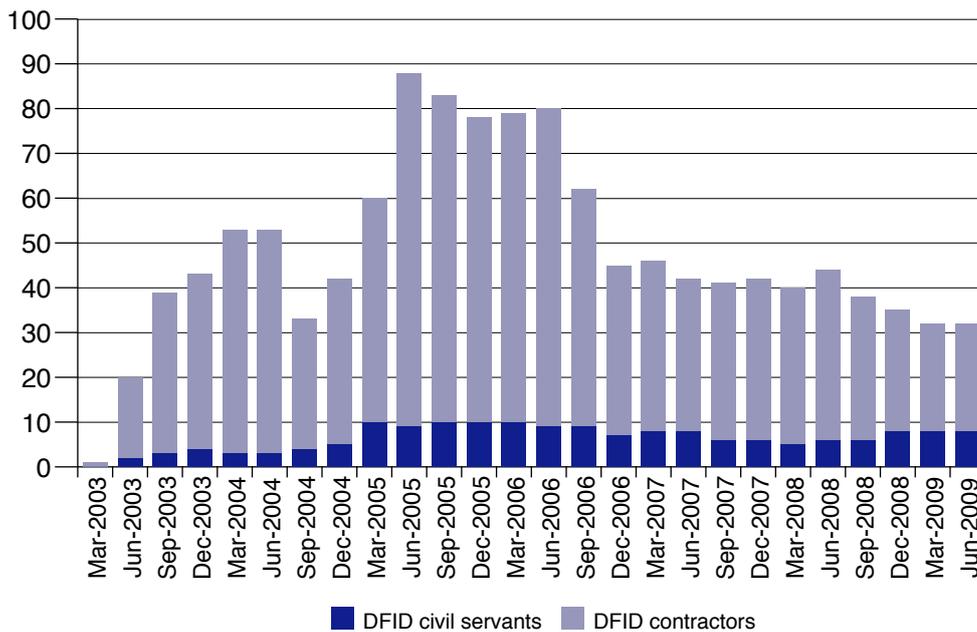
⁶⁰⁶ Epstein, Susan B, CRS Report for Congress, 24 October 2006, *US Embassy in Iraq*.

⁶⁰⁷ United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, July 2009, *Report of Inspection: Embassy Baghdad, Iraq*.

⁶⁰⁸ UK-based DFID and FCO staff and DFID consultants in Iraq (excluding Op TELIC). See Table 8.

⁶⁰⁹ June 2009. See Table 8.

Figure 5: DFID staff and contractors deployed to Iraq, 2003-2009



921. Sir Suma Chakrabarti explained the role of DFID “consultants” to the Inquiry:

“... what we were very keen to do was use consultants in ... project work around certain projects that had to be completed with deep technical skills that DFID staff no longer have. We don’t have those water engineers and power engineers we used to have ...

“The DFID staff were working much more at the policy end on capacity. So how do you put a budget together in the Ministry of Finance? What would you need to run a Prime Minister’s office properly, and those sorts of things that DFID staff focused on much more.”

922. A 2013 report on DFID’s use of contractors by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact explained that they were used in roles ranging from procuring equipment and providing technical advice to implementing development programmes.⁶¹⁰

923. The FCO, with a focus on bilateral and policy work carried out by core FCO staff, employed contractors in smaller numbers, and principally during the CPA period. In January 2004, the FCO employed 23 contractors in Baghdad to work for the CPA.⁶¹¹ In October 2004, there were just two FCO contractors in Iraq.⁶¹²

⁶¹⁰ Independent Commission for Aid Impact, Report 23, May 2013, *DFID’s Use of Contractors to Deliver Aid Programmes*.

⁶¹¹ [Letter Jay to Turnbull, 14 January 2004, ‘Iraq – Civilian Staffing’ attaching Paper, ‘Iraq: Civilian Staffing’](#).

⁶¹² Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Minutes of Evidence, 24 March 2005, *Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2 November 2004*.

Table 7: Civilians deployed to Iraq by the FCO, the MOD and DFID, 2003-2009

	FCO deployment	DFID deployment	Civilians deployed by the MOD under Op TELIC
Mar 2003	8	1	327
Jun 2003	12	20	293
Sep 2003	19	39	141
Dec 2003	26	43	165
Mar 2004	50	53	224
Jun 2004	50	53	170
Sep 2004	55	33	330
Dec 2004	45	42	471
Mar 2005	45	60	350
Jun 2005	45	88	367
Sep 2005	45	83	326
Dec 2005	55	78	342
Mar 2006	65	79	392
Jun 2006	65	80	<i>no data</i>
Sep 2006	60	62	<i>no data</i>
Dec 2006	60	45	<i>no data</i>
Mar 2007	60	46	<i>no data</i>
Jun 2007	60	42	<i>no data</i>
Sep 2007	60	41	412
Dec 2007	65	42	317
Mar 2008	65	40	<i>no data</i>
Jun 2008	65	44	354
Sep 2008	65	38	200
Dec 2008	65	35	<i>no data</i>
Mar 2009	70	32	<i>no data</i>
Jun 2009	75	32	600

Table 8: FCO and DFID deployments to Iraq, 2004-2009⁶¹³

	FCO to Baghdad	DFID to Baghdad	FCO to Basra	DFID to Basra	Baghdad total	Basra total	Kirkuk/ Erbil total ⁶¹⁴
Mar 2004	40	8	5	40	48	45	4
Jun 2004	40	10	5	35	50	40	4
Sep 2004	40	13	10	20	53	30	4
Dec 2004	30	17	10	25	47	35	4
Mar 2005	30	30	10	29	60	39	4
Jun 2005	30	37	10	46	67	56	4
Sep 2005	30	32	10	45	62	55	4
Dec 2005	40	26	10	43	66	53	4
Mar 2006	45	28	15	42	73	57	4
Jun 2006	45	28	10	44	73	54	4
Sep 2006	40	28	15	31	68	46	4
Dec 2006	45	24	10	21	69	31	4
Mar 2007	45	24	10	22	69	32	4
Jun 2007	45	21	10	21	66	31	4
Sep 2007	45	19	10	22	64	32	4
Dec 2007	45	18	10	24	63	34	4
Mar 2008	45	14	10	26	59	36	4
Jun 2008	45	15	10	29	60	39	4
Sep 2008	50	15	10	23	65	33	4
Dec 2008	50	12	10	23	62	33	4
Mar 2009	55	11	10	21	66	31	4
Jun 2009	60	12	10	20	72	30	4

⁶¹³ FCO staff only; DFID staff and contractors.

⁶¹⁴ The Inquiry has inserted a figure of four for Kirkuk/Erbil throughout the period and assumed no increase in staffing during the move from Kirkuk to Erbil in January 2007. The FCO source material refers to “five or less” and double counts for Kirkuk and Erbil between December 2007 and June 2008, long after Kirkuk had closed.

Table 9: DFID staff and contractors deployed to Basra, 2003-2009

	ORHA/CPA Basra	DFID Basra	Basra PRT
Mar 2003	1	0	0
Jun 2003	12	0	0
Sep 2003	22	3	0
Dec 2003	22	10	0
Mar 2004	24	16	0
Jun 2004	18	17	0
Sep 2004	0	20	0
Dec 2004	0	25	0
Mar 2005	0	29	0
Jun 2005	0	46	0
Sep 2005	0	45	0
Dec 2005	0	43	0
Mar 2006	0	42	0
Jun 2006	0	43	1
Sep 2006	0	29	2
Dec 2006	0	17	4
Mar 2007	0	16	6
Jun 2007	0	15	6
Sep 2007	0	15	7
Dec 2007	0	17	7
Mar 2008	0	21	5
Jun 2008	0	24	5
Sep 2008	0	8	15
Dec 2008	0	7	16
Mar 2009	0	8	13
Jun 2009	0	8	12

Table 10: DFID staff and contractors deployed to Iraq, 2003-2009

	DFID staff	DFID contractors
Mar 2003	0	1
Jun 2003	2	18
Sep 2003	3	36
Dec 2003	4	39
Mar 2004	3	50
Jun 2004	3	50
Sep 2004	4	29
Dec 2004	5	37
Mar 2005	10	50
Jun 2005	9	79
Sep 2005	10	73
Dec 2005	10	68
Mar 2006	10	69
Jun 2006	9	71
Sep 2006	9	53
Dec 2006	7	38
Mar 2007	8	38
Jun 2007	8	34
Sep 2007	6	35
Dec 2007	6	36
Mar 2008	5	35
Jun 2008	6	38
Sep 2008	6	32
Dec 2008	8	27
Mar 2009	8	24
Jun 2009	8	24

