

SECTION 12.2

CONCLUSIONS: SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

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Introduction and key findings

1. This Section addresses conclusions in relation to the evidence set out in Section 12.1.

2. This Section does not address conclusions in relation to:

- broader planning and preparation for the conflict in Iraq and its aftermath, which are described in Section 6.5;
- the decision to remove some members of the Ba’ath Party from public office, a process known as “de-Ba’athification”, which are described in Section 11.2;
- the UK contribution to the reconstruction of Iraq, which are described in Section 10.4; or
- the deployment of civilians to Iraq, which are described in Section 15.2.

Key findings

- Between 2003 and 2009, there was no coherent US/UK strategy for Security Sector Reform (SSR).
- The UK began work on SSR in Iraq without a proper understanding of what it entailed and hugely underestimated the magnitude of the task.
- The UK was unable to influence the US or engage it in a way that produced an Iraq-wide approach.
- There was no qualitative way for the UK to measure progress. The focus on the quantity of officers trained for the Iraqi Security Forces, rather than the quality of officers, was simplistic and gave a misleading sense of comfort.
- After 2006, the UK’s determination to withdraw from Iraq meant that aspirations for the Iraqi Security Forces were lowered to what would be “good enough” for Iraq. It was never clear what that meant in practice.
- The development of the Iraqi Army was considerably more successful than that of the Iraqi Police Service. But the UK was still aware before it withdrew from Iraq that the Iraqi Army had not been sufficiently tested. The UK was not confident that the Iraqi Army could maintain security without support.

Pre-invasion planning and preparation

What is SSR?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines SSR as development work that helps societies to “escape from a downward spiral wherein insecurity, crime and underdevelopment are mutually reinforcing”.¹

In considering the SSR effort in Iraq, the Inquiry’s task was complicated by a lack of clear terminology. That is indicative of the lack of clarity which hampered SSR activities from the start. The term Security Sector Reform was not used in a consistent way, and was sometimes used interchangeably with phrases such as “security system reform” and “Rule of Law”. It was sometimes used to refer solely to police reform or to work to reform the army. The term “Rule of Law” was often used to refer specifically to the justice sector.

The term “Security Sector Reform” (SSR) is used in this Report to refer to work to rebuild and reform Iraq’s security and justice institutions. The evidence available to the Inquiry reflects the UK’s overwhelming focus on the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police Service (IPS). Low-budget projects were undertaken in relation to the Iraqi judiciary and prison system (see Box, ‘The justice sector’, later in this Section) but their scale was very small by comparison.

3. Before the invasion, UK Government departments recognised that Security Sector Reform (SSR) would be an important component in reconstructing Iraq.
4. The FCO acknowledged that SSR should be “at the centre of post-conflict work, rather than outside it as happened in Afghanistan”,² and understood that the issues raised by SSR would be complex and should be planned for as soon as possible.
5. Papers on SSR written by the FCO between October and December 2002 demonstrated the range of fundamental questions on SSR in Iraq for which the UK did not yet have answers. They included:
 - “What security structures would be appropriate for a post S[addam] H[ussein] Iraqi Government? How do we arrive at an answer? What are the threats, internal and external? Should we undertake a comprehensive review of the armed forces?”³
 - “How do we replace an excessively large security apparatus with something ‘right sized’? Reform or abolition? Which parts of the security apparatus might be loyal to a new government and which not?”

¹ OECD DAC, *Handbook on Security System Reform*, 2007.

² [Paper FCO Middle East Department, 10 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’.](#)

³ [Letter Gray to Drummond, 18 October 2002, ‘Papers for the AHGI’ attaching Paper, \[unattributed\], 17 October 2002, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’.](#)

- How to reform the working culture of the security sector, “particularly the police and the courts, so that it operates on the basis of humanitarian values in support of a legitimate government”?⁴

6. Between December 2002 and March 2003, very little progress was made in answering those questions. SSR was not always referred to in consideration of post-conflict operations. Specific plans were not developed for what would be done on the ground.

7. The UK saw a need to understand the US strategy before developing its own. That was consistent with the broad UK approach to post-conflict planning, on which the UK assumed that the US would lead, as addressed in Section 6.5.

8. The UK’s short and medium term objectives for SSR were articulated by the MOD in February 2003. They were defined in very broad terms, with the desired end state: “to include the restructuring of the intelligence agencies, armed forces, police and criminal justice system. All elements of the Security Sector to be affordable and accountable”.⁵

9. From 7 February onwards, responsibility for the UK’s policy on SSR sat with the FCO under the leadership of Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir Michael Jay, the Permanent Under Secretary. From 10 April, Mr Straw also chaired the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on Iraq Rehabilitation (AHMGIR).

10. Two teams in the FCO had a key role in relation to SSR:

- the Iraq Planning Unit (IPU), established to improve Whitehall co-ordination on post-conflict issues and provide policy guidance on the practical questions that UK civilian officials and military commanders would face in Iraq; and
- the United Nations Department (UND), which would help to identify, train and deploy civilian police to Iraq.

11. The US-led Coalition Military Assistance and Training Team (CMATT) was responsible for the training of the New Iraqi Army. The UK provided nine military officers in June 2003 to assist with that task, one of which was to act as the Deputy Commander of CMATT. It appears from the evidence that, in practice, the MOD led on this aspect of SSR.

12. On the eve of the invasion, there was no coherent SSR strategy in place between Coalition partners. That was described as a “high-level risk”⁶ by the MOD’s Defence Advisory Team.

⁴ [Paper FCO Middle East Department, 10 December 2002, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform’.](#)

⁵ [Paper MOD \[unattributed\], 5 February 2003, ‘Iraq – Phase IV Subjects’.](#)

⁶ [Minute IPU \[junior official\] to IPU, 18 March 2003, ‘Security Sector Reform: Future Iraqi Armed Forces’ attaching Paper Defence Advisory Team, March 2003, ‘Security Sector Reform: Future Iraqi Armed Forces’.](#)

13. Even though officials had warned that knowledge of conditions within Iraq was incomplete, it was assumed that Iraq would have a functioning criminal justice system and security forces which, after the removal of Ba’athist leadership, would have the capacity to play their part in its reconstruction.

14. It was unclear how the international SSR effort would be co-ordinated and therefore what contribution the UK would make.

Occupation

15. Immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime there was widespread looting by the Iraqi population, including in Baghdad and Basra. As described in Section 9.8, UK forces in Basra were not given instructions by their commanders in the UK on how to deal with it.

16. Brigadier Graham Binns, commanding the 7 Armoured Brigade which had taken Basra City, concluded that “the best way to stop looting was just to get to a point where there was nothing left to loot”.⁷

17. As the need for a functioning police force to control lawless behaviour became increasingly apparent, there remained no strategy for SSR.

18. Officials from the Department for International Development (DFID) reported that the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) had drawn up extensive plans for SSR but that those had been disregarded by the US and Coalition military.

19. The UK recognised that an SSR strategy was needed. On 24 April, the AHMGIR agreed that the UK should lobby the US to create a “comprehensive strategy”, and to involve UK personnel in ORHA scoping studies.

20. A paper produced for the AHMGIR on 8 May indicated that the UK’s approach continued to be based on the assumption that “the UK will neither be required nor able to develop an independent policy on SSR in Iraq”.⁸ The UK’s immediate priorities were therefore to influence the development of US policy, recognising that:

“Reform across the full range of security activities (armed forces, intelligence agencies, justice and law enforcement institutions) is an essential element of the overall Coalition strategy to establish a united and representative Iraqi Government and to create the conditions under which the Coalition can eventually disengage.”

⁷ Private hearing, 2 June 2010, page 11.

⁸ Paper IPU, May 2003, ‘Iraq – Security Sector Reform’.

CPA Order No.2: 'Dissolution of Entities'

In May 2003, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order No.2 "dissolved" a number of military and other security entities that had operated as part of Saddam Hussein's regime, including the Armed Forces. Neither the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) nor the Ministry of Interior (MOI) was dissolved. The UK's role in the development of this Order is addressed in Section 9.8.

There was nothing in CPA Order No.2 that prevented former employees of the military from applying to join the New Iraqi Army (NIA), although the provisions of Order No.1 (removing "full" members of the Ba'ath Party – see Section 11.1) would apply.

Sir David Manning, the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser and Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat, told the Inquiry:

"... these were policies that added to the difficulties, because we might have addressed the security vacuum by trying to encourage Iraqi police, Iraqi military, to co-operate with us, instead of which, they are disbanded and then become natural dissidents and potential insurgents."⁹

Disbanding the Iraqi Army automatically increased unemployment in Iraq.

In November 2003, Mr David Richmond, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Iraq,¹⁰ reported that issue had dominated discussions during his recent visit to Ar Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province. He stated that "unemployment had forced many to do illegal acts, including attacks on the Coalition".¹¹ De-Ba'athification had "made it impossible for most of them to be employed by the State. The governor said that 50 percent had joined the Ba'ath Party not out of conviction but because it was a condition of employment; 40 percent for material gain; and only some 10 percent because they supported Ba'athist ideology".

Although a monthly stipend for those with at least 15 years' service (who were not senior Ba'athists) had been introduced at the end of June, many struggled to gain access to the payments. Ms Ann Clwyd, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Iraq on Human Rights from 2003 to 2009, told the Inquiry about a meeting with a senior army officer who had queued for his stipend for two weeks without reaching the front of the queue. He had told her: "if they want to humiliate us, this is the way of doing it".¹²

Issuing Order No.2 was a key CPA decision which should have been considered between Washington and London. It was to have a long-term impact on the development of the insurgency in Iraq.

21. A more proactive UK strategy for policing in Iraq – produced by UND and sent to No.10 by Mr Straw – was endorsed by Mr Blair in early June. Its immediate objective was "to stabilise the security situation by creating an effective interim police force with international civilian police working alongside Iraqi police and Coalition military

⁹ Public hearing, 30 November 2009, page 91.

¹⁰ Mr David Richmond was temporarily the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Iraq. In September 2003 (on the arrival of Sir Jeremy Greenstock) Mr Richmond became the Deputy.

¹¹ Teleletter Richmond to FCO London, 23 November 2003, 'Iraq: Sunni Outreach: Visit to Ar Ramadi'.

¹² Public hearing, 3 February 2010, pages 26-27.

forces”.¹³ The strategy’s longer-term objective was “to establish an effective, viable and sustainable police force within a fully functioning security sector”.

22. The initial action would be deployment of “an armed International Police Monitoring Force ... to Baghdad and Basra, to conduct joint patrols with the current Iraqi police force and Coalition military”, requiring 3,000 armed police officers. Once the Iraqi police were considered to have received sufficient initial training, the international presence would shift to a longer-term training focus, eventually taking on a mentoring role. UND suggested agreeing a strategy on how to reform the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) by 14 June and that the international force should be in place by 31 August.

23. The AHMGIR, under Mr Straw’s chairmanship, did not discuss how the strategy would be implemented, or consider inconsistencies with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) plans for police reform, as highlighted by the MOD. The MOD had been in touch with Mr Bernard Kerik, a former New York City Police Commissioner and the CPA Director of Interior Affairs. As a result, the MOD considered that the FCO’s policing strategy was “about three weeks behind the curve”¹⁴ because Mr Kerik did not want an international force – instead he wanted 7,000 trainers. UND suggested maintaining its approach until the US produced a policing strategy.

24. As set out in Section 9.8, the UK struggled to have a decisive impact on CPA policies.

25. In July, responsibilities for SSR within the CPA were divided. Mr Kerik took on responsibility for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MOI), including policing, fire, customs, border control, immigration, passports, citizenship and disaster relief. Mr Walt Slocombe, CPA Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense, focused on the development of the Iraqi armed forces. That split was seen by the UK as a set-back to agreeing a coherent national SSR strategy.

26. By mid-July, there were just four senior UK personnel in Iraq working across SSR as a whole (including reform of the police and army). The FCO had deployed Acting Deputy Chief Constable Douglas Brand to lead the UK’s attempt to influence the CPA police reform programme and Acting Deputy Chief Constable Stephen White to lead on policing in Basra. DCC White was accompanied by two MOD police officers.

27. SSR strategies began to develop on a regional basis, largely in isolation from each other.

28. On 17 July, the AHMGIR discussed a paper by the IPU which stated that there “was still no cohesive strategy”¹⁵ but that this was “not necessarily a cause for current alarm”

¹³ [Minute Straw to Blair, 5 June 2003, ‘Iraq: Winning the Peace’ attaching Paper UND, 3 June 2003, ‘Iraq: Security Sector Reform: Policing Strategy’.](#)

¹⁴ Email UND [junior official] to Lowe [MOD], 9 June 2003, ‘Policing Meeting – Tuesday 10 June’.

¹⁵ Annotated Agenda, 17 July 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting attaching Paper IPU, 16 July 2003, ‘Security Sector Reform the Next Steps’.

because it reflected the rapidly moving situation in Iraq. The Inquiry does not agree with that analysis. A shared understanding of what sort of police force was required in Iraq and how it could be delivered was essential to ensuring that SSR resources were used effectively and coherently.

29. The AHMGIR identified the requirement for approximately 7,000 international police officers – of which it was intended that the UK would provide 100 – as “ambitious” but did not commission further work to understand the impact on CPA plans if the total could not be reached.

30. In August, UND asked DCC Brand to lobby the US for the creation of a policing strategy for Iraq. There was no established UK policy position at that point on what sort of police force was appropriate for Iraq, the role of an Iraqi police officer, the ideal force structure, or how police reform should be delivered. That hampered DCC Brand’s ability to influence US strategy.

31. Mr Kerik estimated in early August that Iraq would need 65,000-75,000 police officers and that it would take six years to develop a force of that size. There was no Coalition plan to deliver that number of officers.

32. By the end of August, the CPA’s plans for a 7,000-strong international training force were recognised to be unachievable. The aspiration was now “1,500 to 2,000” officers.¹⁶

33. A policing strategy for Iraq was also essential to ensure that the international effort was coherent across the country. The lack of co-ordination between police reform in Baghdad and Basra could be seen in a report produced by DCC White on 26 August. He assessed that 91 international officers would be required to support the policing mission in Multi-National Division (South-East) (MND(SE)) and an additional 48 would be required to provide force protection. DCC White told the Inquiry that that caused some controversy when the numbers were communicated to the CPA staff in Baghdad as they were considered to be inconsistent with the new ‘MOI 60/90 day Strategic Plan’ which DCC White had not seen.

34. In the absence of a clear strategy for what type of force was needed, and a realistic assessment of how it could be delivered, priority was given to pushing Iraqi police officers through basic training in large numbers.

Initial problems deploying UK police officers

Mr Stephen Pattison, Head of UND until June 2003, told the Inquiry that the process of recruiting officers to deploy overseas was “always a struggle”¹⁷ and “not straightforward”. The requirement was often for armed police which ruled out the majority of UK officers.

¹⁶ Minute Brand, 10 August 2003, ‘Report from Iraq – Douglas Brand’.

¹⁷ Statement, 6 January 2011, pages 12-13.

The focus was therefore on getting UK officers into niche roles in which they could use their experience without being operational. As any officers deployed would have to be volunteers, certain security conditions also had to be met and funding identified. Government officials do not appear to have appreciated the scope of that task before they started recruiting officers for Iraq.

The UK's target was to have deployed 100 UK officers to conduct basic training by the end of September 2003.

On 18 July, Mr Straw wrote to Mr David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, asking him to seek nominations of up to 200 officers for firearms training. By September, 260 had applied but none had been deployed.

It is unclear whether that was because of a reluctance on the part of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Chief Constables (concerned about breaching their duty of care given the security situation in Iraq) to release officers or whether it was because the officers who had applied were not suitably qualified.

In addition to the officers required to run basic training, DCC Brand had also requested support staff and officers to address more specific training needs such as intelligence and operational planning. He told the Inquiry how, after lobbying for a Special Branch system, he was unable to find someone to make the concept a reality and consequently lost the opportunity.

An email from DCC Brand on 21 September expressed frustration that officers had still not been deployed to a Joint Command Centre in Baghdad designed to prevent friendly fire incidents:

“ ... I don't mind where they come from as long as they get here ASAP ... I made my original request ... **6 weeks ago** ... If we are only just thinking about approaching PSNI [Police Service of Northern Ireland] it may be weeks or months before the officers are able to travel and we would lose all credibility with the American military ... To remind you, **this was our idea** ... I urge you to act swiftly and not delay any longer.”¹⁸

The FCO, and in particular UND, had prior experience of deploying officers overseas but was unable to meet the large-scale requirements of Iraq. Sir Michael Jay should have ensured that his department provided the resources that the senior UK officers needed.

In November, after meeting DCC White, Mr Bill Rammell, FCO Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, reported that DCC White's assessment of progress was at odds with the way the situation was being described in public.

The Home Office record of the Iraq Senior Officials Group of 4 November recorded that Mr Straw's initial reaction to DCC White's complaints was to call a “special meeting of Ministers to discuss what more could be done”¹⁹ but that FCO officials had advised that that was not necessary.

Following a visit in November, Mr Straw directed Mr John Sawers, FCO Director General Political, to resolve the matter: “A combination of the Byzantine bureaucracy of ACPO and a lack of understanding in the FCO about police issues and practice ... threaten further

¹⁸ [Email Brand to FCO \[junior official\], 21 September 2003, 'Re: Police Training plan'](#).

¹⁹ Minute Storr to Acton, 5 November 2003, 'Iraq: Senior Officials Meeting on 4 November'.

delays and a sub-optimal delivery in an area where the UK has a serious contribution to make.”²⁰

After a slow start, the UK reached its target of 100 trainers in January 2004. The first tranche deployed to the training centre in Jordan²¹ in November 2003 and the first tranche of 24 officers for az-Zubayr Academy in Basra deployed in December. DCC Brand did not receive his additional officers for non-training roles until March 2004.

Iraqiisation

35. From early June 2003, and throughout the summer, there had been signs that security in both Baghdad and MND(SE) was deteriorating. As the summer wore on, authoritative sources in the UK system, such as the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), began to identify issues with the potential to escalate into conflict and to recognise the likelihood that extremist groups would become more co-ordinated (see Section 14.1).

36. In September Mr Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defense Secretary, applied pressure on the CPA to increase the number of Iraqi Army officers by ordering an acceleration of the training programme, halving the training time to one year, and increasing its budget from US\$173m to US\$2.2bn.

The Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC)

The Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC) was created in July 2003 to:

- give Coalition operations an Iraqi face;
- keep unemployed young men out of the insurgency; and
- increase the number of security forces available.

Established by CPA Order No.28, the ICDC was described as “a security and emergency agency for Iraq”²² and was authorised to perform a wide range of constabulary duties. It operated under the authority of the Administrator of the CPA but was subject to the supervision of Coalition Forces.

The ICDC’s performance received mixed reviews but it became an important component of SSR while other elements, such as the Iraqi Police Service and Iraqi Army, were being developed.

37. As security worsened, Ministers sought to expedite “Iraqiisation”, the term used to refer to the ability of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to take the lead responsibility for security.

²⁰ [Minute Straw to Sawers, 27 November 2003, ‘UK Police Assistance to Iraq’.](#)

²¹ The majority of police training took place at the Jordan International Police Training College (JIPTC).

²² Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 28 – Establishment of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, 3 September 2003.

38. On 2 September 2003, in a meeting of Ministers and senior personnel, Mr Blair said that he believed that the key to the security situation in Iraq was “the rapid mobilisation of an effective Iraqi police force”.²³ That included increasing Iraqi police manpower to 70,000 within three months. That ambitious new target brought forward the timescale set by the CPA for reaching that size of force by more than six months.

39. The Inquiry has seen no evidence pre-dating 2 September of the origins of the proposal to accelerate training so dramatically, or of analysis of whether it was achievable.

40. The IPU advised that existing policy was to provide 70,000 police officers by mid-2004 and train 40,000 for the New Iraqi Army within one year. It listed some ideas for how SSR could be accelerated and improved but did not suggest any further resources beyond those which were already in train. The advice did not assess how those suggestions would be resourced and implemented and did not provide an analysis of whether Mr Blair’s target of 70,000 officers was achievable.

41. A briefing paper for Mr Blair by Mr Richmond stated that Ambassador Bremer did not think that Mr Blair’s target was achievable.

42. The IPU paper and Mr Richmond’s advice suggested that, at the very least, detailed work was needed to assess whether it was possible to accelerate the training timetable in the way Mr Blair proposed, and what resources that would require, before the idea was pursued further.

43. Sir Michael Jay, as the senior official accountable for the resourcing of the UK’s police reform effort, should have ensured that such an assessment was made. The AHMGIR, chaired by Mr Straw, failed to assess whether Mr Blair’s target and the IPU’s suggestions could be achieved.

44. Mr Blair pressed the idea of acceleration, including with President Bush, without having requested or considered such detailed advice. Ahead of a video conference with President Bush on 5 September, Mr Blair sent the President a Note which stated:

“Iraq has 37,000 police. We need to double that. Given the number of trainers and their facilities, that will take a year. We cannot wait that long. So: if we need to treble or quadruple the trainers and expand the numbers of Iraqi police even beyond that contemplated, we should do it ...”²⁴

45. The record of the video conference between Mr Blair and President Bush stated that Mr Blair had said a “big push” was required to boost numbers and speed up training of Iraqi Security Forces.²⁵

²³ [Letter Cannon to Adams, 2 September 2003, ‘Iraq: Briefing for the Prime Minister’.](#)

²⁴ Letter Sheinwald to Rice, 5 September 2003 [attaching ‘Note on Iraq’.](#)

²⁵ Letter Canon to Adams, 5 September 2003, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Video-Conference with Bush, 5 September’.

46. For the first meeting of the Iraq Senior Officials Group on 9 September, an IPU paper maintained that the focus should be on the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC) and the police “as the most likely to produce quick results, while continuing to support the longer-term development of the New Iraqi Army”.²⁶ It did not address Mr Blair’s target of doubling police officer numbers. It assessed that “the main problem in developing the Iraqi Police is the slowness with which CPA is developing its strategy, concept and timelines for reform” and that “in the absence of a central strategy, we are pursuing regional options”.

47. The Annotated Agenda for the meeting of the AHMGIR on 18 September re-affirmed the requirement for a “coherent overall policing strategy”.²⁷ Cabinet Office officials reported that the UK was lobbying Ambassador Bremer, and Washington, to expedite creation of a strategy and operational plan, and was offering the services of DCC Brand to write them. The Annotated Agenda did not reflect Mr Blair’s desire to double the number of police officers.

48. Despite the IPU’s analysis that lack of strategic direction for police reform was the “main problem”, it was not mentioned in a report to Mr Blair from Mr Straw’s office on 17 October. That risked giving an unrealistic impression of both what had been achieved and what might be achieved in the future. The report stated: “We judge that the Coalition now has a credible and deliverable strategy to train 30,000 Iraqi police over the next year.”²⁸ By that stage, around 40,000 police officers were considered to have been trained.

49. Mr Straw told the Inquiry that he considered that judgement to be “reasonable”²⁹ at the time but that with hindsight he could see that it was not.

50. Following the FCO Police Contributors conference in early October, it was clear that sufficient additional international support to make plans for accelerated training deliverable was unlikely to be forthcoming.

51. In October, a public order incident in Basra demonstrated the continued deficiencies of the local police.

52. Shortly afterwards, DCC White publicly expressed concerns about the SSR programme in Iraq, and the UK’s resourcing of it, in a documentary broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland. DCC White told the Inquiry that his remarks had caused controversy in the UK and he was left “feeling unsupported and isolated”³⁰ but for the support of Sir Hilary Synnott, Head of CPA(South), and Ms Jane Kennedy, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

²⁶ [Paper IPU, 8 September 2003, ‘Iraq: Security Action Plan’](#).

²⁷ Annotated Agenda, 18 September 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation meeting.

²⁸ [Letter Sinclair to Sheinwald, 17 October 2003, ‘Iraq: Security and Policing’](#).

²⁹ Public hearing, 2 February 2011, page 140.

³⁰ Statement, 20 June 2010, pages 30-31.

53. Following a review, Combined Joint Taskforce-7 (CJTF-7)³¹ issued an Order on 27 October entitled ‘Acceleration of the Iraqi Police Services’ which envisaged enhanced support from CJTF-7 for enlarged and accelerated police training programmes. It had been developed without consultation with the UK.

54. Sir Hilary Synnott reported that the Order had:

“... considerable implications for military resources to be devoted to police training; for our current plans, including the recently inaugurated Basra Regional Police Academy; and for the significant Danish effort at present and in future. We had no warning of this from CPA Baghdad (beyond a slight reference to such a possibility), no subsequent information from them and no consultation.”³²

55. On 6 November, the AHMGIR was told that the new approach included “accelerating recruitment, training and deployment of Iraqi security forces”.³³ The ICDC was set to increase by April 2004 and the target for 70,000 police should be reached by August 2004 rather than March 2005. The training of the Iraqi Army would be slowed, but the Army would “now be allowed to undertake internal as well as external security tasks”.

56. Although the US military had produced plans for accelerating training, they had not addressed DCC White’s concerns about the quality of that training.

57. Former DCC Brand told the Inquiry:

“Trying to persuade my military colleagues at two-star and three-star level that this was a long-term investment of restructuring the police seemed to work against their sort of short-term mission goals, and I very vividly remember the presentation that was done to the Commanding General which was entitled ‘30,000 in 30 Days’ ... I had to say ‘Okay, in that case then, why don’t you give me the military to train? I have read a few war books, I have seen a few war films, it can’t be as difficult as that, or is that as ridiculous as what you are suggesting, which is we recruit 30,000 in 30 days, call them police, label them police, give them weapons and say ‘You are now in the police’ but actually have no capability to do the things that policemen should do at all?”³⁴

58. In November, Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan, the lead on international affairs for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), told Mr Straw that police reform in Iraq still lacked vision and that the UK contribution was insufficient.

59. At about the same time, Mr Jim Daniel, a senior ex-Home Office adviser sent to Iraq to help the CPA generate a policing strategy, decided to resign. The combination of

³¹ CJTF-7, the Coalition HQ in Iraq, was a small command. It was led by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez.

³² Telegram 110 FCO London [on behalf of CPA Basra] to UKRep Iraq, 31 October 2003, ‘Police Training in South Iraq’.

³³ Annotated Agenda Cabinet Office, 6 November 2003, Ad Hoc Group on Iraq Rehabilitation.

³⁴ Public hearing, 29 June 2010, pages 24-25.

CC Kernaghan's advice, DCC White's views and Mr Daniel's resignation were sufficient to highlight that police reform – an essential part of the UK's exit strategy – was in serious difficulties.

60. By the end of November 2003, Mr Straw had clear evidence that police reform in Iraq lacked strategic direction. He should have instigated consideration of the UK's options for resolving the problem, including work to define a UK position on the right strategy for Iraqi policing.

61. The response of the AHMGIR, chaired by Mr Straw, was instead that the UK should lobby the US to make improvements in police training. Mr Straw should have recognised that lobbying alone would be insufficient to address the critical lack of a strategy/vision for policing in Iraq. Mr Straw's direction to Mr Sawers (see Box, 'Initial problems deploying UK police officers', earlier in this Section) focused too narrowly on the deployment of UK police officers rather than on the wider issues in police reform.

THE US MILITARY TAKE THE LEAD ON POLICE REFORM

62. In mid-November, a new political timetable for Iraq was announced, which brought forward the handover of power from the CPA to the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) to June 2004.³⁵ Former DCC Brand told the Inquiry that the change of timetable critically changed everyone's outlook: "all the focus was on 'Let's get this over to the Iraqis', and so our longer-term intentions were almost squashed from there on".³⁶

63. Towards the end of 2003, within the UK there was awareness that assessments given by US commanders were "exaggerated"³⁷ and there were doubts about Iraqi capacity. A significant gap in figures was highlighted by the FCO, which assessed that there were around 45,000 operational police officers throughout Iraq, all requiring some level of re-training. The US assessment was that there were 63,000 operational police officers.

64. In the absence of a coherent strategy, Coalition partners continued to work independently of one another. An example of this occurred in February 2004, when the UK started recruiting 40 retired UK officers to act as mentors. At the same time, the US was developing plans to recruit around 500 police advisers from Dyncorps to act as mentors, of which 50 were planned for deployment to the South. That was met with some consternation by Mr Steve Casteel, who replaced Mr Kerik as CPA Director of Internal Affairs in September 2003. He reportedly said: "This isn't two countries, you know."³⁸

65. Secretary Rumsfeld transferred the responsibility for training and mentoring police officers to the US military in March 2004 following a report by Major General

³⁵ Minute Cannon to Prime Minister, 18 November 2003, 'Iraq: Political Timetable'.

³⁶ Public hearing, 29 June 2010, page 67.

³⁷ Minute Dodd to Sheinwald, 10 December 2003, 'Iraq: Strategy Group'.

³⁸ Minute FCO [junior official], to Buck, 4 February 2004, 'Visit to Iraq 26-30 Jan'.

Karl Eikenberry, former US Security Co-ordinator and Chief of the Office of Military Co-operation in Afghanistan. It was thought that the change would provide the unity of command across the security sector that was needed. The report reiterated that the Army's focus should remain on external threats but its training rate be reduced to allow the development of other security forces.

66. The change in responsibilities led to the creation of a new umbrella structure, the Office of Security Co-operation (OSC), commanded by Major General Paul Eaton, the former commander of CMATT. CMATT and the newly named policing equivalent – the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) – would report to the OSC and the OSC would report to the CJTF-7.

67. It appears that DCC Brand and Mr Casteel had not been consulted about that significant change in approach. Former DCC Brand told the Inquiry that the creation of the OSC was a shock to both him and Mr Casteel. He said that, while the military could do “the volume stuff”,³⁹ they did not have the skill set to conduct basic training or the policy advice on policing. That meant “they were making it up ... from theatre, rather than back at the policy headquarters”.

68. On 25 March 2004, the FCO's Weekly Update on Iraq for No.10 stated that a CENTCOM review had concluded that transition to local control across Iraq was “likely to be delayed by up to eight months from their original over optimistic target of May 2004”.⁴⁰ The paper stated that was “not a surprise”:

“The Iraqi Security Forces do not just have to be hired; they must be vetted, trained, equipped, mentored and certified ie capability, not numbers, is the key ... Bremer has been pushing for quality for months, without the support in Washington, where the emphasis has been on numbers. On the positive side, a lesson has now been learned.”

69. The Cabinet Office sent an update for Ministers on 2 April, stating that police training was to be accelerated under the new structures with a target of completing in-service training of 43,000 officers by January 2005.

70. Although advice and information sent to Ministers consistently emphasised the importance of training competent police officers, the focus of effort continued to be on training officers in high numbers.

SECURITY DECLINES

71. There was a significant worsening of security in the spring of 2004. Coupled with revelations of abuse by members of the US military of Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib

³⁹ Public hearing, 29 June 2010, pages 94-95.

⁴⁰ Minute Owen to Cannon, 25 March 2004, ‘Iraq: Weekly Update’ attaching paper FCO ‘Iraq: No 10 Weekly Update’.

prison, this led many of the Inquiry's witnesses to conclude that the spring of 2004 was a turning point, as described in Section 9.8.

72. In April, weaknesses in the ICDC and IPS were exposed as a result of uprisings in Fallujah and Najaf. Some officers abandoned their posts and aided the insurgency. Others mutinied when they came under fire.

73. The ICDC was affected worst of all. 12,000 members deserted within two weeks. Consideration was given to re-engaging military officers dismissed under the policy of de-Ba'athification (see Section 11.1). Ambassador Paul Bremer, Presidential Envoy to Iraq and Head of the CPA, maintained that the de-Ba'thification policy was correct, but had been poorly implemented. Mr Blair told President Bush that the Coalition needed to do "whatever it takes"⁴¹ to get the ICDC and police into shape. He added: "I'm not sure we really have our entire system focused on this; and it needs to be".

74. Mr Blair held a meeting with Ministers and senior officials on 13 May to discuss security in Iraq. He expressed a clear view that there were two key issues in Iraq: the political process and security, of which security was "fundamental".⁴² After the transfer of sovereignty, Mr Blair felt that the Iraqis would be reluctant to ask the Coalition to manage security for them and this "put a real premium on building capacity urgently".

75. At Mr Blair's request, a team led by Major General Nicholas Houghton, Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations), visited Iraq from 20 to 23 May to see what could be done to speed up Iraqiisation of the security sector.

76. Maj Gen Houghton's frank assessment identified issues that should already have been clear to Ministers and officials. He noted the lack of strategy, "bureaucratic complexity"⁴³ hindering access to funds and resources, "initiative overload" and a short-term focus. He stated that the concept of acceleration was "misplaced". It was "Sustained Effort", with some change in emphasis, that would produce the desired capability. He highlighted the need for "honest acceptance" of the likely timescales.

77. Maj Gen Houghton assessed that:

"The biggest single thing that will move the creation of capability forward is the increased use of military and police assets in mentoring roles. This should involve, for example, widening the concept of embedding troops within ICDC Units. Given available assets this will mean taking risk on maintaining security."

78. Maj Gen Houghton judged that an SSR strategy must be "authored, owned and executed" in Iraq, not in London.

⁴¹ Letter Sheinwald to Rice, 26 April 2004 [attaching Note from PM for President Bush](#).

⁴² [Letter Bowen to Baker, 13 May 2004, 'Iraq: security'](#).

⁴³ [Minute ACDS\(Ops\) to Rycroft, 25 May 2004, 'How Best to Progress the Iraqiisation of the Security Sector'](#).

79. Maj Gen Houghton stated that over 80,000 police officers were operational with approximately 20,000 having received training. An accelerated training programme was being put in place by CPATT.

80. Mr Blair tried to inject a new sense of urgency into Iraqisation. In five meetings and conversations with President Bush in May and June, Mr Blair raised Iraqisation, emphasising its importance and his hope that Lieutenant General David Petraeus, Commanding General Multi-National Force – Iraq,⁴⁴ and Prime Minister Designate Dr Ayad Allawi could agree a joint plan on Iraqisation for publication.

81. On 3 June, Mr Blair asked to be informed of “any obstacles or log jams”⁴⁵ which he might need to raise with President Bush. He commissioned a round-up on Iraqisation every two weeks.

82. Mr Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, and General Sir Mike Walker, Chief of the Defence Staff, provided Mr Blair with an update on Iraqisation two weeks later. Mr Blair again asked to be informed of any issues automatically rather than having to ask.

83. On 16 June, Mr Blair wrote to President Bush that the problem with Iraqisation was “obvious”: “The numbers in the police are there. But not the quality or equipment ...”⁴⁶

84. By the end of the Coalition’s Occupation in June 2004, Ministers were aware that Iraqisation was critical to the UK’s withdrawal and that it was the quality, not quantity, of officers in the ISF that was critical. But the US and UK were no closer to achieving a coherent SSR strategy for Iraq. As the CPA was disbanded and responsibility for day-to-day interaction with the Iraqi Interim Government on civil affairs passed to the newly appointed British and US Ambassadors, there was no plan to develop one.

The justice sector

For SSR, the UK’s overwhelming focus was on the army and police. The need for a robust judicial system had been recognised but was poorly supported.

Prisons were listed as a “priority one area”⁴⁷ in April 2003 but by December it was reported that “not much work had been done in this area”.

In June 2003, Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, told the AHMGIR that corruption and intimidation had left the Iraqi judicial system in a worse state than expected and that it would require a long-term commitment from the international community to rebuild it.

In March 2004, a report from Mr Robert Davies, Chief Police Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, stated that only one out of five Iraqi Correctional Service facilities was functioning in the UK’s Area of Responsibility. Even that facility was in poor condition and overcrowded. In January, the prison held 478 prisoners against a capacity of 230.

⁴⁴ The MNF-I subsumed OSC in June 2004.

⁴⁵ [Letter Rycroft to Baker, 3 June 2004, ‘Iraq: Prime Minister’s Meeting, 3 June’.](#)

⁴⁶ [Letter Sheinwald to Rice, 16 June 2004, \[untitled\] attaching Note Blair \[to Bush\], \[undated\], ‘Note’.](#)

⁴⁷ Minutes, 4 December 2003, Security Sector Reform meeting.

Part of the reason identified for this rise had been a weakness in the due process where prisoners were kept on remand without judicial review.

SSR projects in the justice sector were small in comparison with efforts being made to reform the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police Service:

- In January 2004, DFID approved a contribution of £2.2m over two years towards the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC). A review of the programme in June 2006 stated “that the project was put together under pressure rapidly to get programme activities started with some quick-win activities ... The pressure to move fast, however, may well have sown the seeds for the eventual, limited impact”.⁴⁸
- A support programme for prisons in southern Iraq was approved during the summer of 2004. The UK awarded £1.7m to the programme (after a bid of £5.53m) to train and mentor staff. All prisons within the CPA(South) boundary run by the Iraqi Prison Service were overseen and maintained by the UK.
- The UK contributed some staff towards the EU JustLex programme that began in February 2005. The programme was an integrated police and Rule of Law mission for Iraq by Member States arranging senior management training for the police, judiciary and prison service. Over four years, it comprised 40 staff from across the EU and spent roughly €30m.

As with the majority of SSR programmes, success seemed to be measured by the number of Iraqi staff trained. The programmes were not effective in solving the underlying problems of corruption and intimidation that thwarted significant improvement.

Officials were still reporting in May 2006 that justice continued to be “the missing link”.⁴⁹

In March 2007, the Better Basra plan described Iraq’s judiciary as “weak and unable to prosecute serious crime”.⁵⁰ Prisons were described as “old, overcrowded” and said to “not meet minimum international human rights standards”. That assessment suggested that little progress had been made from the UK’s early assessments of Iraq’s justice sector.

Severe overcrowding was still an issue in December 2007 when an FCO official reported that:

“Through a combination of negligence, incompetence, poor co-ordination and lack of adequate facilities it can take a long time to process detainees through the investigative, judicial and correctional systems.”⁵¹

Transition

85. After the UK and US ceased to be Occupying Powers in Iraq in June 2004, SSR was conducted under the authority of resolution 1546 (2004) and the annexed letters from Dr Ayad Allawi, the Iraqi Prime Minister, and US Secretary of State Mr Colin Powell.

⁴⁸ Report DFID, 30 June 2006, ‘Iraq International Legal Consortium Justice Sector’.

⁴⁹ Email FCO [junior official] to IPU [junior official], 25 May 2006, ‘Rule of Law – The Justice Sector’.

⁵⁰ [Letter Marsden to Aldred, 2 March 2007, ‘Better Basra’ attaching Paper, 1 March 2007, ‘Better Basra Mark 3: The 2007 Plan’.](#)

⁵¹ Minute FCO [junior official] to PS/SofS [FCO], 20 December 2007, ‘Iraq: Detention and Reconciliation: UK Approach for 2008’.

The role of the Multi-National Force (MNF) was to continue building the capability of the ISF and its institutions through a programme of recruitment, training, equipping, mentoring and monitoring.

86. During the CPA era, the metric used to measure progress in relation to the ISF had been the number of personnel on duty. Immediately after the transition, that metric was replaced by “trained and equipped”⁵² personnel. The net result was a 75 percent drop in the totals of force personnel attributed to the MOI from 181,297 “on duty” personnel on 15 June to 47,255 “trained and equipped” personnel on 25 August.

87. Shortly after transition, Mr Straw advised the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy (DOP) that the SSR objective for the following six months should be for the ISF to be in control across much of the country. That was the basis on which UK troop reductions would be feasible. DOP agreed. It is not clear how Mr Straw reached the conclusion that that was a viable objective.

88. By early October, there was clear evidence that the SSR objective agreed by DOP was unlikely to be achievable because:

- The Basra police chief was working with militants who were causing disruption in the area.
- There remained significant capacity issues within key ministries.
- There was a need for more focused IPS training in areas of operational planning and intelligence.
- Warnings from theatre continued to stress that the focus on numbers was misplaced – the morale and integrity of officers who had joined the ISF was questionable and those issues needed to be addressed to deliver the capabilities required.

89. In November, FCO officials informed Mr Straw that they were factoring such concerns into their planning. They assessed that the two most serious problems were the dysfunctional MOI and the lack of equipment, both of which were being addressed by UK-funded initiatives.

90. It should have been clear to Mr Straw and FCO officials, for whose advice Sir Michael Jay was accountable, that the ISF were unlikely to be able to provide security and that troop reductions based on the assumption that Iraqisation would be successful needed to be reconsidered.

91. On 9 December, despite evidence to the contrary, the FCO continued to advise that, by the summer of 2005, the ISF could take the lead on security. It was overly optimistic of the FCO, under Mr Straw’s leadership, to believe that would be the case. That over-optimism distorted consideration of when UK forces should be withdrawn from Iraq.

⁵² Bowen SW Jr. *Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009.

92. A JIC Assessment of 15 December assessed that a credible ISF, capable of managing the insurgency unaided, would not emerge until 2006 at the earliest.

93. The JIC Assessment was discussed at the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on Iraq the following day. Ministers agreed that a number of papers should be prepared, including practical suggestions to adjust the Petraeus Plan⁵³ for SSR, ways of improving the Iraqi Ministry of Defence and MOI, a list of security and funding issues for Mr Blair to raise with President Bush and a list of useful activities that other countries could be asked to undertake. The lack of a policing strategy for Iraq, which had been identified by the IPU as early as July 2003, had still not been addressed.

94. In February 2005, the FCO produced a paper for the AHMGIR that contained proposals for a greater focus at the national level where there was “an urgent need for an Iraqi national policing strategy, supported by an appropriate training syllabus to address established weaknesses”.⁵⁴ The proposals were for the development of a National Police Plan and in the areas of forensics and intelligence. The FCO paper also pointed to potential funding pressures if those new proposals were to be adopted and if current projects were extended.

95. The FCO told the AHMGIR that the key message from the paper was that funding beyond September was extremely tight and tough decisions would need to be made.

96. In the absence of an SSR strategy against which the merits and contribution of any particular project or programme could be judged, the basis on which such decisions could be made was unclear.

97. Just three months after the JIC had raised concerns about the development of the ISF, the MOD advised No.10 in March that the Petraeus Plan was “largely on track, meeting the demands of a well-entrenched counter insurgency”.⁵⁵ The ISF was expected to achieve full strength by January 2006 and the transfer of regional control would be under way. The view from No.10 was that the MOD’s advice was “rather insubstantial, and almost certainly too optimistic in its assessment of the quality of much of the ISF”.⁵⁶

98. The MOD’s assessment was also contrary to other reports coming from Iraq around that time and it became difficult for Ministers to know which evidence was most accurate. In his Hauldown Report, Lieutenant General John Kiszely, Senior British Military Representative, Iraq (SBMR-I) from October 2004 to April 2005, described the MOI as dysfunctional and stated that any expectation that the IPS would be able to perform well against the insurgency was unrealistic.

⁵³ The Petraeus Plan followed a ‘Troops to Task’ assessment carried out by Lt Gen Petraeus in the summer of 2004. The resulting plan was to increase the Iraqi Police Service and Iraqi National Guard by roughly 50 percent.

⁵⁴ [Note FCO, 21 February 2005, ‘Iraq – UK Support to Civil Policing in Iraq – 2005’.](#)

⁵⁵ [Letter Naworinsky to Quarrey, 17 March 2005, ‘Petraeus Plan Update’.](#)

⁵⁶ Minute Quarrey to Prime Minister, 18 March 2005, ‘Iraq Update’.

99. During the summer of 2005, there is evidence that UK officials were not clear about their departments' role within the SSR effort and felt disconnected from what was happening on the ground. That was exemplified in June when DFID commissioned a consultant to assist the FCO in drawing together a cross-Whitehall strategy for UK support to the development of Iraqi policing capacity. The FCO, the MOD and DFID struggled to reach an agreement on what the strategy should say and acknowledged they simply did not know whether policing was on track or not.

100. Lieutenant General Robin Brims, SBMR-I, reported in July that, although the Iraqi Army was steadily increasing in confidence, it did not yet have the ability to conduct complex operations. The police were lagging behind the army and were of doubtful quality but plans were in place to address that.

101. Mr Blair saw Lt Gen Brims' report and sought an honest assessment of the progress of Iraqiisation, which suggests a lack of confidence in the MOD's reporting. Dr John Reid, the Defence Secretary, admitted that there was still a focus on quantity rather than quality in stating "numerically, generation of ISF remains on track, but significant development in key capability areas is still needed".⁵⁷

102. The information on ISF numbers also masked other issues. In September, an FCO transition plan for the IPS showed, when compared with earlier MOD papers, that the overall figure of 55 percent of police trained masked considerable variations across MND(SE) – although 90 percent of personnel in Dhi Qar province had received training, the figures for Muthanna and Basra were considerably lower (40 percent and 42 percent respectively).

103. Mr Blair expressed his concerns about ISF capability, following reports of police involvement in attacks on the Multi-National Forces in Basra. But despite concerns that had been expressed about the capacity of the ISF, Dr Reid recommended a reduction in UK forces should take place in October or November of 2005.

104. A few days after Dr Reid made his recommendation the Jameat incident in Basra on 19 September raised questions about the ISF in MND(SE). Officials from the FCO, the MOD and DFID judged that the incident had highlighted the risks to achieving UK objectives in MND(SE), and that those risks had implications for military resources. Nevertheless, assumptions about ISF readiness were not re-examined by Ministers. Reluctance to consider the potential implications of the Jameat incident obscured what it had revealed about the security situation in MND(SE).

105. Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Mr Blair's Foreign Policy Adviser, wrote: "It is clear that we need to review whether our police training strategy in the South-East is working, and whether the national policing strategy knits together."⁵⁸ Sir Nigel reported that Mr Blair had agreed that Sir Ronnie Flanagan, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary,

⁵⁷ [Minute Reid to Blair, 28 August 2005, 'Update on progress of the Iraqi security forces \(ISF\)'](#).

⁵⁸ [Letter Sheinwald to Hayes, 4 October 2005, 'Iraq Strategy'](#).

should be asked to visit Iraq and that he wanted a UK Minister to take ownership of the overall policing strategy, including liaison with the US over national strategy, supported by a dedicated team in London.

The MOD takes the lead for policing

106. The critical importance of ISF capability in assessing readiness for transfer to Provincial Iraqi Control, on which UK plans to draw down were based, was emphasised by the ‘Conditions for Provincial Transfer’ published by the Joint Iraqi/MNF Committee to Transfer Security Responsibility, and by Dr Reid, who told the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee on Iraq (DOP(I)) on 12 October that “successful Iraqiisation remains the key”.⁵⁹ DOP(I) decided that Dr Reid should have lead responsibility for building the capacity of the IPS in Basra in addition to his responsibility for the Iraqi Army.

107. DOP(I) discussed the need “to do more to speed up the development of police” but considered that “the plan for ISF development that was in place was largely sound”.⁶⁰

108. Mr Blair asked for a major and sustained push to make progress on the ability of the ISF to take the lead on security.

109. General Sir Mike Jackson, Chief of the General Staff, raised concerns about ISF effectiveness in a minute to Gen Walker and concluded: “it is not to our credit that we have known about the inadequacies of the IPS for so long and yet failed to address them”.⁶¹

110. At the same time, the JIC stated that the Iraqi armed forces stood at 91,000 personnel and MOI forces at 106,000 personnel, but that those figures did not take account of absenteeism or provide an indication of true capability. The IPS suffered from divided loyalties and a significant number were involved in criminality for financial gain.

111. In MND(SE), there was a lack of confidence that plans to tackle corruption within the IPS were working. There were questions about whether the IPS should be disbanded and started from scratch. Major General James Dutton, General Officer Commanding MND(SE) (GOC MND(SE)) from June 2005 to December 2005, told the Inquiry that was why he had proposed a three-point plan on 24 October. It was more focused on reform than re-design and reflected the new approach that “we should be aiming for a police force that is relevant and ‘good enough’ for this region”.⁶²

112. The need for a single SSR strategy was raised again by Sir Ronnie Flanagan when he visited Iraq in November to conduct another review of the effectiveness of the UK’s policing strategy. In his final report of 31 January 2006, Sir Ronnie reported that a

⁵⁹ [Paper Reid, 11 October 2005, ‘Iraq: Security update’](#).

⁶⁰ Minutes, 12 October 2005, DOP(I) meeting.

⁶¹ Minute CGS to CDS, October 2005, ‘CGS visit to Iraq: 10-13 Oct 05’.

⁶² [Letter Dutton to Wall, 24 October 2005, ‘Policing SE Iraq’](#).

broad strategic plan was being developed and the disconnected ways of working were becoming a thing of the past. While that work may have been under way at that time, the Inquiry has not seen any evidence of a national strategy being produced as a result.

113. By the end of 2005, Whitehall remained overly optimistic about ISF development. In papers prepared for DOP(I) on 20 December, the MOD stated that the development of the Iraqi Army remained on track for the fully funded and trained figure of 130,000 by December 2006 and the IPS was making an increasingly significant contribution although it was behind the Iraqi Army in development terms. There remained a significant issue about whether the Iraqi Government and ministries had the capacity to direct and sustain the civil and military security forces. That was alongside the risk of increasing sectarianism and militia infiltration.

114. Mr Blair told President Bush on 23 December: “The two clear messages were: the vital nature of leadership of the MOI and MOD; and 2006 being the year of the police.”⁶³

Preparation for withdrawal

“Good enough”

115. In late 2005, General George Casey, who became Commander of the CJTF-7 in June 2004, designated 2006 as the “Year of the Police”, recognising that a national police force was vital to any exit strategy.

116. From 2006, the UK appears to have stopped lobbying for the creation of a national SSR strategy and instead focused on what was necessary to enable the withdrawal of troops. Without a means to measure progress objectively, success continued to mean the number of officers trained.

117. Acting Deputy Chief Constable Colin Smith, Chief Police Adviser Iraq, wrote about the Year of the Police in January 2006 that “the strap line that ‘just enough is good enough’ is, whilst probably realistic, not particularly encouraging”.⁶⁴ He wrote that it could be “a defining factor in the development of an effective Iraqi Police Service”.

118. In March 2006, Dr Reid continued to press ahead with drawdown and announced that troop levels would reduce in May 2006 from approximately 8,000 to around 7,200 based on “completion of various security sector reform tasks, a reduction in the support levels for those tasks, and recent efficiency measures in theatre”.⁶⁵ That rationale did not include an assessment of the effect of those tasks on the capability of the ISF.

⁶³ [Letter Quarrey to O’Sullivan, 23 December 2005, ‘Iraq’ attaching ‘Note Prime Minister to President Bush’.](#)

⁶⁴ Minute Smith, 1 January 2006, ‘UK Chief Police Advisor – Iraq: Weekly Report: Week Ending Sunday 1st Jan 2006’.

⁶⁵ Letter Reid to Blair, 9 March 2006, ‘Iraq: Force Level Review and Announcement’.

119. The assessment of ISF capability from other sources was still discouraging:

- Operation CORRODE, an operation aimed at removing corrupt police, proved difficult to implement with limited political engagement in Basra. The JIC afterwards reported that it suspected that officers had been reassigned rather than removed.
- The JIC reported that the ISF could cope with low-level threats but its readiness to handle Shia extremists or intra-Shia violence was uncertain. Army command, control and logistics capabilities were all still developing, making major operations without MNF support difficult.
- Mr Robin Lamb, British Consul General in Basra, reported that local staff regarded the IPS “as at best ineffective, and at worst complicit in the assassinations. We would support that assessment”.

120. The security situation in MND(SE) continued to decline in 2006, and the UK continued to plan for drawdown. That is addressed in Section 9.8.

121. The MOD’s assessment in June was that the ISF programme was “on target to complete by December 2006 with 80 percent of the ISF trained and equipped (less the forces in Anbar province and the Air Force and Navy capability)”.⁶⁶ The police were “some way behind” but “significant progress” was expected by the end of the year. Their effectiveness rested on their credibility with the Iraqi people, which was “increasing but remain[ed] an issue”. The ISF should “be capable of managing the threat that they will face but could be quickly undermined by poor leadership”.

122. On 1 September, an eGram from the British Embassy Baghdad reported an “important step psychologically”⁶⁷ for the Iraqi military: the Iraqi Ground Forces Command and Iraqi Ministry of Defence would commence “a staggered handover” of command and control functions from MNF-I on 3 September. The Embassy stated that “while the assumption of responsibility looks gradual and sensibly phased, in reality the pace will be demanding to both MNF-I and the IGFC [Iraqi Ground Forces Command]”. As “life support and logistics capabilities” were “developing at their own, much slower, pace”, the Embassy predicted that “IA Divisions will remain dependent on MNF-I for some time to come”.

BETTER BASRA

123. In summer 2006, in recognition of the need to stabilise Basra and prepare it for transition to Iraqi control, the UK developed the Basra Security Plan and Better Basra Plan. The former was “a plan to improve Basra through operations, high impact

⁶⁶ Minute DJC/Iraq to CO [junior official], 7 June 2006, ‘Iraq: Strategy Group Workstrands’ attaching Paper ‘Update on Progress of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)’.

⁶⁷ eGram 38264/06 Baghdad to FCO, 1 September 2006, ‘Iraq: Iraqis to Take Over Command and Control of its First Army Division’.

reconstruction and SSR ... lasting for up to six months”,⁶⁸ the military element of which became known as Operation SALAMANCA and included operations against militia groups.

124. Major General Richard Shirreff, GOC MND(SE) from July 2006 until January 2007, anticipated that during Op SALAMANCA there would be “a concerted and sustained effort by Police Training Teams”⁶⁹ to “turn those police stations capable of improvement into police stations that are capable of providing basic security in their local areas”. His aim was “to cull the unredeemable and rehabilitate the ‘just about’ salvageable”.

125. In September, as set out in Section 9.8, the scope of Op SALAMANCA was constrained. It later became known as Operation SINBAD.

126. While most reports from theatre indicated that Op SINBAD had progressed well, it does not appear to have created the significant development in the Iraqi Army’s capability that had been desired. On 27 October, Mr Blair was informed that the Iraqi Army had performed well in some areas but it still lacked maturity.

127. Operations designed to weed out corrupt officers were only able to achieve limited success because a proper governance structure within the ministries and judicial system was lacking. Operation THYME in December 2006 sought to purge the Serious Crime Unit of corrupt officers, but the DOP(I) was told in January 2007 that, although arrest warrants had been issued for members of the Serious Crime Unit, they had not been actioned. There were signs that those members of the Serious Crime Unit were “continuing to operate”.⁷⁰

128. Mr Blair stated that, during his visit to Iraq at the end of 2006, “he had sensed, for the first time, that Iraqi Generals felt that if they were given the right training and equipment they would be able to do the job”.⁷¹

129. On 24 January 2007, Mr Des Browne, the Defence Secretary from May 2006 to October 2008, wrote to Mr Blair to update him on the rationale behind a planned reduction in troops from 7,000 to 4,500-5,000:

“There is no question of us leaving a vacuum in the city [Basra], as the IA and IPS are already doing patrols and we will remain present in the Provincial Joint Co-ordination Centre and military transition teams. Early evidence from the final stages of Op SINBAD, where the IA are in some areas not just in the lead but doing it by themselves, is that inevitably they enjoy a greater level of consent than we do – but also that they are doing a decent job. They are far from the finished

⁶⁸ Minute Burke-Davies to APS/Secretary of State [MOD], 24 August 2006, ‘Iraq: Op SALAMANCA’.

⁶⁹ Minute Shirreff, 15 September 2006, ‘GOC MND(SE) – Southern Iraq Update – 15 September 2006’.

⁷⁰ Minutes, 11 January 2007, DOP(I) meeting.

⁷¹ Cabinet Conclusions, 11 January 2007.

article but after re-posturing our shift towards mentoring and support will ensure they continue to develop.”⁷²

130. The third iteration of the Better Basra Plan was produced on 2 March 2007. It looked to develop capacity and capability across wider SSR components, such as the judiciary and prison service. It repeated the benchmark that the police would be brought to a “good enough” standard to transition to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). It also announced that over the next six months, the UK would be deploying military transition teams (MiTTs) within the 10th Division of the Iraqi Army (see Box, ‘MiTTs’, below).

131. In June, Major General Jonathan Shaw, GOC MND(SE) from January 2007 to August 2007, stated that he was not convinced that the ISF was ready for transition. That was in the light of the continuing decline in security. The US and parts of the Iraqi Government had serious concerns over the ability of the ISF in Basra to cope with the security situation.

132. Concerns continued to be raised about the security situation in MND(SE) and that the ISF would not be able to maintain security alone. Mr Dominic Asquith, British Ambassador to Iraq, reported in July that Basrawis had expressed the view to the visiting House of Commons Defence Committee that “a British withdrawal would ‘be followed by chaos sweeping the province like a hurricane’”.⁷³

133. On 8 October 2007, Mr Gordon Brown, who had become Prime Minister in June, announced plans for a significant troop drawdown over the next 12 months. He described the need for two remaining phases:

“In the first, the British forces that remain in Iraq will have the following tasks: training and mentoring the Iraqi Army and police force; securing supply routes and policing the Iran-Iraq border; and the ability to come to the assistance of the Iraqi Security Forces when called upon. Then in the spring of next year – and guided as always by the advice of our military commanders – we plan to move to a second stage of overwatch where the coalition would maintain a more limited re-intervention capacity and where the main focus will be on training and mentoring.”⁷⁴

134. On 9 October, Lieutenant General Sir Nicholas Houghton, Chief of Joint Operations, briefed the Chiefs of Staff that the plan for the Iraqi 14th Division⁷⁵ would see initial operating capability by December 2007, with training complete by June 2008.

⁷² [Letter Browne to Blair, 24 January 2007, ‘Next Steps on Force Levels in Iraq’.](#)

⁷³ eGram 30010/07 Baghdad to FCO London, 13 July 2007, ‘Iraq: Visit of House of Commons Defence Committee, 8-11 July’.

⁷⁴ House of Commons, *Official Report*, 8 October 2007, column 23.

⁷⁵ The 10th Division was the Iraqi Army division in MND(SE) which had been trained by UK personnel. It was given an additional brigade in June 2007 to create a new Division: 14th Division, which would assume responsibility for Basra while 10th Division would be responsible for the rest of the South-East, across Muthanna, Dhi Qar and Maysan provinces.

135. Basra transitioned to Provincial Iraqi Control on 16 December 2007. Maj Gen Binns told the Inquiry that the ISF “were well trained, as individuals, but their leadership was not experienced, they were capable of conducting tactical, low-level operations, but their ability to conduct manoeuvre, to sustain themselves logistically, was a challenge to them”.⁷⁶ The police were “a mixed bag”.

136. Reports on the ISF’s capability did not change materially in the period leading up to the UK’s withdrawal. There remained concern over their ability and willingness to maintain security in the South. When Mr Brown and Mr Browne had breakfast with the Chiefs of Staff on 6 March 2008, the Chiefs told them that “there was quality in the ISF but it was not broadening as rapidly as hoped, so training and mentoring of 14Div remained a vital job”.⁷⁷

137. On 2 April, a junior official in PJHQ wrote to Mr Browne, advising him that MND(SE) was intending to embed MiTTs within 14th Division to strengthen some of the key vulnerabilities that had been demonstrated during the recent operation, Operation Charge of the Knights. That decision is addressed in the Box below. The operation and its impact are described in Section 9.8.

MiTTs

The concept of military transition teams (MiTTs), in which US military personnel were embedded within Iraqi fighting units, was first put forward by the US in early 2005. It was seen as a successful tactic, and had been used by the UK in Afghanistan.

Although the UK deployed MiTTs to work with 10th Division during the summer of 2007, it did not adopt the same approach for 14th Division until April 2008, choosing instead to focus on leadership and embedding UK personnel at brigade and divisional level.

The different approaches taken by the UK and the US between 2005 and 2007 again demonstrated the lack of coherence across the SSR effort. It also created tensions with the US who believed that the UK had not adopted the same approach because of an aversion to casualties.

138. By mid-April, confidence in the IPS was so low that Major General Barney White-Spunner, GOC MND(SE) from February 2008 to May 2008, warned that there were discussions in Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) and the Iraqi Government over whether to disband the Basra police entirely and start again.

139. On 14 May, the JIC stated that public confidence in the ISF had grown but the same concerns remained about how it would fare against Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) resistance.

⁷⁶ Public hearing, 15 January 2010, page 25-26.

⁷⁷ Letter Fletcher to Rimmer, 6 March 2008, ‘Prime Minister’s Breakfast with Chiefs of Staff, 6 March’.

140. Mr John Hutton, the Defence Secretary, wrote to Mr Brown after he visited Iraq in October:

“The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), the Army in particular, are looking confident and capable. Their show of force in the areas which I visited, where they took the lead in providing my security, was genuinely impressive. There is no doubt that Basra itself has been transformed and the ISF now have complete freedom of movement throughout the city. While they do not yet have all the capabilities that we would like to see in a fully-formed Division, and there is important work still to do, we will soon have reached the point where we can say with confidence that we have fulfilled our training mission for 14 Division ...”⁷⁸

141. On 27 March 2009, a junior official informed Mr Brown that 14th Division was considered to be effective and that all UK mentors and trainers had been withdrawn.

Security Sector Reform strategy

142. Between 2003 and 2009, there was no coherent US/UK strategy for SSR in Iraq.

143. In 2003, the UK expected the production of an SSR strategy to be led by the US and, when it was clear that one did not exist, was unable to exert the necessary influence on the CPA in Baghdad to ensure that one was developed.

144. As a consequence, instead of working within an SSR framework that was understood and agreed between international partners, the UK developed its own SSR policies and plans for MND(SE) without a clear understanding of how they contributed to – or whether they were fully consistent with – the SSR approach across Iraq.

145. Without a coherent US/UK strategy for SSR, the UK was unable to fully understand its role and how or whether its plans contributed to the overall rebuilding of Iraq’s security sector. It was unclear what success looked like and therefore how to measure it.

146. The development of effective Iraqi Security Forces, which could take the lead on security very rapidly, became a key element of the UK’s “exit strategy” for Iraq. In the absence of a clearly defined end state, and driven by the desire to reduce UK troop levels, the focus of SSR work became the quantity of officers trained, not their quality. There were numerous warning signs that that was a flawed approach, including reports directly from those on the ground and JIC Assessments. But there was a reluctance to pause and consider what was required to deliver the quality needed.

147. After June 2004, it became even more challenging to reach consensus on a strategy for SSR with the establishment of the Interim Iraqi Government, another party that was expected to take the lead on developing a national SSR strategy. That did not happen.

⁷⁸ Letter Hutton to Brown, 23 October 2008, [untitled].

148. Underlying problems with SSR started to be more clearly visible: the simple metrics used to gauge success during the CPA era had obscured the actual number of trained police officers; the integrity of many police officers was in doubt; and the Iraqi ministries responsible for the ISF were dysfunctional. These issues had not been gripped because the Coalition had focused too simply on the number of officers.

149. Sir Ronnie Flanagan's review in November 2005 appears to be the last serious attempt to argue that there should be a single, coherent policy on SSR in Iraq. Although Sir Ronnie's final report in January 2006 stated that a broad strategic plan was being prepared in conjunction with the Interim Iraqi Government, subsequent SSR strategy remained largely incoherent.

150. Sir Ronnie's final report came at a crucial time. The December 2005 Parliamentary election signalled a shift to greater Iraqi political independence. In January 2006 the UK Cabinet approved the deployment of UK troops to Helmand province in Afghanistan. The UK's SSR objective in Iraq became almost exclusively to demonstrate that the conditions for withdrawal were met. The requirement for a coherent SSR strategy which would establish viable long-term Iraqi Security Forces was set aside.

Measuring success

151. After six years in Iraq, it was difficult to judge what the UK had achieved in the field of SSR. While the number of police appeared to have increased and the Iraqi Army's confidence had undoubtedly grown, without a clearly defined end state for either there was not an appropriate benchmark by which the UK could measure whether it had achieved what it set out to do.

152. The UK knew that the capability of the ISF was critical to withdrawal but did not design an effective way by which it could measure that capability. Judgements were based mainly on reports from theatre – the authors of which were also without a formal means of measuring the ISF's capability.

153. Focusing on the number of trained officers was a problem in Iraq because it was too simplistic. It hid many of the complexities that sat behind and skewed the numbers. The UK was unable to adjust that approach in Iraq because, up to 2006 (after which point its ambitions for SSR changed), it never truly understood what measurements would indicate whether the ISF was capable of maintaining security in Iraq.

154. After 2006, "good enough" for Iraq informally became the benchmark. It was never clear exactly what that meant. This loose benchmark was used as a justification for continuing to plan for withdrawal in the face of contradictory evidence.

155. In 2009, the fragility of the situation in Basra, which had been the focus of UK effort in MND(SE), was clear. Threats to its security remained. The ISF continued to be reliant on support from Multi-National Forces to address weaknesses in leadership and tactical support. If the capabilities of the ISF had been good enough, it seems unlikely that the

US would have embarked on the action that it did – to deploy its own forces to Basra when the UK withdrew, so as to secure the border and protect supply lines. The US and the UK appear to have had different definitions of what “good enough” meant.

Lessons

156. In Section 6.5, the Inquiry states that better planning and preparation for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq would not necessarily have prevented the events that unfolded in Iraq between 2003 and 2009. It would not have been possible for the UK to prepare for every eventuality. However, better plans and preparation could have mitigated some of the risks to which the UK and Iraq were exposed between 2003 and 2009 and increased the likelihood of achieving the outcomes desired by the UK and the Iraqi people.

157. The lessons identified by the Inquiry with regards to planning and preparation for post-conflict operations are described in Section 10.4. Those lessons, which focus on the essential tasks that should be undertaken, also apply to SSR planning.

158. An SSR strategy should define the functions of different elements of the relevant security sector and the structures needed to perform those functions. Considering those questions should drive a robust debate about how security requirements might change over time.

159. An understanding of the many different models that exist internationally for internal security, policing and criminal justice is essential. But those models cannot be considered in isolation because what works in one country will not necessarily work in another which may have very different traditions. It is therefore critical for the SSR strategy to take full account of the history, culture and inherited practices of the country or region in question. The strategy also needs to be informed by the views and aspirations of the local population.

160. A strategy should set out the desired operating standard for each function and state how that differs, if at all, from what exists. In doing so, the strategy should specify where capacity needs to be developed and inform a serious assessment of how the material resources available could best be deployed.

161. It is essential that the UK has an appropriate way to measure the success of any SSR plan. If a clear strategy is in place and has taken account of the views of the local population, the indicators of that success should be obvious. It should rarely concentrate on a one-dimensional set of numbers but instead be a more qualitative and rounded assessment.