

## **INFORMATION FOR JOURNALISTS VISITING MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION (SOUTH EAST) – BASRAH, SOUTHERN IRAQ**

### **AIM**

The aim of this document is to provide you with some background information relating to your proposed visit to Iraq and Multi-National Division (South East) {MND(SE)}. It will cover travel, living conditions, weather, accreditation, communications, equipment, clothing and medical needs. Any visit to Baghdad will have similar requirements, although our Media Ops staff in Baghdad will issue an oral briefing with any additional points.

### **THE AGREED BASIS OF YOUR VISIT**

Your visit will be carried out under the terms of the MOD Green Book -“**MOD WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE MEDIA FOR USE THROUGHOUT THE FULL SPECTRUM OF MILITARY OPERATIONS**” – available online from the MOD website at:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/DoctrineOperationsandDiplomacyPublications/TheGreenBook/TheGreenBook.htm>

This is a formal arrangement with signed undertakings between the parties and should be read prior to application. In order for your visit to proceed, you will be required to comply with Annex A requirements and then complete and return Annex B of the MOD Green Book; the information contained includes records of your emergency contacts as well as detailing the undertakings involved.

The visit will be supervised by personnel from the Divisional Press Information Centre (PIC) in Basrah or by MOD media ops staff in Baghdad. Your requests for coverage will be sought in advance and forwarded to theatre in order for the responsible officer to plan your visit programme; the format may vary depending on your requirements and may involve you being escorted directly by members of the PIC, you may be embedded with (attached to) a unit, or you may have a mixture of both.

You are responsible for:

- Getting to and from the nominated RAF base for flights to and returning from, Iraq.
- Your own insurance for all eventualities, including war-risks.
- Obeying all reasonable instructions from military personnel; these will relate to your safety and theirs.
- Your own communications to and from Iraq. You may not use military communications.

The MOD is then responsible for:

- Your flights from UK to Iraq and return will normally be on military aircraft *unless* operational reasons preclude military air transport options. Current restrictions on road movement mean that we will be unable to pick you up from Kuwait. This flight will usually come into Al Udeid (Qatar) and then from there another flight into Basrah Air Station.
- All in-theatre transport, accommodation and feeding whilst you remain within the agreed bounds of your visit.

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- Emergency medical care will be provided should the requirement arise including aero medical evacuation to the UK if necessary; but the MOD may raise a charge for such services after the event. You must ensure that your insurance covers these risks.
- Facilitating your reporting. It is vital that you declare, during the organisation and negotiation of your visit, exactly what you want to achieve. Wherever possible, these agreed objectives will be facilitated. But, if you decide on a new objective once the visit starts, the MOD may not be able to assist; and any number of factors beyond the MOD's control may alter the situation and stop you achieving one or more of your objectives.
- Protection against security threats will be provided to the same level as is afforded to UK Service personnel. Under no circumstances will you be armed. It is vital that you clearly understand that there are no *guarantees* of safety; there are appreciable risks involved in such a visit and, whilst everything reasonable to protect you will be done, it is always possible that risks may become reality.

It is important to understand that the MOD does not allow visits on the basis that we provide an "armed taxi-service" at your beck-and-call. You will generally accompany military personnel on their working tasks but certain visits and facilities may be specifically arranged for you. Again, this emphasises how important it is to clearly state your objectives during the negotiation of your trip.

**Costs:**

- You will not be charged for flights on RAF transport aircraft, accommodation, food or use of other military facilities if you are a news reporter, as these will be provided within irreducible spare capacity. If you are making a documentary or are engaged on another non-news project, it is possible that MOD will require a contract for the project and may charge for use of military facilities.

It is possible for you to leave the visit early:

- You may decide to return to the UK early. In this case, the staff in the PIC will attempt to secure an earlier seat on an RAF flight. But this cannot be guaranteed and you may have to wait until your originally scheduled flight.
- You may decide to leave the visit entirely and stay in Iraq. There are several consequences that you must understand before you decide to take this option:
  - You do so entirely at your own risk. Your editor may be asked by the MOD for formal confirmation that he is aware of your intention and approves of it.
  - You must be financially independent for the rest of your trip.
  - You must hold all documentation required by the Iraqi authorities.
  - The MOD will not be responsible for your protection, transport, and accommodation or feeding nor for dropping you off or picking you up at any location within Iraq. You will have to arrange to be collected from the camp in which you have, until that point, been resident. This is extremely dangerous.
  - You may be allowed to travel back to the UK on your originally scheduled flight. This can only be facilitated if you make contact with the PIC at least 24 hours beforehand and if you arrive back at the UK base in Basrah airport at a time agreed with the PIC. If you fail to make contact or do not arrive back at the agreed time,

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the MOD will have **no** responsibility to transport you back to the UK but **will** try to assist you. It could take many days before another seat is secured on an aircraft and costs may be raised for food, accommodation and the return flight.

- Civil flights from Kuwait will be available but a visa will be required which can take great time and expense to obtain if you have not entered Iraq via Kuwait in the first place (eg, you flew in by RAF aircraft directly to Basrah). The MoD will not be able to transport you to Kuwait.
- Your insurance may become invalid if you depart from the military programme. This is a matter for you to discuss with your insurers.

## **SPONSOR**

You will have an official “sponsor” for your trip. This person will have been made clear to you prior to your departure. The sponsor may be a member of staff of any of the following: D News Media Ops staff from MOD London; an MOD Regional Press Office in UK, Germany or Cyprus; the unit you are visiting; a Front Line Command (FLEET, Portsmouth; LAND, Wilton or STRIKE, High Wycombe); or another UK Government Department (OGD) such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The sponsor is important as he or she forms your principal point of contact with the MOD/OGD while your visit is being arranged. In some cases, your sponsor will accompany you during the visit itself.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Headquarters of MND (SE) is located at Basrah International Airport in Southern Iraq. The division has some 5,500 British Service personnel under command in theatre (approximately 6900 British service personnel are committed to the operation overall). British Troops are located throughout the region.

There are approximately 5500 troops within the MND(SE) which have been provided by the Governments of Italy, Japan, Norway, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and Australia, making it a truly Multi National Division.

MND(SE) covers 4 provinces in Iraq and the MNF-I presence in each is led by:

Al Basrah	-	UK Brigade with Lithuanian platoon
Maysan	-	Iraqi Provincial Control
Al Muthanna	-	Iraqi provincial control (as of July 06)
Dhi Qar	-	Iraqi provincial control (as of Sep 06)

The main headquarters are:

HQ MND(SE)	-	Basrah Airport
HQ UK Brigade	-	Basrah Airport
HQ UK National Support Element	-	Shaibah

## **DIVISIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The primary activities of the Division have been well documented but the current focus is:

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- Governance – the ongoing Political Process. The UK lead in the political process is the FCO, so any visit that aims to cover the political situation will have significant input from the UK Embassy (Baghdad) and the UK Consulate (Basrah).
- Economic Development – getting society on its feet again by assisting in the restoration of water supply, power, health, education, judiciary, oil industries and heritage and encouraging commercial markets and the economy.
- Security Sector Reform – Training the New Iraqi Army, Navy and Air Force, the Iraqi Police Service and other Iraqi Security Forces followed by partnership operations where MND(SE) forces back-up, assist and monitor these Iraqi Security Forces.

**VISAS****KUWAITI VISAS:** (Applies only if your trip takes you through Kuwait)

Advice from Kuwaiti embassy sources changes frequently and so it cannot be taken that this letter has the correct advice. Please check with a Kuwaiti embassy yourself. It is UNDERSTOOD that a “multiple-entry and exit visa” is required in order for you to get into Kuwait, out to Iraq, back into Kuwait and thence onwards back to your point of origin. It is possible to collect such a visa either from a Kuwaiti embassy or from the Ministry of Information (or Interior) inside Kuwait City. The UK military CANNOT assist with this but we CAN provide a letter stating that you are to accompany us on a trip into Iraq via Kuwait if you wish (we have only been asked for such a letter once in the last 18 months but, in principle, will do so for those who request it).

**IRAQI VISAS:** (Applies to all visitors to UK Forces in Iraq):

The media organisation should send a letter requesting the visa addressed to H.E. The Ambassador. The letter should give full name, nationality, passport number, purpose of the visit, duration of stay and intended date of travel. This letter should be either faxed (to: 020-76028456) or emailed ([lonemb@iraqmofamail.net](mailto:lonemb@iraqmofamail.net)).

The request must be approved first by the Embassy, or sometimes the Consular staff have to seek approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad. You can check if it has been approved by calling the Consular Section of the Embassy on 020-79358456 or 020-79351058. (Approval is faster if a journalist had been to the country before.)

Once the request is approved, then the applicant has to fill two Visa Application Forms (downloadable from the website: <http://www.iraqembassy.org.uk/>). The media organization, or the applicant, should send these forms together with two photographs of the applicant, the passport and fees of £25.00 to the Consular Section at 106 Gloucester Place, London W1U 6HU. The applicant does not have to go him/herself to get the visa.

**ISRAELI VISAS OR ENTRY/EXIT STAMPS:**

Please be aware that UK FCO advises all travellers to the Middle East (civilian or military) that if you hold an Israeli visa / stamp in your passport you should apply for 2<sup>nd</sup> passport

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(from your home country). Some Middle Eastern countries refuse entry and immediately deport Israeli visa / stamp holders. Consequently, the current MoD policy is that personnel with Israeli visas / stamps may not be allowed to board RAF aircraft heading for the Middle East, including Iraq. Those flying to Kuwait on civil air transport are strongly advised to contact a Kuwaiti embassy and Iraqi embassy or consulate for advice if you hold an Israeli visa / stamp.

**INSURANCE**

**It is an individual's responsibility to obtain his or her own insurance. Most media companies will cover the cost but freelancers will be required to organise their insurance as necessary. You are advised to check the small print, as most companies will NOT pay out for acts of war unless it has been specifically requested as part of the insurance.**

**TRAVEL DETAILS**

Your travel arrangements from UK to Iraq will be organised by Media Operations staff at the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), Northwood. You are encouraged not to contact the Press Information Centre (PIC) in Iraq to enquire about MOD organised *return* flights, as details may often be unconfirmed at the time of departure from the UK.

**Flying on RAF Aircraft**

You will normally fly out from RAF Brize Norton (UK) and arrive in Basrah (Iraq) on a direct flight. You need to be at Brize Norton no less than **TWO hours** prior to the scheduled departure time. You will be limited to 45kg hold-baggage and 5kg cabin-baggage (not incl Helmet and Body Armour) on RAF flights to Iraq. If you require a larger weight limit you **MUST** make this clear to your sponsor as soon as possible. Do not turn up at the RAF base with excess baggage, unless cleared first with your sponsor, as you may have to leave this excess baggage behind. Bids for excess baggage should be made direct to Sergeant Loz Gray on 01923 846031.

On arrival in Iraq, you will be given a safety brief covering driving, diet, hydration, disease and mine danger areas. This brief is given to all service personnel on their first visit to Iraq. Media Operations staff at the PIC will then brief you on current activities and issues and discuss your programme.

It will not be possible to say where you will be living in Iraq prior to your departure from the UK and it is possible that you will move location on more than one occasion. It is therefore essential that you bring all the equipment necessary to support your needs and that you travel light. You are advised to bring a rucksack or soft travel bag, rather than a hardened suitcase.

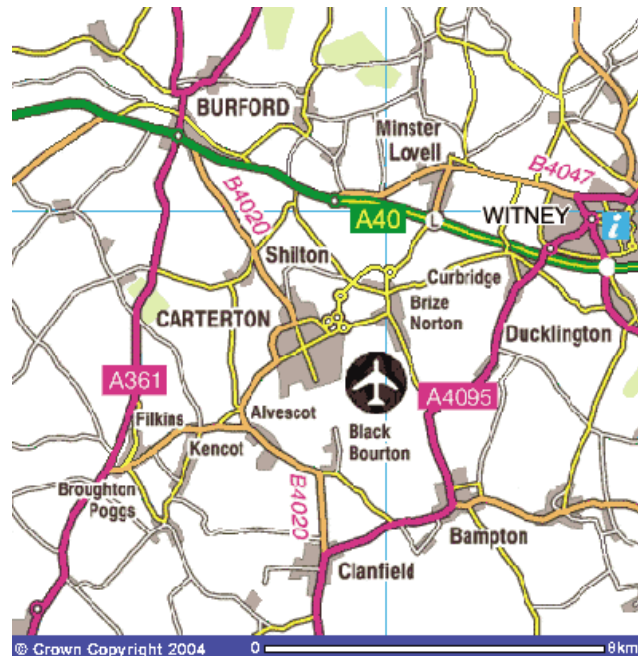
**DIRECTIONS TO BRIZE NORTON**

**RAF Brize Norton Airport, Oxfordshire:** Between Oxford and Cheltenham turn off at Junction 8 of the A40 onto the B4474. RAF Brize Norton is on this road and is sign posted. There is a long-term car park facility. You must report to the front-gate

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guardroom in order to book in. For those due to depart on flights scheduled for early morning, there is the option of overnight accommodation at Gateway House, a service facility at RAF Brize Norton. Further information on passenger accommodation and other RAF Brize Norton passenger facilities can be found at:

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafbrizenorton/flyinginfo/airterminal.cfm>



## **LIVING CONDITIONS**

In some military locations living conditions are primitive. There are shower and toilet facilities in every location but invariably these are shared, as is sleeping accommodation. The food is generally excellent, cooked by military and contract chefs. They will cater for your specific dietary requirements as best they can; please inform your sponsor before you depart and also the PIC on arrival should you have any special dietary requirements.

## **WEATHER**

During the summer months temperatures currently fluctuate between 35°C and 65°C during the day and although they drop to 25°C – 35°C at night do not expect much respite from the heat. During the winter months temperatures are approx 20°C during the day but drop to 10°C in the evenings, sometimes even below zero. In the winter months it also rains regularly.

## **INDIRECT FIRE THREAT**

The Coalition Operating Base (COB) at Basrah Air Station is periodically subjected to indirect fire. You will be briefed on this when you arrive by the Media Ops staff in theatre, but if this happens whilst you are still transiting, on hearing the alarm lay down on the floor and place on you helmet and body armour. Do not attempt to run for cover. Wait until told to move to cover or the alarm sound as an all clear. Listen carefully to specific orders at all times when in theatre as actions may vary slightly dependant on location.

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**PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

- Body armour
- Helmet
- Goggles or other eye-protection (you may travel in open-topped military vehicles in a dusty environment)
- Long sleeved top for travelling on military air assets

**It is mandatory to have body armour and a helmet prior to departure to protect yourself. These must be hand-carried on to the RAF aircraft so that you can wear them as you come in to land / take-off at Basrah. If you CANNOT source these items yourself, let your sponsor (FCO) know as they may be able to assist with the provision of these items (body armour and helmet, not goggles).**

**VISIT PROGRAMME**

The programme will have been compiled and normally discussed with you and / or given to you prior to departure. There will be little chance of changing this programme to react to events or to accommodate any requests that you feed in, but do ask your Media Ops, or unit, point of contact if you feel that there is a good story that you might be able to cover. But please remember that competing priorities for resources, especially transport and soldiers for force protection, as well as the ongoing operational situation may preclude programme changes.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

You will not have access to any military or welfare communications systems (telephones or internet) so you are to ensure that, if you require such facilities, you are able to provide your own. This restriction is applied for reasons of security and propriety and must be adhered to.

The Iraqi mobile 'phone network is a GSM system but it is not yet affiliated for international roaming. In short, your mobile 'phones are unlikely to work in Iraq (we do hope that the Iraqi GSM system will eventually allow international roaming but we have not been given a date for this).

If you need your own communications then you must bring your own satellite 'phones. Thuriya and Iridium 'phones normally work well as do Nera M4 World-Phones.

If you belong to a News Outlet and intend to transmit film or photos from Iraq it is possible to do so from Basrah using commercial satellite uplinks from TV Nahrain offices, Turkish TV (IHA) or the Reuters Agency all located in downtown Basrah. However, it is difficult to organise as each trip requires vehicles and force protection and normally takes several hours to achieve, can only be done in daylight hours and is normally possible only once per week. It is much better to bring your own IT and communications allowing you to upload material directly from UK military bases – provided that you adhere to communications security advice available from Media Ops staff.

UK type 3-pin sockets (240V, ac, 50 Hz) are accessible in most camps for recharging of electrical equipment, so do bring battery chargers with you.

## **TRANSPORT IN IRAQ**

Once in Iraq the staff in the PIC or the unit that you are visiting will be responsible for your daily programme and safety. Modes of transport will vary depending on the daily threat assessment but might be military fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, armoured fighting vehicles, armoured Land Rovers or civilian 'white fleet' vehicles. During these trips you will be under the command of the senior serviceman within the aircraft / vehicle and will be required to wear body armour and a helmet. The military escort will provide Force Protection. Prior to starting any journey you will be briefed on the actions to take if you come under attack or get into other difficulties. Failure to obey reasonable instructions will risk your life and that of Service personnel and so will result in you being sent home early.

## **MEDICAL MATTERS**

**WARNING:** *You must be in good health and fully prepared. The environment can be alternately hot, dry, wet and cold and is invariably sapping on strength and stamina.*

You will need to know your blood group and carry a note of it with you where it can be found – ideally written in large letters on the outside of your body armour.

Please consult your doctor at least two weeks before departure to confirm which vaccinations you require. For travel to the Middle East you will normally need immunisation / vaccination against: Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Yellow fever. You may also be advised by your doctor to be inoculated against Rabies, Hepatitis B and Meningitis C. You should also take anti-malarial prophylaxis. UK service personnel take Chloroquine and Proguanil against the malaria threat, all year round. The dosage regime starts one week before departure to Iraq through to 4 weeks after return.

When you arrive at RAF Brize Norton for your flight (if travelling by RAF) or in Kuwait City (if flying by civil means) it is assumed that you have taken all necessary advice, have taken all necessary immunisation and will be taking anti-malaria tablets. This is entirely your own responsibility.

There is a military field hospital with surgical facilities and highly trained, professional staff within the MND(SE) area of operations. In addition there are doctors at most unit locations.

## **CURRENCY**

The primary currency used by the UK and US forces in Iraq is US dollars in cash. There is no facility to change currency once in theatre, nor are there any cash-machines, cheque cashing facilities or ability to accept credit card payments, nor will UK forces accept travellers' cheques so please ensure you have sufficient US dollars in cash with you. (100 US dollars should comfortably cover most eventualities per week). You may undertake visits to the Italian contingent where Euros are used; so it is worth bringing Euros with you.

## **FEEDBACK**

In order for us to make future visits run smoothly it is important that all CORRESPONDENTS provide feedback on their visit to Iraq. This should be in two formats. Firstly, comments on the administration and value of the visit and secondly,

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copies of the written or broadcast articles need to be seen. This way any soldiers featured can be given copies and the MOD can assess whether your programme has allowed you to see and report on your areas of expertise. Please send such feedback to: OP TELIC Desk Officer, PJHQ J9 Media Ops, Room 3008, JSU Northwood, Sandy Lane, Middlesex, HA6 3HP, United Kingdom.

**PACKING LIST – ONLY BRING WHAT YOU CAN COMFORTABLY CARRY**

It is suggested that you bring the following (“\*” means this is mandatory):

- \*Body armour, helmet and some type of eye protection (good wrap-arounds or goggles)
- Light cotton clothing
- A jumper or warm jacket (as it can be cold from November to March)
- Daysack (to carry your body armour, cameras, etc when you are not wearing them)
- Sun Hat
- \*Long sleeve top (when travelling on Helicopters)
- Sunglasses
- Insect Repellent
- Sun Block
- Flip-flops (for use between ablutions and accommodation blocks)
- \*Wash Kit
- Talc
- \*Towel
- \*Personal medication *if you routinely take it*, which should be kept in hand-, not hold-, luggage
- \*Sleeping-bag (we do not supply duvets, sleeping bags, pillows, sheets, etc!)
- A small torch
- Spare batteries
- Wet wipes
- \*Practical and robust foot wear (trainers are not advisable – they smell!)
- Padlock for securing personal baggage – the MOD will not take responsibility for items lost or stolen during your visit

**PRESS INFORMATION CENTRE BASRAH CONTACT DETAILS**

PIC : Satphone 00870 763665814

Email: [picbasrah@defencemediaops.co.uk](mailto:picbasrah@defencemediaops.co.uk)

**PJHQ CONTACT DETAILS**

Desk Officer: Major Jackie Fletcher (0044 1923 846030)

Chief Clerk: Sergeant Loz Gray (0044 1923 846031)

Email: [mediaops@pjhq.mod.uk](mailto:mediaops@pjhq.mod.uk)

**DO'S AND DONT'S**

Please Do Not:

- Take home war trophies (it is illegal).

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- Touch any weapons, ammunition or suspicious objects that you encounter; point such items out to your military escort.
- Overload yourself with luggage (45kg hold-baggage and 5kg cabin-baggage per person is the absolute maximum that you will be allowed to take on the aircraft **UNLESS** you have made specific arrangements with us, beforehand, to take more).
- Bring gifts to give away to local children unless this is organised as part of your visit prior to departing the UK. The giving of presents can be very disruptive and unfair on the children.
- Pack chocolate in your luggage (there are no laundry facilities here for you to use).

Please Do:

- Be prepared to be hot, sweaty and uncomfortable all day. Or cold, during the winter!

AND FINALLY....

There are security dangers in Iraq; these can materialise unexpectedly. For your safety, and the safety of those around you, you are to act on all directions and commands given, irrespective of whether or not you personally perceive a threat. Failure to do this, or any actions that you commit against advice given, that endangers your or another's life, will result in you being sent home early.