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JOINT OPERATIONS CENTRE CYPRUS
15 JUL 2003
HQ BFC BFPO 53

*Why now*

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15 July 2003

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**INTERNMENT OF IRAQI NATIONALS IN IRAQ**

On the UK's behalf, US Forces are currently detaining 71 Iraqi nationals at a holding facility in Basrah. They are not prisoners of war but have been interned on the basis of intelligence or acts against UK forces since the end of major hostilities, as is our right as an occupying power.

Until such time as they are released (and it is conceivable that this will not be until we relinquish our status as an occupying power), we are required under the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention (GCIV) periodically to review the status and continued detention of these individuals. Currently, such reviews are conducted personally and singly by the General Officer Commanding 1 (UK) Division. The system, as we established it immediately following the cessation of major combat operations, admits of no appeal against the GOC's decision. Although this was adequate as a stop-gap measure, there is now an increasing need for a more settled and defensible system.

It would be possible, within the letter of GCIV and the ICRC commentary, to establish exclusively military boards to review the internment of the personnel in question. I am not attracted by this. Given the other options potentially available, we would not be making our best efforts to meet the spirit of the

The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

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I am copying this letter to David Blunkett, Paul Boateng, Valerie Amos, Charles Falconer, Peter Goldsmith, and to Sir Andrew Turnbull.

**GEOFFREY HOON**

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