



MINISTER OF STATE FOR
THE ARMED FORCES

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Dear Kevin

I undertook to write to you in answer to your Parliamentary Questions of 11 April (Official Report, columns 152-153W) about the prisoner of war camp at Umm Qasr, Iraq. You posed a number of questions about the way in which the UK has operated the camp. As you will know, I and my Ministerial colleagues have stated many times that we are committed to ensuring that the prisoners captured during the conflict with Iraq are treated in accordance with our obligations under the Geneva Convention. We have worked closely with our US Coalition partners and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to ensure that our international obligations have been fulfilled at the camp in Umm Qasr.

Now known as Camp Bucca, having formerly been referred to as Camp Freddy, the prisoner camp at Umm Qasr has a capacity of 8,000. If necessary, we could have expanded the camp beyond that, to hold some 12,000 detainees. I am sure you will not be surprised to learn that we no longer anticipate capturing large numbers of prisoners. We therefore have no current plans to construct more prisoner of war facilities. Responsibility for security at Camp Bucca lies with the US, who are also responsible for other general duties including maintenance and administration. They currently employ some 1,200 staff to carry out these tasks. About 40 UK Service personnel are involved in administrative support. As I shall explain below, the UK also has Service lawyers at the camp.

All enemy combatants detained at Camp Bucca are being treated as prisoners of war, as required by the Geneva Convention. The number of prisoners held at the camp, as at 17 May, was 73. You asked how many prisoners were held in each week since the camp opened. The figure for week ending 29 March was 1,464. On 5 April, we held 2,037 detainees. A week later, there were 2,014 prisoners at the camp. On 19 April, 2,203 were in detention and on 26 April we had 2,062 detainees. On 3 May there were 1,273 detainees which reduced to 620 on 10 May.

A number of the questions you asked were concerned with the freedom of prisoners to practice their religion. This is a matter to which we have attached particular

Private Office



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Kevin McNamara Esq MP

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importance and we have not taken lightly the need to ensure that prisoners' religious needs have been treated sympathetically. Great care has been taken to enable detainees to pray freely in accordance with Islamic custom, should they wish to do so.

Arrangements were also put in place to ensure that prisoners receive two full meals a day, offering a daily intake of some 2,300 calories. The meals are all prepared locally and in accordance with traditional Halal requirements. While the Geneva Convention places no obligation on the detaining power to engage a minister for the faith groups represented among the captives, we made arrangements for a local cleric regularly to visit the prisoners to attend to their spiritual needs. As far as segregation is concerned, none was required on religious grounds, nor for political reasons - though we did segregate juvenile prisoners from adults. These arrangements have worked wholly satisfactorily to date and we are content that we have more than fully met our obligations in this important area.

You asked a number of questions about the family life of prisoners at Camp Bucca. For reasons of force protection, families are unable to visit the camp. Prisoners are, however, permitted to send letters home and staff of the ICRC are on hand to assist with this. Prisoners are also allowed to receive mail (both letters and parcels) and to take delivery of ICRC packages. No welfare telephones are available for prisoners to use. The prisoners at the camp all speak Arabic, and 16 interpreters are on hand at the camp to provide for the detainees' translation and interpretation requirements, and Arabic language newspapers are available for the prisoners to read. As well as being able to write and receive letters, the prisoners also have local music played at the camp and a number of footballs have been provided to aid their exercise. These arrangements are entirely in keeping with our international obligations to treat detainees humanely. As a result of their implementation, we have had no significant expressions of concern about the way in which prisoners are being treated at the camps.

You enquired about the hand over of prisoners between nations. The nations that have agreed to transfer prisoners are the UK, the US and Australia. All prisoners captured by UK Forces and who are still in detention are currently being held by the US under the terms of this agreement, which was signed at the outset of the conflict. UK personnel have full access to prisoners captured by UK Forces. The UK retains the primary right of jurisdiction over all prisoners captured by UK Forces for acts committed prior to their transfer to the US. Under these arrangements, we have received no requests for the transfer to the US of named persons.

You also asked a number of questions about legal representation at the camp and about tribunals. The UK currently has six Service lawyers in Iraq, of whom three are carrying out their duties at Camp Bucca. No civilian lawyers or human rights experts were deployed to Iraq but there are ICRC representatives on hand to provide whatever advice the prisoners may require. Article V of Geneva Convention III provides that should there be any doubt that a person should be categorised as a prisoner of war that person shall enjoy the protection of the convention until such time as his status has been determined by a competent tribunal. To date, several screening panels have sat in order to hear the cases of a number of people who have claimed civilian status. Persons attending screening panels, have been advised, but not obliged, to answer questions. As a result





of this process, over 300 civilians have been released without the need for an Article V tribunal. Screening panels comprise UK officers and warrant officers who are independent of the cases under examination and who have access throughout the process to a UK Service lawyer should they require legal advice to conduct their duties.

Finally, you asked about what you described as interrogation rooms and procedures. Eight tents were set aside at Camp Bucca for questioning prisoners. The Geneva Convention does not prescribe the maximum amount of time during which a prisoner may be questioned each day but it has been our practice in Iraq to conduct sessions of no longer than two hours at a time. Personnel conducting the questioning of detainees do so in accordance with guidelines drawn up by Defence Intelligence Training staff. In accordance with Exemption 1 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (Defence security and international relations) I am unable to place a copy of these guidelines in the House of Commons library because they contain information that, if known prior to capture, may be of use to a potential future enemy.

I hope I have satisfactorily answered your questions. I firmly believe that we are fulfilling our international obligations at Camp Bucca. I am certainly satisfied that UK Service personnel have done all that is required of them by the Geneva Convention. They have, I believe, carried out the task of managing the camp with the same professionalism and excellence that has characterised the activities of our Armed Forces elsewhere during the conflict with Iraq.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.



The Rt Hon Adam Ingram MP



Recycled Paper

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(13) which belligerent states recognise and have agreed to hand over prisoners into the military jurisdiction of Her Majesty's Government at Camp One, Umm Qasr; [109050]

(14) how many civilian lawyers and human rights experts have been sent to Iraq with coalition forces; and how many are stationed at Camp One, Umm Qasr; [109042]

(15) how many meals are served each day at Camp One, Umm Qasr; what steps have been taken to ensure the religious and dietary requirements of detainees are met; and what the average daily calorific intake is of each prisoner; [109051]

(16) what steps he has taken to ensure that detainees at Camp One, Umm Qasr may exercise their right to select and be represented by legal counsel before the military tribunal; [109035]

(17) how many service personnel are engaged in functions related to security, administration and maintenance of Camp One, Umm Qasr; [109049]

(18) how many interrogation rooms are situated in the vicinity of Camp One, Umm Qasr; what the maximum number of hours each day a detainee may be interrogated is; what the guidelines and rules governing interrogation procedures are; and if he will place a copy in the Library; [109053]

(19) what steps he is taking to establish an independent tribunal under a recognised legal authority to determine the status of detainees in Iraq; [109058]

(20) what language groups are represented among detainees at Camp One, Umm Qasr; what proportion of detainees speaks each language; and how many translators are available for each language. [109037]

Mr. Ingram: I will write to my hon. Friend and a copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list internal flights made by Ministers in his Department in 2002, including in each case the (a) cost, (b) departure location and (c) destination; and of these how many were (i) first class, (ii) business class and (iii) economy class. [103589]

Dr. Moonie: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Laws) on 22 January (*Official Report*, column 334W) by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office (Mr. Alexander) and to my answer of 24 February (*Official Report*, column 139W) to the hon. Member for Chelmsford West (Mr. Burns).

Scotland

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times he has visited Scotland on official duties each year since 2000; and what meetings were held on each occasion. [103618]

Dr. Moonie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence visited Scotland on one occasion in 2001.

I am withholding details of any meetings in accordance with Exemptions 2 and 7 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. It is not the normal practice of Governments to release details of specific meetings or their content, as some of these discussions may have taken place on a confidential basis.

Service Accommodation

Mr. Keetch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy he has to ensure that the quality and size of service accommodation offered to families is superior to their previous billet; and if he will make a statement. [110388]

Dr. Moonie: The Defence Housing Executive (DHE) manages service families accommodation (SFA) in Great Britain and since its formation in 1995 has made significant progress in improving the general standard of service housing. About half of the long term core housing stock is now at Standard 1 for Condition (SlfC). The upgrade programme will continue with demanding targets set for the DHE each year, against the services' long term requirements for family housing. As a result many service families will move into better accommodation than they have experienced previously.

Service Personnel (Gulf)

Norman Lamb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on delays in delivering packages and mail to British forces serving in the Gulf. [109617]

Mr. Ingram: There are no delays in movement of mail into theatre from the United Kingdom. Collection from Forces Post Offices in theatre and final delivery to individuals is a unit responsibility, and timings will vary according to the operational tempo of individual units.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bovine TB

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress made in Northern Ireland to eradicate bovine TB. [107935]

Mr. Pearson: Bovine tuberculosis is among the most difficult animal health problems facing Northern Ireland. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has a range of measures in place to control bovine TB. There is an extensive programme of identification and removal of infected animals, combined with control on movements. DARD test all animals annually and all animals that show a positive result to the test are slaughtered. More stringent rules are applied to tests where there is known infection in the herd. Animals may not be moved from infected herds until the problem is resolved. This prevents onward spread.

DARD has also recently completed a policy review of all aspects of the existing control measures for this disease to identify what further or different measures are necessary to reduce the incidence of TB. The aim of the