

05WELLINGTON92

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12958: DECL: 01/31/2015 TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, NZ SU..

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CT: NEW ZEALAND SENDS "ONE-OFF" MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER TO BAGHDAD WITH UN REF: 04 WELLINGTON 824 Classified By

: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION KATHERINE B

HADDA, REASON 1.4 (B, D) 1

(U) The GoNZ announced January 31 that it will station one military liaison officer in Baghdad to work in the UN Assistance Mission

The soldier's work will include liaising with the MNF and the interim Iraqi Government's security forces, and the one-year deployment will be served in two six-month installments

In making the announcement, Prime Minister Clark noted that the deployment was a "one-off," and that the GoNZ had not received any additional requests for troops from either the UN or the USG

She also commended the strong turnout in the Iraqi elections, but expressed concern over low Sunni turnout, stating "it is going to be very important if Iraq is to go forward, that there is the maximum degree of inclusion." 2

(U) Clark noted that the liaison officer will maintain NZ's profile as an active participant in UN peacekeeping operations - a profile which has flagged since participation in East Timor

New Zealand's initial 12-month military deployment to Iraq ended September 25, 2004 (reftel) with the homecoming of over 60 engineers and support staff

At that time Clark confirmed that no further deployments to Iraq were being considered, although even then she indicated a willingness to look favorably on a request from the UN for one or two military officers to serve in UN headquarters in Baghdad.

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(C) Comment: Clark's decision to assign an officer to Iraq under UN auspices is in keeping in tone with earlier comments (reftel,) and allows Clark's Government to remain involved in a significant UN operation

While it also enables NZ to continue to distance its presence in Iraq from the US and the Coalition, we predict that the Government will still try to ta

ke credit for the move when speaking with USG officials

The assignment of one officer also reflects the GoNZ's efforts to balance a small, overstretched military force with a strong commitment to peacekeeping efforts worldwide

Clark's lament that NZ's peacekeeping activities have declined since East Timor reaffirms the Government's view that NZ's peacekeeping capabilities are an effective vehicle for increasing NZ's public profile within the multilateral system

Swindells