

## **COALITION INFORMATION CENTRE (CIC)**

### **HISTORY**

1. The CIC was established in October 2001 – in the wake of the 11 September attacks and the subsequent military intervention in Afghanistan. It was principally a response to a perceived lack of coherence and effectiveness in the Coalition's media effort. It was established in the FCO's media suite, reporting directly to Alastair Campbell. It was run from October 2001 to September 2002 by xxxx. But during the early Afghanistan phase Alastair Campbell and xxxx from No 10 spent a good deal of time in the FCO overseeing the operation. The CIC's staff came from a range of Departments around Whitehall, supported by an American implant and, less consistently, by representatives of other members of the Coalition. It was linked directly to the OGC in Washington, mainly through daily conference calls and e-mail. For a period, a third CIC was established in Islamabad, in an effort to counter Taliban propaganda.
2. After the Afghanistan conflict had largely subsided, the CIC continued in existence, largely on a caretaker basis (and was renamed the Communications and Information Centre). The amount of work involved was limited and many of the CIC staff returned to their Home Departments.
3. This happened in the run up to the Iraq crisis, when xxxx had replaced xxxx as Head of the CIC. It focused on producing a daily ministerial brief for all Government Departments, developing potentially positive media themes and helping to ensure that ill-founded criticism of our policy was rebutted. It continued to work in close tandem with the OGC in Washington. xxxx succeeded xxxx as Head of the CIC in early March 2003.
4. At the beginning of April this year, No 10 asked to have the CIC substantially reinforced (including implants from the US, Australia and Spain). This was done. But, since the end of the conflict, we have been able to wind this unit down gradually. There are now only two residual staff in London (linked to the IPU); plus a team working with xxxx in Baghdad.

## **TASKS OF THE CIC DURING THE IRAQ CONFLICT**

5. The focus was very much on Iraq, but there was some continuing work on Afghanistan and on Kosovo and Bosnia.

## **RESOURCES**

6. There have been intermittent efforts to put the CIC on a proper financial footing. But in practice its staff have been paid by their Home Departments, while capital costs and accommodation have been covered by Information Directorate. There is a Cabinet Office budget for the CIC for this Financial Year, which should now bear the non-salary costs.

## **MINISTERIAL OVERSIGHT**

The CIC was set up at the behest of Alastair Campbell. At the high points of its activity, it was very actively managed by him. It was stated publicly from the start that the Prime Minister would have overall responsibility for the CIC. This decision was reinforced by improved arrangements to ensure that the CIC was properly locked into the FCO (and wider Whitehall) policy net. There was no problem over links to the policy players – from an early stage in the run-up to conflict, those involved with the CIC were regularly at xxxx daily meetings on Iraq and were on the key distribution lists.