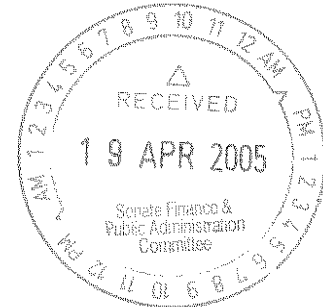




Australian Government
Office of National Assessments
Director-General

15 April 2005

Mr Alastair Sands
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration
Legislative Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT



Dear Alastair

**February Hearing: Senator Evans: Question on Notice:
Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio
PM36: Office of National Assessments**

The following is provided in response to a question on notice from the February hearings submitted by Senator Evans relating to ONA's staffing levels.

1. How many analysts does ONA currently have working on Iraq-related issues?

ONA currently has three analysts in two branches who spend more than 50% of their time on Iraq-related issues. The two branch heads are also closely involved in overseeing and coordinating the work of these analysts, and one would spend more than 50% of his time on Iraq-related issues. In addition nine other analysts would spend between 5% and 20% of their time on Iraq issues when and as such issues impact on their areas of responsibility.

2. What are their respective areas of responsibility?

Among the three analysts spending more than 50% of their time on Iraq-related issues, one has responsibility for military/strategic issues and two have responsibility for internal political and related regional issues. The nine analysts who work as necessary on Iraq-related issues have responsibility for

transnational terrorism, energy, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), economic development, other Middle East issues and US, European and Japanese foreign policy.

3. *Has the staff profile in this area changed since the invasion of Iraq?*

Yes.

4. *If so, how and when?*

As noted in the Flood Report, from mid-2002 ONA had two WMD analysts working either partly or mostly on Iraq WMD and two Middle East analysts spending most of their time on more general Iraq issues. The two relevant branch heads also dedicated a good percentage of their time to Iraq-related reporting. Immediately prior to the outbreak of war in March 2003, ONA established a 24-hour Watch Office staffed by 10 analysts and three branch heads on a shift basis. From May 2003 ONA staff numbers working on Iraq-related issues reverted gradually to pre-war levels. The main ONA staffing change in relation to Iraq issues since the war has been the implementation of the Flood recommendation that a separate branch be established to focus on Middle East and African issues including Iraq. This branch currently comprises a branch head and three analysts and is expected to increase by two more analysts this year.

5. *How many analysts does ONA currently have working on Weapons of Mass Destruction issues?*

Two analysts work full-time on WMD issues. A third analyst spends about 50% of his time on these issues.

6. *How has the staff profile in this area changed since March 1996?*

In March 1996 one analyst worked on WMD issues.



Peter N Varghese
Director-General