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PROVISION OF A UK STABILISATION FORCE

(A paper by DCJO(Ops))

BACKGROUND

1. Mounting pressure on Iraq could lead to an early regime or military collapse leading to a 'loss of control'¹. Rapid intervention by the coalition may be required to stabilise the situation, including support to an interim government. Current Package 3 deployment timelines would limit the arrival of sufficient and appropriate UK military capability in time. Consequently, there is a need to develop a contingency plan that would enable the UK to gain an early footprint on the ground, providing influence in theatre and achieving strategic impact.

ASSUMPTIONS

2. The following assumptions have been made:
 - a. A legal framework permitting the deployment of a stabilisation force to Iraq will be achieved.
 - b. The generation and deployment of Packages 0-3 have priority over the stabilisation force.
 - c. Stabilisation forces, where possible, should be drawn from those elements earmarked for the JRRF.
 - d. There should not be simultaneous deployments of 3 (UK) Div (including 16 Air Asslt Bde) and 1 (UK) Armd Div.
 - e. Within Iraq, nominal consent for this force will exist at least at the strategic level.
 - f. P Day is taken as 15 Feb 03

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

3. The SPG Paper Military Strategic Options Post UNSCR 1441 identified three possible options open to the UK following Iraqi regime or military collapse:

¹ 'Loss of Control' – defined as the period between the collapse of the Iraqi Regime and the establishment of an effective alternative providing law and order and security.

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- a. Do Nothing. Depending on the situation in Iraq, a political decision may be made to do nothing other than increase intelligence gathering and support the wider humanitarian effort.
- b. Hasty Response. The situation may need rapid stabilisation¹ and light forces, supported by a significant air package. These could be reinforced by armoured forces.
- c. Delayed Response. If the balance of risk does not favour an immediate stabilisation response, or a timely decision to intervene cannot be made, more heavily armed and better protected troops may be required.

This paper addresses the options to meet a hasty response.

4. CENTCOM planners continue to develop branch plans for early regime collapse. The lack of surety has constrained the development of an approved CONOPS, but there is clear emphasis on using the considerable numbers of in-place forces. Where US forces would deploy is not yet clear although securing Baghdad remains a priority. The UK contribution to a stabilisation force would need to fit in the overall US operational plan, and take account of any potential for long term commitment. Currently the campaign plan sees the main effort of the UK land component operating in the north of Iraq. However, the Cdo Gp² operating in southern Iraq may provide valuable added choices.

5. For a hasty response the UK force contribution is likely to be light although supported if required by significant operational fires. Its effect is likely to be confined to wider peacekeeping and "stabilisation" tasks but the force should be capable of defending itself, have some warfighting utility, and have tactical mobility. Gaining control and denying access to WMD, key point security, disarmament/demobilisation are some potential tasks. A more detailed CONOPS and force structure will need to be refined in consultation with US planners and their emerging ideas.

TIMINGS

6. In terms of timings, there are a number of plausible scenarios under which Saddam Hussein's regime might collapse. In the past the regime has proved to be fairly resilient in the face of diplomatic and UN pressure and, despite the continued unambiguous military preparations of the US, it is most likely that Saddam Hussein will not fold in these circumstances, ie prior to P Day. However, in combination it is assessed that the commencement of the air campaign followed by the committal of US ground forces to the south at about P+30, may prove to be the catalyst; this is assessed as the earliest probable date for collapse. Three other timeframes have been identified:

- a. On or Around P Day. If the force on mind strategy succeeds and matches the most optimistic expectations, the regime could collapse on or around P Day. At this stage the main UK force deployment may not have commenced.
- b. P to P+60. This period covers the deployment of Package 3 forces which will therefore not be available complete although leading elements may be available. However, the ATG will be in position in the NAG by P Day and Package 0 may also be available.

² Separate work is identifying whether this deployment should include HQ 3 Cdo Bde and an additional Cdo/Bn as part of Package 2/3.

- c. After P+60. By this time the last UK package, the land component, will be at FOC and ready to conduct decisive operations. Regime collapse would be dealt with by these in place forces and therefore this timeframe option is not discussed further.

FORCE OPTIONS: COLLAPSE BEFORE OR ON/AROUND P DAY

8. Package 1: In Place Forces. In place maritime and air assets could be used immediately to support any US deployment of stabilisation forces. This would include ISR, AAR and operational fires, but would not involve the deployment of ground troops.
9. LAND Forces. Post OP FRESCO, LAND could generate a significant light force at short notice consisting of HQ 3 (UK) Div, 16 Air Asslt Bde and the SLE.
- a. HQ 3 (UK) Div. LAND could generate 3 (UK) Div HQ which has an air deployable fly forward capability, tested during Op FINGAL. Key capabilities have been ring-fenced and the HQ is currently not affected by Op FRESCO or Package 3 commitments.
- b. 16 Air Asslt Bde. 16 Air Asslt Bde is currently committed to Op FRESCO but could be generated at risk. This would involve either additional disruption to the Arms Plot and Operational Commitments Plot, which LAND would be reluctant to do, or by backfilling units currently earmarked under Package 3. Post FRESCO all LAND JRRF elements become available within 30 days with the Bde HQ and the ABTF at R2 and 16 Air Asslt Bde (2 x PARA battalions, 1 x Air Asslt Inf bn) at R5. Some units will require additional training to reach appropriate readiness.
- c. SLE. As part of a Joint force, the SLE could be used as a discrete package or as part of an advance element of a larger deployment. For example, it would be possible for the SLE to link up with or potentially a Cdo Gp from the ATG to form the basis of a bde (-). In general terms the SLE is air deployable but the speed of response is dependent on the availability of AT and timely DPILCLEAR⁴.

⁴ For example, with 20 x C130 and 20 crews deployment could be achieved in as little as 2 days.

d. JHC. The JHC could provide significant numbers of aircraft to support the SLE and other elements but not concurrent with Package 3. JHC would need to revisit the readiness profile of some assets, specifically Chinook. SH could self deploy via Turkey and Jordan (in 3-4 days) or deploy via AT. Availability of facilities and infrastructure at APODs will be a key determinant of the scope of initial SH operations.

10. Air. The in place forces could be rapidly reinforced by the remainder of Air Package 2, if necessary. Significant AT would be required to support the deployment of light forces, and priorities will need to be set against a concurrent air deployment. Key APOD enablers and an RAF Regt Fd Sqn held at high readiness would need to deploy early to bring an APOD rapidly to FOC. There is risk if these key assets have already been deployed and relocation may be required.

11. Maritime Forces. The Lead Cdo Gp with the ATG will be in theatre by P day and is due to transit the Suez Canal 1-5 Feb 03. A second Cdo is currently available at R4 and post Op FRESCO it can up¹² to a full Cdo Gp that could deploy forward by AT.

FORCE OPTIONS: P - P+60

12. Should regime collapse occur after P Day but before Package 3 is complete in Turkey, the forces would initially have to consist of the enhanced ATG and the together with those lead elements of Package 3, if deployed and ready.

PRE-DEPLOYMENT OPTIONS

13. The requirement to provide more responsive forces to deal with sudden collapse could also be addressed by pre-positioning capability. A planned deployment close to theatre may reduce the risk entailed with a standing start from the UK and may form part of a coercive strategy to reinforce political objectives. It could also form the foundation on which to build additional forces as required. The sustainment of such forces over time would pose challenges and would need further definition.

there are two conventional options: poising a Cdo Gp group with the ATG or forward basing elements of the land component.

14. ATG Option. FLEET are able to provide a Cdo Gp ATG with OCEAN and ARK ROYAL and a 1 Star C2 element to be position in the NAG from 20 Feb 03⁵. Some work up training will be required by OCEAN (within the timeframe), and some charter shipping will be taken up in December, to meet this target date. The Landing Force (LF) could deploy rapidly into Iraq using the SH package but its sustainment, beyond an amphibious lodgement, may have to rely on AT until such point as an MSR is established.

15. LATF. An LATF could be generated within readiness and found from the Option 1B ORBAT. It could be pre-positioned in Turkey, Kuwait or elsewhere and offers the option of a capable and responsive force close to Iraq. We would be reluctant to commit a stand alone BG to combined command in warfighting, but the utility and profile of such a force in stabilisation operations, linked to a

⁵ This package would include 5 Chinook and 10 Sea King.

US formation and available for early commitment, could be attractive. 1 (UK) Arm'd Div is already scoping an early entry Task Force, which would be amongst the first elements to deploy into Turkey under current Package 3 plans. Assuming diplomatic and political clearance, it would take a number of weeks to deploy this force and its logistic support requirements would need to be defined.

LOGISTICS

16. Experience in Afghanistan demonstrates that it is possible for limited periods to sustain at least a brigade (-) light land force in the Middle East region from the air, albeit that this places a significant strain on the AT fleet. That strain would be all the more given the probable requirement for simultaneous support a large SF and enhanced in-place air and maritime packages in the region. Ultimately the level of support required would be dictated by the location of the force in country and its given tasks.

17. The forward deployment of the ATG from Feb delivers sustainment for a Cdo Gp sized force for 3 months, including 1 month of warfighting. This sustainment could support a larger formation for the initial deployment phase in advance of the opening of the strategic LoC.

18. The relative proximity of Cyprus makes it a potential sustainment FMB, to which sustainment could be sailed forward for onward air movement to Iraq. In order to mitigate the air requirement and ensure the long term sustainment of a force in Iraq, development of in-country resources or mutual logistic support would be essential – and will take time. An overland line of communication would be critical in case of the deployment of an LATF, given its large equipment support requirements. Options for an overland sustainment LoC are clearly contingent upon where any land force might operate, however the following will apply regardless:

- a. Kuwait. Kuwait offers the longest sailing time and the shortest overland distance in to Iraq, albeit that the distance to Baghdad would still be over 500km. This LoC is likely to be shared with the US, offering some savings.
- b. Jordan. Jordan offers a relatively short sailing time, but a long land LoC to Iraq. Maintaining such an LoC on a UK only basis would require a significant logistic presence.
- c. Turkey. Turkey offers the shortest sailing time, but the longest overland LoC. Current planning has already exposed the degree of difficulty in establishing a LoC through Turkey even on a shared coalition basis.

OTHER FACTORS

19. Concurrency. It will not be possible to retain the full range of options for a contingency stabilisation force once the deployment of Package 3 commences (D-day). From this date key enabling assets and capabilities will be committed to the Main Effort thus reducing their availability to deploy any contingent force. A stabilisation force element can still be mounted to cover a sudden regime collapse during the period from the start of deployment to FOC. It could be drawn from the Cdo Bde, the SLE, and possibly – if deployed- the early entry Task Force from 1 (UK) Arm'd Div.

20. Sustainability. If operations do not occur in Winter 02/03 but are postponed to later in the year, the proposed force options for rapid response largely remain the same. the SLE and light bdes from the JRRF would continue to provide the basis for land options at appropriate readiness. Sustainment of the ATG over time might become problematic as would pre-positioning an LATF.

21. C2. Depending on the force selected there are a number of command options. All would need to be part of the extant US/Coalition C2 structure. Early entry forces could be commanded by the HQ 16 Air Asslt Bde or 3 Cdo Bde. JFHQ, held at R2 would be an alternative, but this HQ may already have deployed to activate the NCC in Qatar. HQ 3 (UK) Div could deploy to command the UK component which may include the with the light bde(s) (including the SLE). However, this presupposes that the UK contribution was geographically concentrated, and consequently, also accepts the most likely AOR to be in southern Iraq due to the limited commitment options of the Cdo Gp from the ATG. This may have implications on where, strategically, the UK wish to be placed for the Aftermath.

22. Deployment. The need for urgency in the deployment of a stabilisation force will dictate that movement of at least elements of the force will have to be by air, there will not be time to open a surface line of communication. It is very difficult to predict what airflow can be achieved into an unknown APOD and this could be restricted by the capabilities of the runway, aircraft handing facilities, threat, lighting and navigation aids. Restrictions could limit airflow to only military aircraft or to military aircraft with NVG or DAS capability and, most restrictive of all, For planning purposes it is possible to produce illustrative examples of possible deployment timelines for force elements. The SLE is approximately 844 personnel and 1662 ALEST and this force could be moved to Iraq in 26 x C17 and 4 x Tristars sorties in just under 2 weeks. Using a combination of C130 and, later in the flow, commercial aircraft, this planning figure could be reduced to approximately 1 week. 16 Air Asslt Bde could consist of 3600 personnel and 21070 ALEST. All personnel, and a BG at IOC, could be delivered in 2 weeks with the most optimistic aircraft flow and availability with the bde fully deployed at the 6-8 week point. The shipping of the Package 2 ATG could also accommodate the equipment of 3 Cdo Bde and a second commando. Personnel could be flown forward to marry up with this equipment in, or adjacent to, theatre.