



**SECRETARY OF STATE**

MO 6/17/15C

19 September 2002

**PSO/CDS**

Copy to:

PS/Minister(AF)

PS/PUS

Sec/CNS

MA/CGS

PS/CAS

PS/VCDS

MA/CDL

MA/DCDS(C)

MA/DCDS(EC)

PS/CDI

MA/CJO

Policy Director

ACDS(Ops)

ACDS(RP)

DG Op Pol

DG RP

DGE

PJHQ - Civ Sec

Sec(O)1

**IRAQ : POTENTIAL UK CONTRIBUTION TO ANY US-LED ACTION**

1. The Secretary of State discussed with Minister(AF), CDS, PUS, DCDS(C), CJO, DG Op Pol, DGCC and others this afternoon what potential UK contributions could be indicated to CENTCOM at the planning conference starting on 23 September. To facilitate discussion, we had shown the Secretary of State the draft minute by DCDS(C) which had been discussed by the COS earlier in the afternoon.

**US Military Planning**

2. CDS explained that US military planning had developed since the previous meeting on 5 September (and my letter to No 10 of 6 September setting out the possible UK contributions). In particular, the US now had a clearer understanding of the importance of operations in Northern Iraq to "fix" Iraqi forces. However, they did not have sufficient assets available in theatre to mount simultaneous attacks from the north and the south without switching forces from the South (and thereby increasing the level of risk there). General Franks had therefore indicated that it would be helpful if the UK could provide in the North an armoured brigade and a 2 star tactical lead (under which he would place a US armoured brigade equivalent).

3. CDS explained that, while OA conducted at PJHQ suggested that the US campaign plan was viable, the COS continued to have doubts as to whether the US had a winning concept.

DECLASSIFIED

### Possible UK Contributions

4. It was agreed that Package 2 (subsuming Package 1 and Package 0) continued to offer a significant and useful contribution to any US-led action. Subject to final confirmation from No 10, Mr Hoon was content for CJO to indicate to CENTCOM its potential availability for planning purposes and with the caveat that no final political decisions had been taken.
5. Discussion then focussed on the composition of Package 3 (as revised following the previous discussion on 5 September) and the associated decision timelines. CDS explained that, were the UK to provide a land contribution in the North, it represented – in the COS's judgement – the minimum militarily viable option. Of the 28,000 Service personnel involved, some 5,000 were enablers required to support the armoured brigade; only some 2,200 were in the divisional headquarters *per se*. There was, therefore, little advantage in not offering the divisional headquarters in conjunction with the brigade.
6. The Secretary of State requested clarification of the length of time necessary to deploy a UK land contribution. CJO explained that current planning assumed that the formation would need 14 days warning and preparation (P) time prior to its deployment (D) date and then 48 days to move to the Turkey/Iraq border. The main ground operations would be launched on D+ 62, equating – on current assumptions – to mid-February 2003. If the UK contribution were to be available in time for such operations, P-day could fall no later than early December. CDS identified a number of early and publicly visible decisions which would be required:

UORs. Although P-day might not occur until early December, some UORs had long lead times.

Reserves. Package 3 would entail calling up 7,700 reservists. The call out decision would need to be taken approximately four months before the start of major land operations.

Operation FRESCO. Of the 36 battalions or equivalent in the land package, 15 were currently allocated to Operation FRESCO. Four of these battalions had already started FRESCO training, rising to 11 by the end of next week. The earlier a decision could be taken to remove these battalions from FRESCO (and replace them with others) the smaller the risk that any units allocated to fire-fighting duties would not have completed their training.

The Secretary of State noted that progress on UORs also required expenditure approval from the Treasury; he had asked for a detailed breakdown of UOR cost estimates and would be meeting the Chancellor on Monday. As for Reserves and FRESCO, there was a clear tension between, on the one hand, the decision timetable for Package 3 and, on the other, both the domestic political process and the diplomatic process in New York. There were also other considerations such as cost: on the current figures, there appeared to be a £1Bn premium for the land contribution which could exhaust the Reserve. It

DECLASSIFIED

would therefore be premature to indicate to CENTCOM now the availability of Package 3 in the same terms as Package 2.

7. In conclusion, it was agreed that:

- Subject to No 10's agreement, CJO would indicate to CENTCOM the potential availability of UK contributions in two separate compartments:
  - Package 2 (subsuming Packages 1 and 0), with the caveats set out above.
  - Package 3 as a possible add-on (and with the guidance that the US should also plan without it).
- CDS would re-examine the timelines for the Reserves call-out, taking account of the discussion on deployment times above.
- No 10 should be alerted to the need for a decision by the middle of next week on replacement of FRESCO units. Preferably, this should be announced in the course of Tuesday's Parliamentary proceedings. It could be presented as a prudent measure to avoid foreclosing possible military options should diplomatic action fail.

Following the meeting, I discussed with Simon Cholerton the framework for a draft letter to No 10 reflecting the outcome of this discussion. To meet No 10's deadline, it would be helpful to receive this draft by 0900 tomorrow.



P D WATKINS  
PS/Secretary of State  
OWOB  
CHOTS: SOFS-Private Office  
SOFS-Private Office-S