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IRAQ PACKAGE OPTIONS - MILITARY STRATEGIC COMMENTARY

AT 19 SEP 02

A paper by the SPG

A. D/PJHQ/5/8135/12/1 dated 13 Sep 02

INTRODUCTION

1. To set the COS discussion on potential military operations in Iraq in a strategic context, and to highlight the key decisions and guidance we are seeking from COS. Text in bold indicates where a COS judgement or decision will be necessary to inform Ministerial decisions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CONTEXT

2. The US military planners and the Joint Staff in Washington have made it clear that notwithstanding the developments of the last 2 weeks they remain committed to producing an early military option for the President. The UN process will not derail their current planning timelines, though clearly the political developments may yet overtake the military's contingency work.

3. Military planning continues in a climate of uncertainty against some key strategic factors.

a. **Shape of the Campaign.** The overall shape of the campaign has not yet been settled. Mounting an attack from Kuwait still remains a core US theme, and the importance of delivering effects from Jordan, and from Turkey are now much more firmly established. However, the means of delivering the latter contain a number of risks that have yet to be addressed, and the "Northern Option" has yet to be firmly established as a viable axis, in terms of delivering the Turks, and the logistic feasibility of such an undertaking. The current COS view is that the campaign as currently set out is not a winning concept – yet.

b. **Timing.** Timelines for the launch of the campaign, against which many of our current deadlines are set, are based upon offering the President the earliest opportunity for action, as opposed to "the last safe moment" for a decision. The former is more readily defined than the latter as that is based on the likely weather conditions some 8 months hence.

c. **Post Conflict.** The likely post conflict scenarios and their demands have yet to be clearly articulated. Scenarios include immediate and catastrophic regime collapse, the mounting of an internal coup as the campaign commences, or at the opposite end of the spectrum an exhausted Iraq suing for peace. Each of these will require a different response. The infant US inter-agency process has just started to identify the means by which transition to a post Saddam regime might take place. This commences with a CENTCOM led military government.

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d. **Legal Base.** The UN track has now been opened, however, this may serve to delay rather than advance decisions on the legality of any potential action. The question of UK participation alongside US action should the UN route fail remains open.

4. It is against this background of strategic uncertainty and US military planning certainty that some key judgements and decisions are required. These will inform the US of our probable intent, and allow the 3 Services, the DLO and other agencies to dispose themselves optimally to manage our current commitments, OP FRESCO, and our potential contribution towards a campaign against Iraq. The timing for these decisions all fall in the next week, if we are to meet CENTCOM plans, and to place our own forces on the best track for what lies ahead without substantial disruption, or potential risk to OP FRESCO.

KEY JUDGEMENTS

5. Clearly the most important judgement is the size and shape of the UK's potential force package. COS are familiar with the four incremental force package options:

- Package 0. SF and SF enablers only.
- Package 1. In place forces, key enablers plus Package 0
- Package 2. Medium scale maritime and air force, plus Package 1
- Package 3. Package 2 plus a Land option.

6. The US need to have early visibility of our likely contribution in Package 2; the air element of the package has implications for basing, logistic support, and likely need for US forces should the UK not contribute a capability. Within the maritime element of Package 2 the Amphibious Ready Group with an embarked commando offers a high readiness, flexible **small scale land contribution**. PJHQ and Central Staff Work indicates that this force package can be maintained throughout, provided it is integrated with USMC forces, and does not proceed beyond a point from which it can be sustained from its organic afloat resources. This clearly restricts its operational utility, but does present an opportunity for 'boots on the ground' if the UK decision is not to commit beyond package 2. We have identified a very small number of key UORs without which force elements will not be committed to combat operations. There are a raft of very high priority Air UORs that are on the stocks; the necessity of executing these in advance of the force deployment will require operational risk, and capability judgements.

COS will wish to take a view on the need to start work on Air UORs, and the potential demand for early pre-positioning of weapon stocks.

7. However, the **critical path for both UK and US planning lies within the land element of Package 3**, in terms of significant early joint logistic planning, campaign design, and for our own OP FRESCO and land force preparations. COS have seen PJHQ's paper (Ref A) on the various force options. It is clear from our

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contacts with the US that there is an expectation of UK ground force commitment, and although there is a genuine willingness to facilitate our being there, this is not without limit.

Conflict vs Post Conflict

8. If UK Land Forces are to participate in the campaign a key judgement is as to whether our effort should be against the need to meet US short term planning for combat, or the equally demanding and pressing need for preparations for the Post Conflict phase.

9. Conflict phase. Commitment to this phase may carry with it inherent risks with regard to post conflict engagement with little choice on role, timing, location, or future extraction. An alternative approach that offers a UK lead, or UK participation in the post conflict phase may be equally attractive to the US as our commitment to a land role in the conflict phase.

10. Post Conflict. Given the wide range of possible post conflict scenarios these forces would have to be combat capable forces at high readiness, and in all probability with key elements forward deployed during the conflict phase. The length and scale of our post conflict commitment will determine our ability to fulfil a range of other operations, and most notably our Balkans commitment. An enduring Medium Scale commitment in Iraq would preclude continued Medium Scale engagement in the Balkans.

11. Strategic Balance. We are currently committed to 2 Medium Scale land operations (FRESCO, and the Balkans), and a land commitment to Iraq at any thing above small scale will commit us to 3 **Medium Scale** land operations. Although with a full Package 3 commitment to the conflict phase we retain the SLE, our ability to deploy and sustain even a Small Scale force package has yet to be determined, and anything above this Scale of Effort will be impossible, although not committing the ARG under these circumstances may help to retain strategic balance. Recovery, and recuperation will also be key to our judgements as to which phase to commit to. Hard and fast judgements are not possible, however, commitment of Package 3 will have an effect for at least 2 years.

Assuming that UK land participation is a requirement, there is a judgement to be made on whether we should be engaged in the Conflict or Post Conflict phases. Both would be difficult to sustain.

Axis

12. Although the US are enthusiastic about UK participation they are also realistic about the difficulties of the Command, Control and logistic support of mixed US/UK forces within the narrow confines of Kuwait. The Chiefs of Staff have already voiced clear reservations over the integration of substantial UK land forces in the Southern theatre. Therefore, if we are to be engaged in combat operations the US and UK military preference is that we should be in Northern Iraq.

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13. The Northern Axis. There are a number of key factors that COS will wish to consider when they look at any commitment against the North, these largely centre on current uncertainties and likely divisions of Command. Furthermore, there are clear indications that while the JCS see the North as fundamental to the campaign, this conviction does not yet appear to have permeated CENTCOM. There is an inherent risk in becoming committed to a secondary front that is ruled irrelevant to the Main Effort and subsequently starved of key resources, such as ISR, reserves, or strike effort. Concerns are:

- a. US Unified Command Boundaries. There would appear to be no appetite to redraw the CENTCOM/ EUCOM boundary, and therefore any UK force will be prey to the inherent difficulties of cross-boundary operations.
- b. 3* Command. CINCCENTCOM does not intend to establish his own 3* in Turkey. This is seen as a EUCOM responsibility. The complexities of the command relationships, against the background of a need to deliver a compliant Turkey are evident.
- c. Delivering Turkey. The Pentagon have yet to fully engage with the Turks – on their role, and what is actually wanted of them in detail.
- d. Lines of Communication. Without detailed reconnaissance we are not in a position to judge the viability of delivering our force package, in time, and suitably equipped over the Turkish land Line of Communication. In this there is a significant risk assumed in our deployment calculation.
- e. Becoming “fixed” in the North. Northern Iraq is a difficult area politically. The Turks have a long history of engagement, and still remember that it was the UK that was instrumental in the cession of Mosul (and its associated oilfields) during the creation of Iraq. Similarly, the Kurds – divided amongst themselves, and divided from both Turkey and Iraq – will be quick to recall our assistance in Op HAVEN, but equally quick to remember it was the RAF that effectively suppressed a number of Kurdish revolts. There is a real danger that post conflict the UK, simply through our force location, would retain the “lead” in the north, thereby splitting our lines of communication with our traditional Gulf presence, and placing us in an intractable position for some time.

14. COS have already identified the inherent difficulties of integrating a UK medium scale effort in the south. While strategically a northern axis remains fundamental to the plan, COS will wish to assess whether there is yet sufficient operational emphasis being placed upon it for UK to commit forces to the northern option.

Force Packages

15. The detail on the force package options is at Ref A. The following key issues remains:

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a. The relative priority afforded to the preparation of each package in terms of key common DLO resources.

b. The need for early visible, though arguably ambiguous, preparations to proceed if we are to meet US timelines, and

c. For a Land Package 3, we need to determine: the optimal package we can generate; if any other options exist; whether the underpinning assumptions we have used are correct; and the risks inherent in the very short timeline we are pressing for.

16. DLO Priorities. The current DLO view is that they will be unable to satisfy all the proposed calls on their resources in a manner to meet the most demanding timelines in full. There will be a need to prioritise equipment delivery, and to deconflict UOR action with other preparations, in order to target industrial as well as DLO resources. The most significant pinch points are with rotary wing aircraft, and the preparation of vehicles. These projects will require a coordinated approach involving DLO, industrial and FLC resources. DLO are looking at ways of how best to deliver equipment once the priorities are declared. To meet these very exacting deadlines may in some cases require the re-deployment of manpower between agencies, at the expense of lower priority work for this operation. Once strategic and operational guidance is given, the Joint Estimate process will reveal which element of the Package is to have priority: Maritime, Land or Air. The scale of this problem clearly increases with the chosen package with Packages 0,1,2 having containable risk, but Package 3 demanding radical solutions to meet the force generation timelines.

17. Force Preparation. The original D +124 timeline figure produced by CJO on 30 August was for a division of 2 square bdes, a manoeuvre sp bde and 2 logistic bdes. Option 1B is for a significantly reduced force contribution, hence the figure of D + 48 to deploy the force into theatre. RSOI, in theatre training, and reconstitution, will need to be built into this timeline. The process may take up to 40 days but could be mitigated by occurring concurrently as units are complete in theatre, but there will be a requirement to conduct combined training prior to the declaration of FOC. This should be achievable before the V Corps main effort is launched in the south, at D + 66. Secondly, if CinC CENTCOM achieves early success leading to regime collapse, before the committal of main forces, the UK element should still be able to contribute to operations in the north, including the transitional phase to post conflict activities.

18. Land Package 3. Ref A suggests the minimum option is Package 3B, and the optimal 1B. However, there is broad agreement between MoD and PJHQ staffs that Option 3B is essentially cosmetic rather than a truly capable force for combat operations in Northern Iraq. The optimal force we can generate given all our current constraints, Option 1B is not without some key risks:

a. Sustainability. Without the UOR actions that SofS has currently deferred the force cannot deploy, unless combat risk is taken, and an assumption is made that any logistic shortfall will be made up by the US.

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b. Deployment. Current timelines assume that we will be able to requisition sufficient lift to meet the necessary timelines, or the US will make up the shortfall.

c. Turkey. The US need to deliver Turkey as a vigorous and supportive ally. However, the price could be the integration of a Tu Bde into a UK led Division. Notwithstanding the political difficulties this might imply, there are also very real combat risks in attempting to integrate a Tu Bde under UK command in this potentially demanding environment.

d. Additional risks. Additional risks include a fixed medium scale long term commitment in post conflict and the knock-on effect for land operations for over 2 years.

e. Key Assumptions. The following key assumptions were made in developing the timelines for the land component option to enable the Option 1B force to be deployed by D + 48. These highlight the essential requirement for early decision making:

- Sufficient commercial shipping and aircraft would be available in the time required in order to make up the shortfall in the military strategic lift capacity. This may be assumed to be at least 21 days prior to decision to deploy forces.
- Key reservist enablers would be activated in time for them to be employed on the LoC during deployment. Callout for formed TA units may take up to 90 days.
- Industry will be able to meet requirements for regeneration of base depot sustainment stocks in time to meet deployment dates. There will be little confidence here until industry is approached.
- US will run the LoC from SPOD/APOD to Concentration Areas. In this case the UK needs to weigh up the reliability of such offers given that the US main effort will be with V Corps.
- Turkey will deliver HNS ICR to enable deployment within theatre and/or the US will provide assets to make up UK shortfalls. These aspects will only become clear when the TGS is approached.

Annex:

A. Roles and Tasks.

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POTENTIAL ROLES AND TASKS (ANNEX A TO MIL STRAT COMMENTARY)	
ROLE OR TASK	ASSET
MARITIME	
<u>Command and Control</u> Provision of UK MCC Provision of DCJFMCC Co-ordination of coalition maritime assets	MCC/CVS MCC MCC/CVS
<u>Information and Intelligence</u> <u>Strike</u> TLAM. Attack of land based or surface units/platforms. Seizure of port/airfield installations. Destruction of key points/C2 nodes Operations in Complex Terrain (Urban.) Sanctions Enforcement/Interdiction.	SSN/FF/MPA. SSN. CVS/CAG/Cdo/NFS/SSN. Cdo. Cdo. Cdo DD/FF.
<u>Force Protection</u> Mine Counter Measures operations- Force AAW, ASuW. Defensive Counter Air operations. Offensive Counter Air operations. Protection of SLOCs. Protection of land based forces in littoral Cat 2 Sp to SF. Humanitarian assistance post conflict.	MM. DD/FF. CVS/DD. CVS CAG. DD/FF. DD/FF/CVS. Cdo. Cdo.
<u>Sustainability</u> Maintenance of maritime LOC. Afloat Support (both own and coalition.) Logistic Support to ARG, Land, Air forces operations ashore. PCR medical support. Support to DD/FF/SSNs.	RFA. RFA. RFA. RFA. RFA.
<u>Manoeuvre</u> Strategic deployment. Operational mobility. Tactical agility and deployment of force elements.Littoral/Land Manoeuvre	All. All. ARG/CVS ARG/Cdo..
LAND	
Securing the crossings over the R TIGRIS and developing a bridgehead to the south. The defeat, in sequence, of the main Iraqi units in the north (RA 1 (Mech) Div, RG ADNAN Div). Securing the forces own flank against Iraqi attack from East. fixing Iraqi forces in the north to prevent redeployment to counter the US main effort from the south. Isolating TIKRIT. Being prepared to secure WMD sites, line of communication and civil infrastructure (including oil facilities) in the north.	Div HQ and 2 Manoeuvre formations (UK Armcd Bdc and US ACR) (With the addition of a third manoeuvre formation.) (With the addition of a third manoeuvre formation)

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AIR	
<u>NORTH</u> Offensive Ops Tactical Air Recce CAS / Offensive Ops ISTAR AAR AEW	18 TORNADO GR4 8 JAGUAR 12/18 HARRIER GR7 1 NIMROD R1 2 TRISTAR + 8 VC10 2 E-3D
<u>SOUTH</u> Offensive Ops Air Defence AAR	12 TORNADO GR4 6 TORNADO F3 2 TRISTAR
<u>LOC TO BE DECIDED</u> Air Transport / SF Maritime Recce	C-17 / C-130 4 NIMROD MPA

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