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D/DG Op Pol/4/6/1(49/02)

SJS

22 July 2002

PS/Secretary of State

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There are essentially two options for UK involvement in an early attack:

- air/maritime/SF package
- division minus in N. Iraq

Large scale involvement in a US thrust from Kuwait would ^{be} impracticable. The division minus option would require immediate action on UORs etc and early decisions (October) on reserves etc; the latter would definitely be visible.

MW
22/7

IRAQ: Meeting with Prime Minister

1. We have been carrying out further work in advance of the Prime Minister's meeting on Iraq on Tuesday. The meeting will discuss a Cabinet Office paper which was submitted to Ministers last Friday. We expect the agenda to follow the recommendations in the paper covering:

- US planning and timescales
- Objectives of any military action
- Strategic policy framework
- UK potential contribution (in particular lead times)
- Information Campaign

2. Secretary of State has already been briefed on what we know about US planning and timescales. CDS will speak to this at the PM's meeting. In particular we are working hard to establish whether or not the US have a winning military concept. It is still too early to be definitive, but we consider it likely that the answer to this question will be "yes" with certain conditions. A key point for the Prime Minister to note will be that, as far as military planning is concerned, US action could take place very quickly, as early as November, using in theatre forces which appeared to be involved in routine deployments.

3. Secretary of State will recognise, from previous correspondence, the UK's proposed *objective of any military action* set out in the paper. As the paper points out, US military action takes regime change as its objective. Although agreement among Ministers on our objective is useful, it begs the question of the *strategic policy framework* in which to take military action in pursuit of this objective. In particular a framework is required to set the conditions for military action including the necessary justification in international law. The Cabinet Office paper looks at this question in some detail. From a military perspective, the justification is important because it may well constrain our ability to support US action. Our experience with DESERT BADGER II illustrated that this is far from an academic point and the use of Diego Garcia and Cyprus will be an issue at the very least.

4. We have carried out further, illustrative work, on *UK military contribution and timescales* in consequence of feedback from recent COS meetings and Secretary of State's meeting last Thursday. We have focused our thinking on two packages:

- 1) **Supporting/Enabling Package** – this package would be tailored to US operations in southern (and potentially northern) Iraq. The package includes basing in Cyprus and Diego Garcia; air support based around our OP RESINATE (ISR; AAR and in place F3 and GR4); ARMILLA ships and a TLAM-capable submarine; the only land contribution would be Special Forces and their associated aircraft. (Both air and sea components may be enhanced at relatively short notice.)
- 2) **Discrete Land Contribution** – this would foresee an expanded supporting/enabling package as above together with a Division (minus) land component to take part in operations in northern Iraq.

c. 35,000 troops

Apart from being involved, the military utility (and risks) of this option not clear.

5. CDS has directed that we concentrate on these packages because they effectively represent maximum practical UK contributions to US-led operations for either early action or later action. Other options, such as providing land forces to integrate with the US main effort in the south, have been discounted because the severe difficulties we would face due to interoperability; deployment time and geographic constraints affecting logistics in particular.
6. I attach at annex illustrative schematic timelines for preparing each element of the two packages. The first schematic illustrates what would be available if we took decisions now, assuming action this winter. The second schematic illustrates the latest point at which decisions could be taken for action in autumn next year. Green time lines indicate activities which would not necessarily be visible signs of UK preparing to take action against Iraq, red time lines represent visible activity. Illustrative financial commitments are indicated [in square brackets].
7. For the enabling/supporting package this winter, preparation could take place using existing resources. This would not be publicly visible until the beginning of military action for the maritime and SF components. Deployment of air assets one month in advance of action would, however, be visible. We are looking separately at whether there are items of short-term expenditure (including UORs) which could usefully enhance this package.
8. For the discrete land contribution, we have confirmed earlier work that a large scale (Div(-)) force would take six to nine months to prepare and deploy. We believe that some early preparation activity could be explained under the umbrella of the recent CSR settlement and lessons learned from EX SAIF SAREEA II and operations in Afghanistan. That said, any large-scale deployment would require the call up of reserves beginning five months in advance of offensive operations. In summary for a large scale deployment, although large numbers of reserves would need to be called out in October

and November, a complete formation would not be ready for offensive action until March next year, although a smaller presence would be available sooner.

9. The schematic for Autumn 2003 present the same timelines aligned to an October 2003 date for the commencement of offensive action. This shows that decisions involving a financial commitment of £700m would need to be taken by February at the very latest¹ and our intentions would start to become publicly visible, initially through the call out of reserves, in April and May. As CDS has pointed out, from the perspective of a UK military contribution to coalition action, it is only worth putting off action by a year if we are able to use the additional time to make proper preparations for military action well in advance of offensive operations.

10. Indications from the US are that they do not expect a ground force contribution from the UK for operations out of Kuwait. This leaves open the possibility of a UK contribution from the West – likely to be limited to Special Forces – and a contribution from the North. Our work on the Div(-) option is now being tailored for this possibility, though it is difficult to see how meaningful operations could be achieved outside the framework of a multinational force such as the ARRC with the support of other allies.

11. Finally the need for an *information campaign* is covered in the Cabinet Office paper. Although this is couched in terms of influencing public and international opinion, it will also be necessary to integrate this with information operations as part of any military plan. Again, in the absence of a strategic policy framework, it is hard to see how this could be achieved.

Way Ahead

12. As the Cabinet Office makes clear, time is now pressing. For the MOD in particular it will become increasingly difficult for us, in dealing with the US,

¹ Decisions taken much earlier would, however, reduce risk.

to take matters forward in the absence of guidance on the scale and timing of any UK force contribution, if we are to do more than offer the Supporting/Enabling Package. Further, as the US move forward, they are bound to seek guarantees on the UK contribution they are assuming as part of their planning, such as the provision of Diego Garcia.

13. In preparing their paper, Cabinet Office officials had it in mind that this would prepare the Prime Minister for a conversation with President Bush, preferably before he is briefed by Rumsfeld on US military planning, which is due to take place on 4 August. I understand Secretary of State is potentially travelling to Washington in early ^{10 - 12} September. Once the outcome of the Prime Minister's meeting is known, it may well make sense for an MOD team at official level to visit Washington in the meantime.

14. I also attach a speaking note for SofS to use at the meeting which underlines the key decisions MOD seeks from tomorrow's meeting.

Desmond Bowen

Desmond Bowen
DG Op Pol
MT

Enclosures:

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☆ = decision point
Green is invisible
Red is visible

WINTER 2002/03

UK Options
(p. 4)

1st Package
(sea/air/)

Enablers



2nd Package
(Division minus)

Large Scale



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Start Deploying Land Forces

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AUTUMN 2003

UK Options
(1.4)

1st Package

Enablers

Maritime

Air

Feb-03 Mar-03 Apr-03 May-03 Jun-03 Jul-03 Aug-03 Sep-03 Oct-03



Planning Direction

UOR action

Deployments

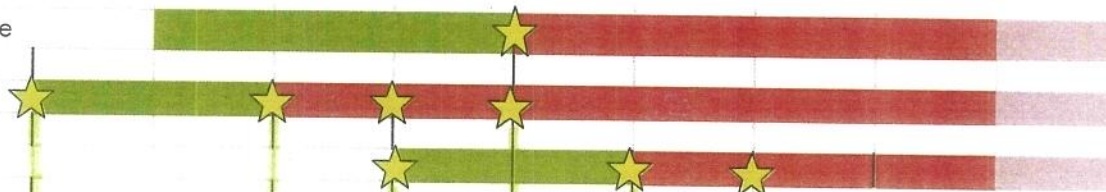
2nd Package

Large Scale

Maritime

Army

Air



Land Sustainability Package [£500m]

Land UOR action [£200m]

Recover STP Flying Hours [£155m]

Air UOR [272m]

Stock build up/NBC prep [n/k]

Call Out 2300 Air Reserves

Begin Reserve Call Out Army 100s

Begin Deployment; Call out 6000 Army Reserves

Start Deploying Land Forces

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SPEAKING NOTE FOR SOFS: 23 JULY 2002

Key Points:

- US military planning is gathering pace.
- Mood and timetable point to this winter for action, although an alternative would be in 2003/4.
- Need for early guidance on UK military involvement and preparatory work.
- PM engagement with President needed now to assess US willingness to establish strategic framework, followed by UK decision-making before summer break.

Line to Take

- Too early to judge if the US military plan is a winning concept. Chiefs of Staff not yet convinced. Questions to be answered as planning develops. UK view of pressure on Iraq to be applied from South, West and North.
- US would like to establish scale of UK involvement. [Subject to legal framework] US expectation of Diego Garcia, Cyprus, air enablers, maritime force and SF at minimum. Developing expectation of division size force in North with Turkey and other allies.
- Decisions needed urgently if MOD is to be involved this winter. A land force contribution Division size needs preparatory action immediately with leading Brigades only arriving in theatre in the new year, and complete in March/April. This would be supported on the maritime and air side too.

- For large scale land force contribution in 2003/4 we would have more preparation time, but we should not delay decisions long in order to ensure all long lead times (UORs etc) are met.
- For MOD essential next steps are:
 - guidance on planned UK involvement: this winter or next, and scale.
 - widening of military planning net to take preparations forward.
 - proposals for decisions by Ministers on preparation work (UORs, reserves, training, cannibalisation) to be taken in next weeks.
- understanding that costs of UORs etc will be met from Reserve. (Additional f500M in 02/03 was "to sustain activity levels and retention levels, and help offset the wider impact of the rate of military operations": Chief Secretary's letter (para 8) of 10 July.)