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SafS 18/1
Iraq options
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D/DCDS(C)/05/04/05

24 May 02

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

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MA/CGS

PS/CAS

MA/VCDS

Policy Director

CDI

DCDS(EC)

ACDS(Ops)

DG Op Pol

ACDS(RP)

DG RP

DGE

Iraq SPG Leader

Sec(O)1

IRAQ

Issue

1. Emerging findings of Iraq contingency planning work.

Recommendation

2. That Secretary of State notes that:
 - (a) until there is greater visibility and clarity of US intent our work on potential approaches to an Iraq campaign remain speculative; this work is advancing but will lack definition until we engage with the US; as a result force packages discussed in this paper are illustrative of the maximum potential UK contribution.
 - (b) due to air transport constraints imposed by OP JACANA, UK could not contribute significantly to offensive operations before the end of November;
 - (c) given **three months** warning of offensive operations the UK could deploy a **Medium Scale Joint Force** to the Gulf but the force package would, however, risk being a token contribution; decisions incurring significant expenditure would be required immediately, and work on basing rights, and deployment would need to start almost immediately. The cost of generating forces to the required level of readiness, including essential UORs, would be some **£500M - £800M**.
 - (d) with **six months** warning UK could deploy a **Large Scale** land warfighting force together with a Medium Scale maritime/air component ("Division minus package"); at this level of deployment we judge the land component as making a significant contribution a US led coalition, but the time for preparation would prejudice the capability and sustainability of the force; decisions incurring significant expenditure would be required within a month; basing rights would need to be secured within three months; a

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decision on a six month deployment **now** would permit offensive operation to begin in **December**. The cost of generating forces to the required level of readiness, including essential UORs, would be some **£800M - £1.1Bn**.

- (e) with **nine months** warning the recommended force package would remain as for six months, but inherent risks would be significantly reduced; the large scale land for package in particular becomes more credible, capable and sustainable. As a result the cost of generating the required level of readiness would be rather higher - some **£900M - £1.2Bn**.
- (f) the deployment and campaign costs would be in addition to those set out above;
- (g) deployment and offensive operations would lead to significant downstream opportunity costs, particularly our ability to engage on other operations, given the need to recover and recuperate forces of this size;

3. And agrees that

- (a) after reporting to the Prime Minister, he should draw on this analysis in discussions with Secretary Rumsfeld on 5th June seeking views on both the timescale and the level of UK involvement desired; and,
- (b) that further work should be carried out in parallel to refine contingency planning in order to inform costs and decision points. This could identify what action we might need to take soon in order to reduce the warning time for the Division minus option; further advice could be submitted in mid-June;
- (c) note that proper preparations would involve a need to raise issues more widely in the Department and to make discreet approaches to Industry, although we would not expose the purpose of such enquiries. Leaks must be possible, and we would prepare a public presentation package for this eventuality.
- (d) we also should submit detailed advice on EX EASTERN SANDS in early June.

Timing

- 45
4. Priority. Meeting scheduled for 10~~00~~ on Monday 27 May.

Background

5. In my minute of 10th May I promised to update the Secretary of State on our planning work on Iraq in advance of his meeting with Rumsfeld on 6 June. Our close-hold work on coalition military options has identified potential differences in UK and US views on the outcomes we seek in Iraq, in terms of governance and WMD capability, as being key. As these outcomes drive all our lower level planning we are having to develop a range of approaches to satisfy a range of "end-states", these in turn

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suggest a number of permutations on the size and capability requirements of putative coalition force packages. Other key issues we would need to resolve include the potential legal underpinning of any military action and agreement on what are the key conditions that need to be in place to guarantee success. I will update you further orally.

6. The remainder of this note concerns our work on UK military contingency planning. The work deliberately does not consider the legal or policy framework underpinning any military action. The key assumption is that the largest US led coalition would be along the lines of the DESERT STORM and that the UK would wish to contribute.

7. We have focussed our work so far on credible and achievable, but illustrative, UK force contributions given three, six and nine-month warning times in advance of offensive military action. It is a part of the UK position as put by the Prime Minister at Crawford that there should be an opportunity for arms inspectors under a UNSCR before military action is undertaken; this will shorten timescales. We have looked at what is achievable within existing spending and what is practical were additional resources committed. That said, we also need to take into account the impact of current commitments on Gulf contingency plans, and also how a major deployment might affect other operations.

8. OP JACANA is the critical existing operational commitment that would limit our ability to deploy significant forces to the Gulf. The sustainment of existing forces in Afghanistan and delays in the delivery in new capabilities have placed such a strain on RAF air transport (AT) that if, as is planned, OP JACANA draws down in July, the appropriate capability will only become available in September due to the need for maintenance. Taking into account deployment times, this would limit our ability to contribute significantly to any offensive operations in the region until November at the earliest.

3 month Warning

9. At current levels of readiness, given a 3 month warning, the UK could deploy a Medium Scale Joint Force, the key elements of which would be around 10 major warships including a carrier, an armoured Brigade, about 60 fast jets and associated support including transport aircraft.

10. There would be very little time available to carry out necessary risk reduction including desertisation of equipment for all elements of the joint force. This would significantly impede our ability to contribute to allied operations. UOR action necessary and possible in the time available is estimated at between £200M and £450M. In addition, in particular in the case of the Army, it would be necessary to procure now a wide range of materiel to fill known gaps in operational sustainability – at an estimated cost of some £175M. It would also be necessary to raise the readiness of RAF fast jet aircrew from the reduced levels currently planned for 2002/3. This is estimated to cost an additional £150M.

11. Limiting our land contribution to a single brigade would mean that we would not be capable of independent warfighting. The UK brigade would require integration into an allied formation, which would not be ideal and substantially reduce our influence on

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the control of the campaign. It will be less than our Gulf War contribution. Further, UK's contribution would be dwarfed by the likely scale of the overall effort.

12. A decision to go ahead with this force package would immediately incur cost. Mobilisation would become publicly apparent almost immediately. Theatre basing would need to be established immediately as lead elements would begin to arrive in theatre within weeks. Unimpeded transit through the Suez Canal would be required to achieve the time scale. Commercial air and sea charter costing around £100m would also be required.

6 month Warning

13. 6 months preparation time would allow us to deploy a Large Scale land warfighting force – a “division minus” – comprising two square armoured brigades, an operational support group, and a rear operations brigade. This would be combined with medium scale maritime and air forces comparable to those available for the 3-month option. Scale would be comparable to the Gulf War contribution and confer significant influence on the control of the campaign.

14. In this scenario, the land element of UK forces would be capable of limited independent warfighting. Sustainability of the land force (and all UK forces more generally) would, however, carry significant risks such as large numbers of vehicles becoming unserviceable and reliance on others to supply ammunition and other stock. Furthermore, the 6-month lead time does not allow for the procurement and fitting of *all* UOR equipment considered to be essential for operations in the Gulf (such as the desertisation of all armoured vehicles). The absence of these modifications across the vehicle fleets would generate operational risk and degrading the credibility of the UK's contribution as campaign unfolded.

15. Our initial work shows that a decision to *prepare for deployment* would require the commitment of significant funds almost immediately. Significant UOR contracts would need to be placed with industry. Operational expenditure such as for commercial strategic lift would need to begin within one month. A call-out of somewhere between five and ten thousand reservists including medical personnel would need to begin soon after. These would mainly be Army reservists, some used to backfill existing commitments and others deployed to the Gulf itself. The overall cost of preparing forces for operations on this scale and in this timescale would be some £800M to £1.1Bn, excluding deployment costs.

16. Any decision to deploy would require us to secure basing 3-4 months in advance of offensive operations. Clearly there would be advantage in securing earlier basing or pre-deployment of equipment and forces.

9 month Warning

17. Given a 9-month warning, although I would recommend the same maximum force package as for 6 months, the additional warning time would offer greater opportunity to optimise preparation and minimise risk through additional equipment fits and training opportunities. Costs would be around £100M higher than for the 6 month option because of the greater volume of UORs which could be procured in the

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timescale. We believe such a force package would possess enough capability and sustainability to be a credible contribution to any coalition.

Conflict and Recuperation

18. Work so far has not considered costs incurred in the conflict itself; nor has it considered post-conflict tasks, recovery of forces and their recuperation. Aside from impact on expenditure, there would of course be a major military opportunity cost for a significant period after the conflict. Defence planning assumptions allow three years for recuperation after a large scale deployment.

EX EASTERN SANDS

19. An exercise in the Gulf region – EASTERN SANDS – remains a possibility. This would involve switching 1 UK Arm'd Div's Offensive Support Group Feb/Mar training from Poland to Kuwait. Additional costs, over and above those incurred by carrying out the exercise in Poland are estimated as being between £1m and £6m depending on the availability of military strategic lift and host-nation support. This is against a total exercise cost (for Poland) of some £23m.

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you were briefed on in
Kuwait.*

20. Although the EASTERN SANDS has much to commend it on training grounds alone, it would also offer the opportunity for the Department to establish a pretext for certain UOR activity – desertisation for example – and early deployment of equipment and personnel. That said, we would need to consider whether the preparations for the exercise might send a signal – that we were committed to action against Iraq – both in the region and at home.

Conclusion

21. The key finding of our work so far is that other than offering a token force contribution, we could not contribute to large scale offensive action beginning before December. Further work is unlikely to change this conclusion. That said, we have no sight as yet of US planning and all our work is illustrative. It might be therefore that we could make some meaningful contribution to smaller scale operations by offering a discrete capability much earlier.

22. If the US were to propose a large-scale operation, the more warning time we have the more credible the UK's contribution could be. A 6-month warning currently represents the bare minimum; 9 months would allow us to offer a much more robust and capable force contribution. Ideally we would know well in advance the earliest date of planned offensive action and would be authorised (publicly) to commence activity to meet that deadline. Clearly this is unlikely to be the case. If, however, we consider it likely that UK would wish to contribute to such action when the call came we need to consider what action we need to take now to reduce risks and as far as possible readiness times. This work would need to identify key decision points, including when we need to call out reserves and will necessitate wider consultation within the Department and discreet contact with Industry. We would aim to provide this advice by mid-June. It will include our thoughts on how we widen the debate across Whitehall, in particular to address implications for the defence budget.

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23. Finally, EASTERN SANDS, offers an opportunity both to enable preparatory work to take place discretely and to facilitate risk reduction through pre-deployment. I will submit further advice in early June.

24. Policy Director has been consulted on the approach outlined in this minute and is content that it fits in with the overall policy approach and what we can discern of US intentions.

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