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FILE 001/71
cc: Oth
MR
JPC

INDEXED

by fax to the press
16h 2m
As briefed by me yesterday by Sir & the Chiefs.
Are you content with the recommendations (page 4)?
These seem right, subject to your views on
an announcement on Monday 20 January. This is bound
to have significant impact. In any event, I assume
you will want to see a draft.

MO 6/17/15K

16 January 2003

Dear Tony,

David 16

cc (this page) Jonathan
David &
Matthew

cc (whole document)
Alastair
Sally

IRAQ: UK LAND CONTRIBUTION

The United States have asked us to provide a UK ground force to take on a key role in Southern Iraq in the event of military action. Important questions remain to be resolved about the overall US plan. But the role proposed for the UK is a sensible and significant one, and I recommend that with certain qualifications, we accept it. We need to decide quickly.

We need to begin moving equipment and personnel early next week. We should approach the Kuwaitis and others this weekend for clearances (including for UK air forces): this points to a decision by Friday afternoon. Our decision on a land package needs to be announced to Parliament and the public. If you agree, I propose to announce the composition and deployment of the force in an oral statement on Monday 20 January.

Background

At yesterday's briefing with the Chiefs of Staff we discussed the UK

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister

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contribution to possible operations against Iraq. We have already agreed with the US to plan on the basis of contributing Special Forces an Amphibious Task Group comprising 3 Commando Brigade and some 16 vessels in addition to naval forces already in theatre, and an air package of some 68 fast jets and 41 supporting aircraft. You also agreed (Anna Wechsberg's letter of 31 October 2002) that we could offer for planning purposes a UK land package for possible operations against Iraq. We have been considering with the US since then the precise scope of the package and the role it would play.

As initially conceived, this package (my office's letters of 15 and 29 October) would have comprised a Divisional HQ with its personnel, with one armoured brigade, and significant logistic support; some 28,000 personnel in total. It would have operated with the US 4th Infantry Division from Turkey into Northern Iraq, and the US had offered their 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment (3 ACR) (roughly equivalent to a UK armoured brigade) to provide our division with a second manoeuvre formation.

However, Turkey has been extremely reticent about accepting coalition ground forces on their territory. Although the US now seem to be making some progress in negotiating their own requirements, they have concluded that time is now too short to deploy more than one division through Turkey. Against this background, the US have been adjusting their plans. They aim to compensate for a reduced Northern land force by enabling US forces coming from the South to reach further and faster than originally planned. In order to achieve this, they have identified a key role for a UK ground force.

Proposed role for UK land forces

The proposal is essentially as described in my office's letter of 8 January. The US would like us to deploy HQ 1 (UK) Armoured Division, 7 Armoured Brigade and 16 Air Assault Brigade, and have offered to provide assistance with logistic support. The provision of US logistic support will enable us to make compensating reductions in our force, which would number around 26,000 rather than the 28,000 originally

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envisaged. Although we will still need to call out reservists, our current assessment is that the total reservist requirement is unlikely to be much above 3,000, compared to the 7-8,000 we originally expected. We have already announced the call-out of about 1,500. We should have a firmer figure for the total requirement by the end of the month.

This force, including the Amphibious Task Group (ATG) which we are now deploying, would have the following tasks:

- During initial US ground operations, the ATG, with tactical control of a US Marine Expeditionary Unit, would conduct the Um Qasr/Al Faw operation as already planned.
- Approximately ten days later, HQ 1 Armoured Division with 16 Air Assault Brigade would relieve US forces in an area south of Basrah and the Euphrates including the Rumaylah oilfields, enabling the US to press on further north.
- Whilst US forces conduct decisive ground operations to isolate Baghdad, HQ 1 Armoured Division with 7 Armoured Brigade could protect the right flank of the US 1st Marine Expeditionary Force as it advances north. This would include securing Basrah International Airport and isolating (but not entering) Basrah itself.
- The final UK Divisional Area of Responsibility, including for aftermath operations, would be an area bounded by the Iraq/Kuwait border in the south, Jalibah airfield in the west, the Euphrates in the north, and the Shatt al Arab waterway in the east – a largely Shia area of some 1600 km².

The US are continuing to look at possible additional tasks for this force, but we will take a cautious approach to this. We do not intend that our force should bite off more than it can chew, given its reliance on US logistic support.

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Assessment

Overall US plan. As we have discussed, a number of issues still need finally to be resolved, before we can conclude that the overall US plan represents a winning concept. These include the legal basis for any operation, as well as the credibility of plans for the aftermath, which the US accept will begin concurrently with combat operations. The US also continue to resource the strategic importance of fixing Iraqi forces in the North. We now have greater confidence that they will be able to achieve this: the Turks have just agreed more active planning for two US brigades, although this is not yet fully resolved.

It is also important to note that, as explained yesterday, the overall US plan is radically different from that employed in the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict. Then the concept was of the application of overwhelming force, facilitated by a long and deliberate build-up over several months. By contrast, US planning for this campaign is very economical in terms of the size of forces and length of build-up assumed, turning traditional adages about the ratio of attacking to defending forces on their head, and depending instead on the achievement of overwhelming effect. Much therefore hinges on the achievement at the outset of "shock and awe", to attack the cohesion of the Iraqi regime and deter Iraqi forces from opposing the advance of coalition ground forces. In practical terms, "shock and awe" means the violent application of largely US airpower to targets throughout Iraq at the beginning of the campaign. In the first four days of the campaign, the US envisage using five times as many air weapons against targets in and around Baghdad as were used in the whole of the 1990-91 campaign.

Proposed UK role. Assuming that the outstanding issues can be resolved, I and the Chiefs of Staff are content that the role proposed for a UK ground force is both sensible and attractive. The plan will need further development to address a number of specific challenges (oilfields, displaced persons, handling Iran, etc), but no insurmountable problems have been identified. Although Iraqi use of WMD would obviously present a serious threat, the threat from conventional Iraqi forces is

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assessed as limited, in part because of the expected effects of US airpower. The proposed UK force package is balanced and flexible, is likely to require many fewer reservists than previously estimated, and should be easier to sustain in theatre than the original Northern option, although it cannot be kept there indefinitely; the scope for roulement will depend to a large extent on being able to bring the requirement for firefighting through Operation FRESCO to an end. Although the demanding deployment timescales mean that some risk will have to be taken on the fitting of Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) equipment, this risk is considered acceptable.

The proposed final Area of Responsibility is a coherent one with largely natural geographical boundaries (the Euphrates and the borders with Iran and Kuwait), and includes economic infrastructure critical to Iraq's future, including much of its oil reserves, critical communications nodes, a city (Basrah) of 1.3 million people and a port (Um Qasr) about the size of Southampton. Although the establishment of UK control over this area will require careful presentation to rebut any allegations of selfish motives, we will be playing a vital role in shaping a better future for Iraq and its people.

The proposed UK role will also make us even more important to the US plan than we were before. As noted in our letter of 8 January, this is to some extent a double-edged sword. By making us more integral to the US plan, it would add to the difficulties if UK and US intentions should diverge. But this is a sharpening of an existing risk - bearing in mind US reliance on Diego Garcia, for instance - rather than the creation of a new one.

In our discussion with the Chiefs of Staff yesterday you identified three big issues:

- The nature of the proposition that we are putting to the Iraqi people, including those in the governing apparatus who are not considered beyond the pale, and the way in which this can be conveyed to them without damaging operational security and losing the element of surprise.

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- The aftermath. Now that we have a proposed Area of Responsibility for UK forces, we will be able to work on this with greater clarity, and the forthcoming visit of a Whitehall team to Washington is an opportunity to mould US thinking.
- The unexpected, and making sure we have the best possible contingency plans for worst-case scenarios

I have put work in hand to address these.

Costs

We continue to estimate that the total UOR bill will amount to £500M, that preparing spares, maintenance and logistic support will cost an additional £350M, and that training and infrastructure costs will amount to less than £100M. When Ministry of Defence officials briefed Paul Boateng on 23 December, we estimated the costs of air and sea lift charter at some £50M, bringing the total cost for the preparatory phase to some £1Bn. Under the new land package, the costs of chartering air and sealift are expected to rise by £70M to £120M. This increase will, however, be partially offset by reductions in costs owing to the shorter line of communication, US assistance with logistics, and the smaller size of the force with fewer reservists.

Implementation actions

CENTCOM assume that, unless Saddam changes his behaviour, a political decision to take military action may be made in mid-February. Air and ground operations could begin in early March, with the main effort by ground forces beginning in mid-March (although they still aspire to bring the main effort forward). If UK forces are to fulfil the role described above, we need to have deployed and readied in Kuwait the HQs by the end of January, 16 Air Assault Brigade by the beginning of March, and 7 Armoured Brigade by mid-March.

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Deployment. The correlation between these deployment timelines and US operational planning is set out at Annex A. The precise detail of the road, air and sea movements needed to deploy the UK land force is still developing. However, transit via Suez will typically take 20 days, and loading/unloading at each end adds a further 1 or 2 days, depending on the size of the ship. Movement of some equipment by road requires advance notification to the local authorities. So to be confident of being able to fulfil our role on the ground, we need to begin the visible movement of convoys of 'fighting' equipment as early as Tuesday 21 January. There will also be an obvious increase in activity at those bases affected, and we will need to go to the market to charter the aircraft necessary for the movement of personnel. On current planning, deployment to these timescales would enable the moves of 16 Air Assault Brigade and 7 Armoured Brigade to be completed by 20 February and 10 March respectively. This would be followed by a period of Force Integration Training – preparation and rehearsal alongside US forces – before they would be properly prepared to conduct operations.

Basing and Host Nation Support. We also need urgently to begin seeking agreement to the basing or transit of UK forces, and to negotiate appropriate host nation support. Although we do not need to specify publicly where the UK force is going, it would be prudent to approach the Kuwaitis formally before equipment and personnel start moving. We would therefore propose that this should happen on Saturday 18 January. We also need to approach a number of other countries, not least in order to seek agreement to switch some of the UK air package to the South.

This means that we will need to issue instructions to posts on Friday evening: if necessary this can be done on a conditional basis, but it would obviously be preferable to be able to make a firm proposition. A country-by-country summary of our proposals for handling basing in conjunction with the FCO and Embassies is at Annex A.

Reserves. In my statement on 7 January, I said that we envisaged that initially we would issue sufficient call-out notices to secure some 1,500 reservists, and that we would issue other notices in due course. As noted above, it currently seems unlikely

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that our overall reservist requirements, including some additional RN/RM and RAF requirements which I have already approved, will total much more than 3,000. I expect to receive further advice on this by the end of the month.

Presentation

The proposed land package is fully consistent with the Government's policy objectives announced on 7 January. Following the announcements of military preparations and maritime deployments on 18 December and 7 January, it will further ratchet up the pressure on Saddam. Domestically, the proposed force package is broadly what the media already expect. To that extent, its announcement will come as no surprise. The high visibility of the measures involved will require a reasonably candid explanation. Making our position clearer will remove much of the current awkwardness about preparatory activity in advance of decisions on force packages. Once it has been announced to Parliament, there should be less risk that preparatory activity will give rise to accusations of mobilisation by stealth.

We do need, however, to move quickly to secure host nation agreement to our various basing and transit requirements, since we cannot continue indefinitely to talk vaguely of deployments to "the Gulf region".

All these considerations argue for the earliest possible announcement. Delay beyond 20 January would not improve the presentational climate. At the moment, it can be explained as a logical continuation of the steps we have already announced. But the nearer we get to 27 January and Blix's report to the Security Council, the greater the risk that this decision will be over-interpreted. Getting the announcement out well in advance of the 27th will avoid complications for the handling of either event.

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Recommendations

I therefore recommend that:

- (a) We should inform the US that we agree that planning should assume the contribution of the proposed UK land force package to carry out the role the US has requested, subject to:
 - i. the overall caveat that a further political decision would be required to commit UK forces to any specific operation
 - ii. US assistance in facilitating the bed-down of UK forces, and provision of logistic support
 - iii. Further work to develop a satisfactory plan for the aftermath.
- (b) We should approach the Kuwaitis on Saturday 18 January, formally seeking agreement to base the UK land package there, and approach other states whose assistance will be required, including for the basing of some aircraft originally intended for Turkey. This requires instructions to be sent to posts on Friday evening.
- (c) We should begin the deployment of the UK land package, noting that this will involve further visible movements from early next week.
- (d) We should call out additional reservists in due course when the requirement is clear.
- (e) I should announce the composition and deployment of the land package to Parliament on Monday 20 January.

I would be grateful for your agreement to proceed on this basis.

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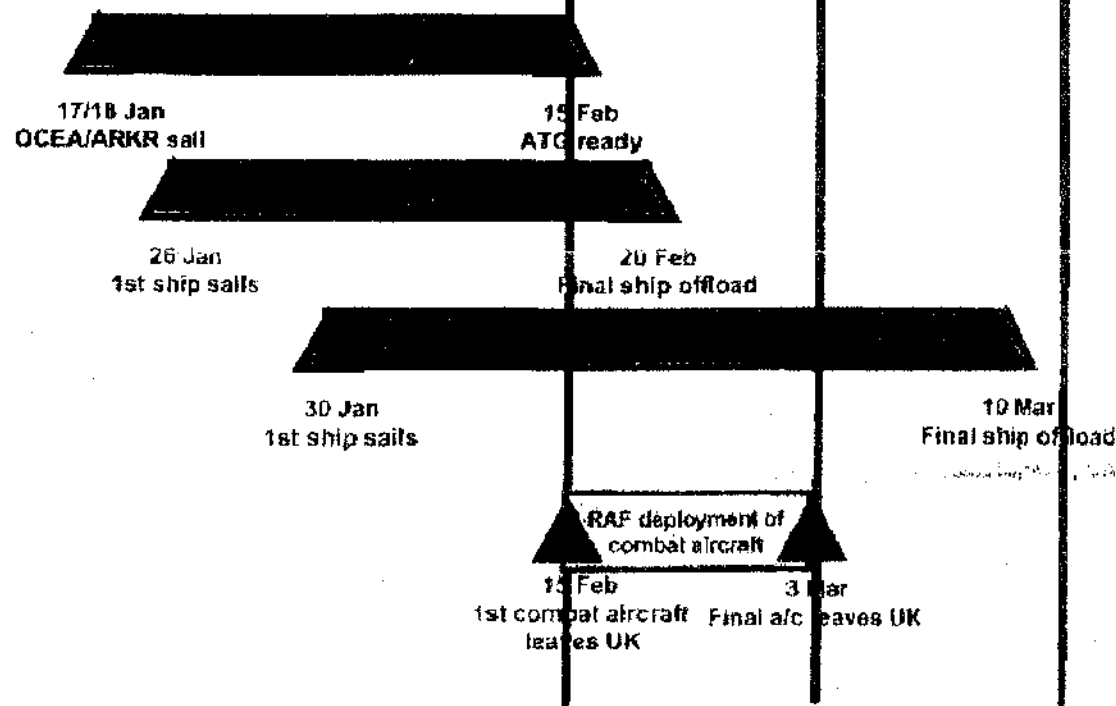
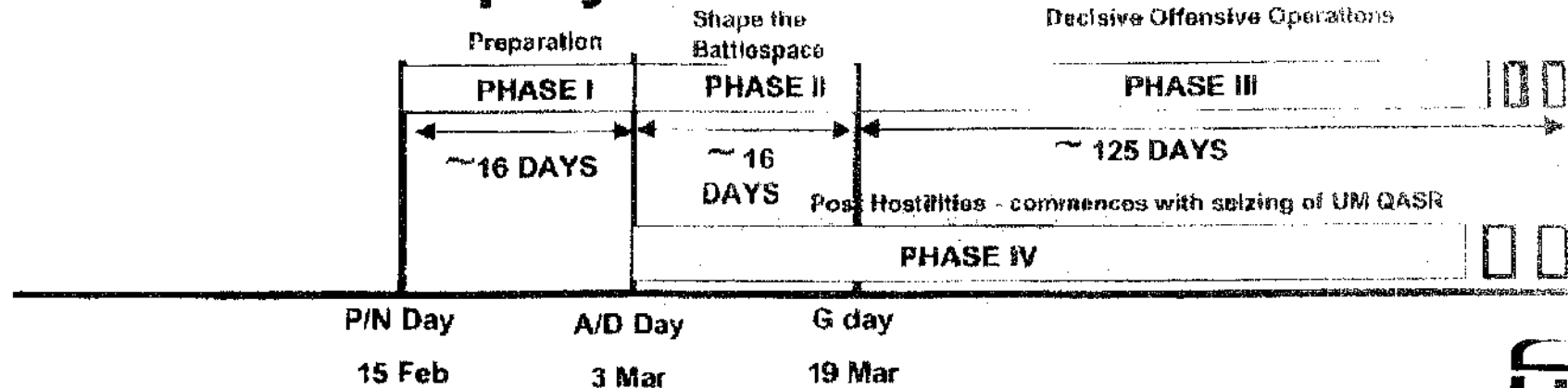
I am copying this letter to the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
and to the Cabinet Secretary.

Yours sincerely
Geoff

GEOFFREY HOON

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UK Deployment Timelines



Equipment will be called forward to the SPOD 7 days prior to ship departing.

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ANNEX B

LONG TERM BASING REQUIREMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

1. The following breakdown of basing requirements by country is based on current planning (as at 13 January) to meet US timelines. It is therefore subject to a degree of flux and may change. Recommendations are highlighted in bold.

Kuwait

2. The UK currently has 8 GR4s and 420 personnel located at Ali Al Salem. An MOU which will cover Host Nation Support and future operations is currently being staffed.

3. The Op TELIC basing requirement is for a further 12 Tomado GR4s (Ground attack fast jets) and 12x GR7s (fast jets) at Ali Al Salem. Basing for the Joint force Logistics Commander and 200 personnel alongside the US. Up to 25,000 Land Forces at various locations

4. To meet timescales deployment of enabling equipment for the land package needs to commence, by air, into Kuwait from 27 January. Applications for diplomatic clearances will be needed in advance.

5. The US intend to engage with Kuwait imminently on land facilities and plan to factor the UK into their request. **The UK should seek to raise our requirements bilaterally with Kuwait prior to this approach.** HMA Kuwait is ready to approach the Kuwaitis on Saturday with a formal request. We will ultimately need to seek authority to mount offensive operations from Kuwait.

Qatar

6. Requirement to collocate National Component Commander (NCC) HQ (about 400 personnel) with US Operational HQ at Camp AS. Possible contingency at Al Udeid airfield if Turkish aircraft basing and overflight clearances are not available.

7. Initial deployment of 24 personnel planned for 15 January. Qataris have been briefed at working level that we are deploying to do work in Camp AS to stay in step with US contingency planning. The second deployment of 74 UK personnel on 22 January is likely to generate significantly more interest.

8. **HMA will need to inform the Qataris in more detail of the numbers and approximate dates of deployment.** We will, however, need to take a lead from the US in terms of explaining the nature of any deployment. We understand that the US have not formally approached Qatar about the use of Camp AS in the event of military action. The current UK position is that deployments are to keep in step with and liaise with the US. DA Doha is actively engaged with the Qataris in negotiating a LOA which will cover jurisdiction and visa arrangements for UK forces deployed in Qatar but outside the scope of the existing DCA.

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Turkey

9. We currently have 4 x Jaguar and 2 VC10 (AAR) aircraft at Incirlik as part of Op RESINATE. These are covered by HNS support arrangements but they would probably need to be expanded to encompass a bigger deployment.
10. We have a Forward Operating base requirement at Diyarbakir (1100 personnel, 2 x C130 transports and 2 x CH47 Support Helicopters). Basing requirement at Incirlik for an air package consisting of 18 x Tornado GR4 (Ground Attack Fast Jets), 8 x Jaguar (Ground Attack), 4 x E3D surveillance aircraft and 1850 personnel.
11. We need to seek permission to land equipment at Iskenderum port for onward movement to Incirlik by 25 January. We would also need agreement on TLAM overflights and ultimately authority to mount offensive operations from Turkey. If we were to fail to secure the air package in Turkey we would need to seek overflight authority for AWACS and AAR aircraft.

Saudi Arabia

12. We currently have 6 Tornado F3s and will shortly deploy an HS 125 to PSAB.
13. Ultimate basing requirement for Prince Sultan Airbase (PSAB) for 20 Tornado F3s (Air Defence), 4 Nimrod MR2 (Maritime Reconnaissance), 2 Canberra PR9s (Reconnaissance) an HS125, the Air Component Commander HQ and a total of 1130 Personnel.
14. The US have requested that we follow their lead in requests to Saudi Arabia. The UK requirements have been incorporated into a larger US request, which has been presented to the Saudis. The US does not expect approval of this request to be quickly or easily granted. In the meantime the most pressing deployment is for 150 personnel and Communications kit to start enabling work on the ACC from 23 January. Numbers are likely to be less than 40 until early February. DA Riyadh has confirmed that these will be manageable under the existing arrangements for op RESINATE. HMA Riyadh recommends that we should confirm UK requirements to the Saudis as soon as there is an opportunity to do so on Saturday.

Jordan

16. Al Jafr required as a forward mounting base (1200 personnel, 5 x C130 (Transport aircraft), 6 x CH47 (support helicopters) and 3 x Lynx (helicopters). There is also a requirement for basing for 8 x GR7 (Fast Ground attack jets) and 2 x PR9 Canberra (reconnaissance aircraft) at Azraq. There is a

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possible requirement to base a further 12 additional GR7 if they are not based at Ali Al Salem (Kuwait).

17. The Jordanians have requested a unified coalition approach. The US have approached the King who has given approval for offensive operations from Jordan on the condition that it is kept low profile and a ceiling of 5,000 coalition personnel in Jordan. The US are currently working to raise this ceiling. **HMA Amman should liaise with the US ambassador to determine the best way in which to take forward a coalition request and be cleared to approach the Jordanians as and when he sees fit.** Host Nation Support is covered by an existing MOUs with Jordan

UAE

18. There are no UK forces currently deployed to the UAE.

19. Long term basing requirement for a Naval Forward Logistics Site and 15 accompanying personnel at Minhad Airbase. Additional naval logistic sites are required at Jebel Ali Port and Fujairah Port & Airport with up to 70 and 100 personnel respectively. We would also wish to request use of some UAE facilities to conduct amphibious work up training and acclimatisation.

20. Available facilities at Minhad are being committed and we need to start enabling work shortly if we are to meet required timelines. The UAE have indicated they would be receptive to an approach. **HMA Abu Dhabi should, therefore, approach the UAE with our requests for Naval logistics basing at the same time as we approach other nations.**

21. DA Abu Dhabi is already considering opportunities to make use of the NTGs presence in the Gulf for joint training activities with the UAE Armed Forces. We will also have to open negotiations on Host Nation Support and coverage within the existing Defence Cooperation Accord (DCA) which may require a Letter of Arrangement

22. The lead coalition nation at Minhad is Canada and we intend to attach to the Australian facilities at Minhad. **This has been agreed at a working level but we should make a formal approach to the Australians and the Canadians through our DAs in country.**

Oman

23. We need to relocate 2 Nimrod MR2 (Maritime reconnaissance) from Thumrait where they are deployed on Op Oracle to Seeb. We would also like to make use of Oman training ranges to conduct amphibious work up training and acclimatisation.

24. DA Muscat has confirmed that the Omanis have agreed to the relocation of the Nimrods. **DA Muscat will need to approach the Omanis through the usual channels to discuss training possibilities.**

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Bahrain

25. We have requirements to expand the existing UK MCC (Maritime Component Commander) from 40 to 64 personnel and to retain the Tristar (AAR) detachment at Muharraq. We may need to seek to base an additional 2 Tristars at Muharraq if the air package in Turkey does not work out.

26. The UK MCC is covered by an LOA, it has recently been amended to cover an increase in personnel to 64. The Muharraq AAR detachment is covered by a separate extant LOA.

Egypt

27. We do not have any basing requirements for Egypt. It would, however, be prudent for DA Cairo to inform the Egyptians that they are likely to see an increase in requests to transit the Suez canal.

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