

PLANNING FOR THE UK'S ROLE IN IRAQ AFTER SADDAM

Introduction

1. US/UK military planning assumes that, in the medium term after the conflict in Iraq, the Coalition forces will be re-deployed into six or seven geographical sectors in order to provide a secure environment for the civil transitional administration to conduct humanitarian assistance and reconstruction work. The US expectation is that the UK Division will be responsible for one of these sectors. This would be very expensive and could have wider resource implications. **Ministers urgently need to take a view on this before the military planning assumptions become a fait accompli.**

Options for UK Involvement in the Short Term

2. Once Coalition forces have entered Iraq and defeated its armed forces, they will end up in occupation of certain parts of Iraq. They will have areas of operational responsibility and, within those areas, obligations towards the Iraqi people under the Law of Armed Conflict and International humanitarian law. The UK division will remain within the Coalition military chain of command and probably be located in the Southeast of Iraq, based in or near Basrah. However, the precise location of the Division immediately following hostilities will depend on how the campaign has developed. And the size of its area will depend, amongst other things, on the permissiveness of the environment and will be broadly proportionate to the size of the Division in relation to the rest of the Coalition.

3. Under these circumstances, we could consider concentrating our humanitarian effort in the UK Division's area of operations. There might be some expectation that we do so, given our legal responsibilities as the occupying power. But the costs of making a significant difference would be high. Indicative estimates suggest it could cost between \$2B and \$12B to meet the humanitarian need in the whole of Iraq in the first year, depending on the degree of disruption to the oil for food programme and the amount of displacement and damage caused by conflict. As the UK Division's likely area might contain up to 20% of the Iraqi population, somewhere between \$400M and \$2.4B might be needed for the first year. This is well beyond the financial and implementing capacity of DfID and MOD. And there is a risk that the UK could end up becoming responsible for a large and expensive commitment, potentially in the medium term, if the local population became dependent on UK assistance.

4. The alternative to making an exemplary effort in our area would be to give our humanitarian assistance to UN agencies and NGOs on the basis that it could be used anywhere in Iraq on the basis of greatest need. This could be supplemented by some small scale support for quick impact projects in the UK Division's area and could be a cheaper and more flexible option.

Do Ministers agree that the UK does not have the resources to make an 'exemplary' effort in providing for basic humanitarian needs in the area controlled by the UK Division?

Options for UK Involvement in the Medium Term

5. In the medium term (by the autumn), the Chiefs of Staff consider that it will be necessary to draw down to around a third (ie from around 45,000 to 15,000) of the current

level of military commitment in order to avoid long term damage to the armed forces. The additional costs of maintaining a force of brigade strength in Iraq would be in the order of £1B per annum. At the same time, there is a US expectation that the UK will contribute forces for the security of a geographic area of Iraq under the command of the Coalition military commander over the medium term. For security reasons the military planners will carve Iraq into sectors of two to four provinces in size. The amount of Iraq a brigade would secure in the medium term depends on the permissiveness of the environment. But it is a reasonable to assume that a brigade should be able to manage a single, well-populated province. The province of Basrah, for example, has a population of some two million people.

6. There are a variety of options for the employment of a force of this size¹:

- A UK brigade could be responsible for providing security in a single province of Iraq (eg the Al Basrah province – this would be attractive to us because of its regional significance, its port and infrastructure, and its proximity to established UK facilities in Kuwait). The brigade would operate under another nation's two-star headquarters for the sector as a whole.
- A UK Divisional headquarters could take lead responsibility for security, under Coalition command in a larger area of Iraq (eg US planners envisage the Al Basrah, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Wasit provinces being a single sector) by providing a two-star headquarters and a brigade. This would require support from Coalition partners – perhaps two more brigades in this example – but this could be presented as a UK -led sector. We should not underestimate the difficulty of finding suitable nations to join us.
- In addition (or as an alternative) to providing a brigade, the UK, as the framework nation, could suggest deploying the three star NATO Headquarters ACE Rapid Reaction Corps, which has the advantage of being able to deploy rapidly. Its role would need to be defined, but it could have overall responsibility for the security of Iraq. This is not a straightforward option. The ARRC would have to be extracted from NATO, which could be contentious. There are very few three star HQs that could run the security operation in Iraq and the ARRC would risk being stuck in Iraq for the duration.
- It is also at least theoretically possible that the UK could withdraw its forces altogether in the medium term, though the politics of doing so could be problematic.

Which of these military options should the UK aim to pursue in the medium term?

Wider Responsibilities in the Medium Term

7. In any area for which we take responsibility for security, we could also take on wider responsibilities for reconstruction (including humanitarian assistance and some aspects of civil administration) if there was an appropriate UNSC mandate in place. This could enable us to demonstrate our effectiveness in an exemplary manner. However, officials consider there are major drawbacks:

- We do not want to introduce artificial administrative boundaries, with different countries leading on civil administration in different regions of Iraq. The US plan is to administer Iraq as a whole from Baghdad, which must be right.
- If we became responsible for funding, staffing as well as implementing reconstruction in a British sector, the burden would be onerous. We judge that this would very likely be

¹ See attached Administrative Divisions map.

beyond the resources of the UK alone and would have implications for domestic Departments.

Do Ministers agree that the UK should follow the US plan for the administering Iraq as a whole and not seek general UK responsibility for the administration of any geographic area of Iraq in the medium term?

8. Without a UNSC mandate for the post-conflict phase (a separate issue from the second resolution authorising military action), the status of occupying forces would be that of belligerent occupants, whose rights are quite limited. The longer an occupation went on, and the further the tasks undertaken departed from the objective of the military action (in this case disarmament), the more difficult it would be to justify an occupation in legal terms.

Do Ministers agree that any UK involvement over the medium term should be conditional on a UN mandate?

Objectives

8. The objectives of our post-conflict occupation of Iraq will be achieved when Iraq has been radically changed for the better. The US ambition is to reform Iraq towards becoming a liberal market economy and multi-party democracy. This is consistent with our objectives as set out by the Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of Commons on 7 January. From a UK perspective, we see an Iraq that:

- ☐ Has a broad-based, effective and representative government.
- ☐ Has given up its attachment to WMD.
- ☐ No longer supports terrorism.
- ☐ Has armed forces and intelligence services that are of an appropriate size (striking the balance between not threatening its neighbours and protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq) and are well on the way to being reformed.
- ☐ Complies with its International obligations.
- ☐ Respects human rights and has made significant progress towards a fair and effective justice sector.
- ☐ Is no longer dependent on the oil for food programme and is well on the way to becoming a free market economy.
- ☐ Is no longer subject to sanctions, and has begun to regularise its relations with international financial and trading organisations, with a view to it not being economically hamstrung by debt and reparations.

Do Ministers agree with these objectives?

Principles

9. It would also be helpful from a planning perspective to have some principles to guide UK involvement in the short term:

- ☐ We shall meet our obligations under International humanitarian law including the Hague Regulations and Geneva Conventions.
- ☐ We shall minimise the suffering of the Iraqi people.

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- Until there is a new UN Security Council mandate, we shall be limited in what we can do to change things in Iraq by our interpretation of international humanitarian law and by the laws of armed conflict as they apply to occupying forces.
- Once we have entered Iraq, and if necessary, overcome any resistance, we should help the Iraqi people to help themselves by using their own institutions to run the country.
- We shall need to stress that our presence in Iraq is temporary and is to secure compliance with UN resolutions, but our commitment to support the people of Iraq is for the long term.
- We shall need to stress that the natural resources of Iraq are for the benefit of the Iraqi people.
- Our involvement in the short term should as far as possible, not exceed the resources that are currently committed, and should keep our options open for the medium term.
- Any evidence of WMD is to be verified by UN inspectors.
- We should seek to internationalise our presence in Iraq as soon as we can.

Do Ministers agree these principles? Are they content for us to approach potential contributors now?

Iraq Planning Unit
5 March 2003

Attachment:

Iraq Administrative Divisions Map

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Iraq – Administrative Areas

