

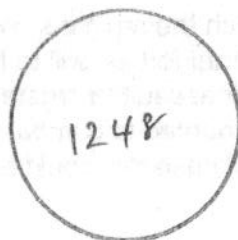


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MO 6/17/15K

17 March 2003

*I take it this amounts to
a statement that we
have taken account of the factors
identified in the JIC paper.*

Dear David

JIC PAPER: "SADDAM'S PLAN FOR BAGHDAD"

Your letter of 14 March asked whether we were confident that the current military plan took full account of the risks and problems identified in the JIC paper of 13 March.

The JIC paper largely confirms the analysis given in Martyn Williams' letter of 28 February. In particular, it underlines the Iraqi regime's continuing dilemma over the withdrawal of Republican Guard heavy armour into Baghdad. On the one hand, this would provide the potential for a more robust defence; on the other hand, the regime has for many years refrained from doing this because of the risk of a coup. We may not know the answer to this question until the ringed defence outside Baghdad begins to break up or fall back. The US intention is to make it difficult for heavy units to reinforce the light forces who currently make up the inner-city defence. The Special Republican Guard itself is, as we have noted before, not trained to mount an urban guerrilla campaign.

The setting alight of oil-filled trenches has the potential to cause some delay. As with Iraqi use of CBW, there is not much – apart from information operations – we can do to stop the Iraqis doing it. But their effect on coalition forces is likely to be limited: ground forces could either wait until they had burned out (between 2-12 hours) or try to go round them; and the smoke would not in itself prevent air strikes using GPS-guided munitions (although Iraqi GPS jammers might). As the JIC paper notes, this tactic may be a two-edged sword for the Iraqis, because it is unlikely to encourage loyalty amongst the local population. Ensuring internal security is likely to be a major complication for any Iraqi units within Baghdad. But we must recognise that the regime is likely to be willing to inflict extreme suffering on its own population and seek to blame the coalition.

Sir David Manning KCMG
10 Downing Street

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A key variable is the extent to which the regime's orders will be obeyed, and the impact of the early campaign on Iraqi forces' will to fight. If necessary, General Franks is prepared to mount an air assault to create an enclave within the city from which operations could be mounted to combat resisting forces. As we noted on 28 February, in the worst case this could be a messy and protracted process.

Toms

Pete

P D WATKINS
Private Secretary

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