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25 March 2003

File

Dear Matthew,

IRAQ: IRREGULAR FORCES AND THE MEDINA DIVISION

You asked for a note about how the coalition intended to deal with the Fedayeen and the Medina Division.

Fedayeen/Irregular Forces

In addition to regular security forces such as the Regular Army (RA), Republican Guard (RG) and Special Republican Guard (SRG), there are a number of paramilitary or 'irregular' forces operating in Iraq. They could come from a number of the organisations listed at Annex A. Their activities are likely to be directed and co-ordinated at the local level (although it is possible that they may be augmented from other areas).

We do not know for certain which of these forces are putting up resistance in southern Iraq. Reporting from theatre is using the term 'Fedayeen' as a generic term for 'irregular' resistance.

Regardless of whether command and control from central Iraq is lost, elements of local militia forces are likely to continue operations against coalition forces and any rebellious local residents. The success or otherwise of groups in Basrah is likely to have a direct impact on the way these forces operate in Baghdad.

Historically, Saddam has organised these forces to monitor each other as well as fulfil their more established internal security duties. Their ability to present a

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cohesive 'military capability' is limited, but internecine fighting is assessed as unlikely.

There is a natural tension in any ground offensive campaign between tempo and consolidation. Against the background of our overall objectives and of the regime's options, it is tempo – namely rapid advance on Baghdad – that must take priority. Such resistance inevitably leads to a certain untidiness behind the front line of coalition forces as they move forward, and this is reflected in the localised pockets of resistance that we have seen in recent days. This resistance does not threaten the coalition's overall control of southern Iraq or the ultimate attainment of our objectives, but mopping it up is not a trivial task.

The military handling of this challenge in and around Basrah will be a matter for the judgement of the Commander of the 1 (UK) Division, Major General Robin Brims, and we are keen not to try to second guess him here. At present, his focus is on gathering information on the strength and dispositions of irregular forces within and around the city, whilst testing the water by robust patrolling in nearby Az Zubayr. The outcome of these activities will influence the decision on whether, when and how to confront the residual opposition in Basrah. It should be borne in mind that the key military objective is to "screen" Basrah, to prevent Iraqi forces disrupting the US push northwards: this is being achieved.

Medina Division

The Medina Republican Guard Division will be the first in line, on current dispositions, to face the US assault on Baghdad. A softening-up process has begun with strikes by US attack helicopters, but this is likely to be inhibited in the next couple of days by adverse weather conditions. Once V Corps and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force are ready, they will advance simultaneously against Baghdad along different but parallel axes. This will present the regime with a dilemma: leave the Medina Division (and other formations) where they are, making them vulnerable to air strikes and an armoured assault; or withdraw it into Baghdad, with the risk that it may turn on the regime itself. But the exact approach taken to dealing with the Medina Division will be a matter for the US land commanders to decide. It should also be remembered that although important, the engagement of the Medina Division is only a prelude to the key task of dealing with Baghdad itself

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO) and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office).

Yours
Peter

P D WATKINS
Private Secretary

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ANNEX A

IRAQI 'IRREGULAR' FORCES

Fedayeen Saddam is thought to be controlled by Saddam's second son Qusai and is a militia organisation. It is thought to comprise approximately 11,500 active personnel and 3,000 reservists. Most are young men who border on a youth gang, with thugs of age 16 and upwards, but they are placed under the overall control of a Lieutenant General. Fedayeen officers are usually recruited from the RG. They have an extensive armoury including 60mm and 82mm mortars, artillery, Kalashnikov rifles, RPK machine guns and sniper rifles. They also have access to armoured vehicles, including the Russian BRDM wheeled reconnaissance vehicle. The Fedayeen are likely to perform a number of internal security roles in the event of a coalition attack including: repression of civilian uprisings, possible suicide missions against coalition forces, and capturing and executing RA and RG deserters.

The Ba'ath Party Militia was officially disbanded at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Nevertheless it is likely that the Ba'ath Party will call out members to form an ad hoc force for security purposes working in conjunction with RA forces conducting security sweeps. They also may be tasked to recruit individuals to carry out suicide attacks against coalition forces. Security units are armed with light and heavy weapons, including 60-mm mortars, antitank rocket launchers, and heavy machineguns (14.5 to 23 mm). Personnel are trained by the military in basic weapon skills but this training is minimal and they would probably be ineffective against Coalition forces.

Al-Quds is essentially a militia and not a serious fighting force. Al-Quds are intrinsically linked to the Ba'ath Party and there is a blurring of membership between the Al Quds and the Ba'ath Party militia. The Al Quds is not a typical Iraqi security force and resemble a Home Guard. Most Al Quds officers are from the RA. Personnel receive basic weapons training and will have access to firearms. Al Quds is tasked with the defending the cities against invasion and putting down internal unrest as required.

Mojahedin E -Khalq (MEK). The MEK is an Iranian dissident group based in and supported by Iraq. The organisation is used by Saddam to support Iraqi internal security operations including suppressing any internal uprisings. The MEK possesses armour, including tanks, IFVs, APCs, artillery pieces, heavy equipment transporters. MEK bases are often collocated with Iraqi Corps and they consequently undertake security duties jointly. The regime fully expects the MEK to fight for the Saddam during Coalition operations. The fact that both the UK and US consider the MEK to be a terrorist organisation further bolsters its motivation to fight; they will not have a future in Iraq post Saddam.

The Directorate of General Security (DGS) is primarily responsible for countering threats to Iraq's internal security from the civil population. It investigates any individual or groups suspected of anti-state activity and acts against them accordingly. The DGS maintains a para-military force for quelling civil unrest, although these units are ultimately under Special Security Organisation (SSO) control. DGS has some 2,700 troops in two regiments that are deployed in company- to battalion-size units from garrisons in Baghdad and

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the provincial capitals. DGS troops carry helmets, bulletproof vests, charged batons, tear gas and hand grenades, rocket-propelled antipersonnel grenades, machineguns, assault rifles and handguns.

Directorate of General Intelligence (DGI)'s principal objective is to monitor and suppress dissident activities at home and abroad. It also aims to penetrate foreign intelligence and security services and provide operational intelligence and support for the procurement activities of Iraqi defence industry and government ministries. The DGI are not organised to fight against a coalition attack or to suppress an urban uprising. They are however an integral part of the security apparatus and have access to small arms. They will be expected by the regime to actively defend the state in armed conflict if necessary.

Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI). Comprising military personnel, DMI's principal roles are the collection and assessment of military intelligence from abroad, including information concerning weapon systems, organisation and equipment and training of foreign armed forces. DMI also provides security and counter intelligence, including the investigation of military personnel, for the Iraqi armed forces. It is not within the DMI's remit to defend the state against invasion, or internal uprising. However, like the DGI, they are an integral part of the security apparatus and have access to small arms. They will therefore be expected by the regime to actively defend the state in armed conflict.

The **Special Security Organisation (SSO)** is primarily involved in overseeing security of the President and monitoring the activities and loyalty of other intelligence and security services and military units integral to regime survival. The SSO is headed by Qusai and sits in a privileged position; the interdependency between the SSO and the regime makes it the most loyal of all Iraq's security services. SSO weaponry includes Kalashnikov assault rifles, hand-guns and a limited number of sub-machine guns.

The SSO plays a significant role in dictating the movement of Iraqi military units. SSO personnel are posted to all RG and RA units for security purposes and to ensure regime loyalty; they are tasked with shooting anyone who attempts to desert. They also play a significant role in the protection of Iraq's CBW assets and are an integral part of the personal security arrangement for leading regime figures, including Saddam.

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