



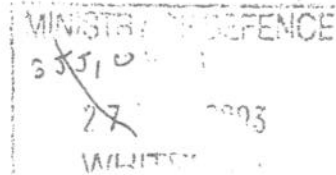
LOOSE MINUTE

DG Op Pol/4/6/1 (67/03)

25 March 2003

**PS/PUS**  
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*[Handwritten signature]*

*Mr [unclear]  
Many thanks.  
Two points:*

**TELIC: INFORMATION CAMPAIGN**

Summary

ICCG discusses media balance and IO issues. Media coverage overall reasonably balanced; perception of imbalance created by excessive focus on rolling 24 hour TV and individual reports. Steady posture needed in London with more operational context in theatre. *particular political pressure to strike a blow for*

1. From an IO perspective, the road to Baghdad goes through Basra. But the US are further North. Targeting of dual-use facilities needs careful handling to stay within legal and proportionality bounds. *everybody has ambitions or other reasons.*

2. Following the discussion at the Chiefs meeting earlier. I pursued discussion at the Information Campaign Coordination Group on three themes:

- balance in media reporting on the overall campaign
- the information operations view of the Basra/Baghdad relationship;
- targeting of dual-use communication media facilities.

3. On the first, we concluded that while there are inevitably downbeat or even disobliging comments made (and endlessly repeated on the minority 24 channels) the overall coverage of the campaign is reasonably well balanced. So far as London is concerned, there is merit in maintaining focus on the

*25/3*

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strategic military campaign objectives (as laid before the House last week) and not attempting to chase down the tactical commentary offered by the deployed media. I understand that the Secretary of State is meeting leader writers tomorrow; this would be a good opportunity to pursue this approach.

4. That said, we agreed that there was a place for encouraging the US, and our own representatives in Qatar, to focus on painting the operational picture. This message will be passed down the media ops chain. In fact there have been good pieces of this sort from 1 Div and CO 3 Cdo Bde today.

5. We also discussed the idea of setting up a broadly-based operational briefing for 'talking heads', even possibly involving CJO or DCJO (Ops). On balance, we felt that the time was not yet right for this. London should stick to steady, strategic level messages and should certainly avoid any direct criticism of press coverage, which would be interpreted as our being 'rattled' and lead to a 'media v MOD spin-doctors' battle that we would be bound to lose.

6. Secondly, against this background, we discussed the strategic IO significance of Basra. In sum, the IO advice was that the road to Baghdad leads through Basra. Not only would satisfactory removal of regime elements from Basra send a message to Baghdad, it would have the beneficial side effect (NB not an objective) of pacifying the impatient media. It would also prepare the ground for the start of substantial humanitarian operations.

7. The key potential problem with this approach at present was that the US appeared clear that the road to Baghdad is through Karbala and Al Kut. A fully considered DTIO-sponsored piece is being prepared for Chiefs on this issue.

8. As for the targeting issue, I stressed the key point (being submitted separately to Ministers) that the justification for attacking dual-use facilities lay in their regime C3 function and the military advantage of degrading that. On no account were internal or external briefings to adduce removal of the organs of propaganda as a justification.

*Ian Lee*

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DG Op Pol

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