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DAVID MANNING

cc Julian Miller
Claire Smith

SITUATION IN BASRA

The attached Situation Report was prepared, at my request, by DIS, drawing on a variety of sources reporting from within Basra. It has been reviewed and agreed by Assessments Staff.

JOHN SCARLETT

2 April 2003

*Prime Minister
(Don Jackson):*

*I have asked for regular
updates on Basra.*

Initial based, so not for quoting

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SITUATION IN BASRA AS AT 01 APRIL 2003

Leadership

- !c. Chemical
At: • Ali Hassan al-Majid continues to be the dominating figure in Basra.

Some senior party members who have failed to show the necessary determination to defend the regime have been executed. We suspect that more junior figures within the Ba'ath system are following this example and executing at will in order to demonstrate their loyalty

Security Structures and Tactics

- Coalition air strikes are degrading Ba'ath and security forces grip on the city. The destruction of the Ba'ath headquarters has driven security forces to set up in schools, sports clubs and municipal facilities. Continued air strikes, combined with UK fighting patrols into the city, are forcing the security forces to disperse off the streets. However, checkpoints continue to be manned in suburbs known to be anti-regime. Reinforcements arrive along Highway 6 – there appears to be large numbers of Fedayeen and possibly Republican Guard travelling in civilian clothes using civilian transport. The coalition has left one bridge open in the north and the regime is exploiting this.
- There are significant number of troops still in the city (there are no coherent figures but estimated over 3000) as well as tanks. However, armoured forces are being destroyed as the regime counter-attacks into the Al-Faw peninsula. The military has attempted to reinforce; however, 16 Air Assault Brigade have destroyed an armoured column (estimated as 17 T-55s from 6 Armd Div) moving into the city from the north.

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close it.

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are assessed to be high. Some members of the RA have attacked Ba'ath officials. desertion rates within Basra

UK forces have been approached by a member of the RA who stated that elements of the RA will conduct attacks on regime forces once the coalition moves to take the city.

Local Population

- There is a body of evidence that there may have been an attempted uprising on 25 March. This was put down by the regime, with local tribal leaders summarily executed. Civilians are now too frightened to move against regime. There are multiple reports stating that regime forces have also used mortars and automatic weapons to attack civilians trying to leave the city.
- However, as families leave, elements of the male population seems to be feeling more confident to challenge the regime. As coalition attacks on the regime are increasingly successful, anti-regime sentiments are getting stronger.
- There are difficulties with supporting anti-regime forces. One problem that has been identified is that the coalition will not be able to differentiate between resistance fighters and regime security forces – both are in civilian clothing and carrying weapons.
- Food and water is in short supply; there is one report that states that the regime may have deliberately sabotaged water supplies into the city. UK efforts to assist outside Basra are appreciated, although there have been chaotic scenes.

UK Operations within Basra

- UK armoured forces have entered the city at night, including a raid conducted by 7 Armd Bde into Sa'ad Square. There are strong indications that this aggressive posture by UK forces is undermining the confidence of regime figures within the city.

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