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Sec(Iraq)/3/3

5 April 2003

PS/Secretary of State

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1 (UK) DIVISION PLAN FOR ENTRY INTO BASRAH

Issue

1. GOC 1 (UK) Div's plan for entry into Basrah, and the possible requirement for subsequent expansion northwards.

Recommendation

2. That the Secretary of State note the plan described below.

Timing

3. Priority. GOC 1 (UK) Div's planned window for entry into Basrah opens on Monday 7 April.

Background

4. Coalition strategy in respect of Basrah was described in the note attached to my minute (3/3) of 30 March:
  - Secure those areas already held (eg, oil nodes and routes)
  - Find enemy forces (inside and moving into/out of urban areas)
  - Fix enemy forces (aggressive patrolling, controlling access, denying communications)
  - Strike enemy forces (intelligence-led raids and strikes)

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- Provide refuge (to coerced regular forces and civilians)
- Isolate the community from regime propaganda (information operations).

GOC 1 (UK) Div's plan to effect this strategy and achieve entry into Basrah involves three phases.

5. Phase 1 is already in train. Its purpose is to establish a degree of control in Az Zubayr which is sufficiently firm to allow 7 Armd Bde units to be released for operations in Basrah. To this end, Phase 1 involves a number of lines of operation:

- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) focussed on the access routes from the north, to identify any forces trying to enter or exit Basrah (enabling their interdiction if appropriate)
- Attrition of Iraqi irregular forces north of Basrah through air and artillery strikes
- Information operations against the local regime
- Close operations (whether raids or patrols) to create the conditions for a shift to smaller and lighter forces in Az Zubayr.

6. Phase 2 involves a shift of forces from "consolidation" tasks to operations in Basrah, and subsequent expansion as required. In addition to the Phase 1 lines of operation, Phase 2 will feature the relief of 7 Armd Bde in Az Zubayr by elements of 3 Cdo Bde when conditions allow this, and the relief of 3 Cdo Bde by 102 Logs Bde in Umm Qasr.

7. Phase 3 – the entry into Basrah and removal of regime control - will begin when a number of preconditions have been met – and this will not be before **Monday 7 April at the earliest**. Its duration is difficult to judge, but it clearly may take some time. The preconditions are:

- Az Zubayr firmly under control and passed to 3 Cdo Bde
- Stability in the 3 Cdo Bde Area of Operations (AO), with the area south of Basrah isolated
- Stability in the 16 Air Assault Bde AO north of Basrah
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- Highway 6 capable of being interdicted and controlled by 16 Air Assault Bde

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- Authority from the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC - General McKiernan).

8. When conditions are right, 3 Cdo Bde and 7 Armd Bde will attack to secure areas of Basrah, supported by precision air and artillery strikes, whilst 16 Air Assault Bde provides an infantry battlegroup held in reserve at Shaibah airfield:

- 3 Cdo Bde will:
  - attack to fix Iraqi forces south of Basrah, exploiting opportunities to seize the Basrah Palace
  - secure the AL BARADI IYAH water distribution and pumping station (if not already achieved)
  - be prepared to secure the Governate buildings in Basrah itself
- 7 Armd Bde will:
  - attack to secure infrastructure objectives on the northern and western sides of Basrah
  - secure the principal Basrah water purification and pumping station (if not achieved already)
  - exploit opportunities to expand control within Basrah

During this process, 16 Bde will increase the level of aggressive patrolling north of the Hammar Bridge, in order to distract Iraqi forces

9. 1 Div's intention is that the entry will be supported by information operations, to reassure the population and isolate them from regime propaganda, and by humanitarian assistance (particularly delivery of water) and quick-impact projects in liberated areas. The combined effect should be to build popular confidence in coalition capabilities and intentions, and to reduce confidence in and dependence on the regime. News of the US entry into Baghdad should reinforce this effect.

10. Subsequent expansion. The Secretary of State agreed on 13 March (MO 6/17/15CB, responding to my Sec(O)/2/37/8 of 10 March) that CJO had authority to expand our AO some 150 km northwards, and if necessary take on and defeat Iraqi forces posing a potential threat to Basrah, if this was necessary to achieve a satisfactory outcome to Phase III of the overall campaign. This issue may well arise in the near future.

11. We understand that Franks is keen to deal with Iraqi forces deployed in the Lower Tigris valley, but US land forces are of course otherwise engaged at present, and their focus is bound to remain on Baghdad in the short term (and if Baghdad collapses quickly they will have Tikrit to consider). If these

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Iraqi forces were to move south (of which there is no sign yet), they could pose a threat to Basrah; their area of deployment is also a known area of Surface-to-Surface Missile operations, and thus may potentially pose a CBW threat. We therefore intend that GOC 1 Div should have flexibility to move north to defeat these forces or accept their surrender, if required.

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