

D/PJHQ/10/5341

12 April 2003

PS/Secretary of State

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Policy Director

DG Op Pol

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ACDS(Ops)

Head Sec(Iraq)

PJHQ-CivSec

EXPANSION OF THE UK AOR

Reference: MO 6/17/15CB dated 13 March 03

Issue

1. Extension of the UK Area of Responsibility to include all of Basrah and Maysan Provinces in preparation for Phase IV.

Recommendation

2. The Secretary of State is invited to note that:
 - a) in line with previous authority, CJO plans to move forces to the northern limit of the extended UK Area of Operation, flushing out any Iraqi forces encountered en route;
 - b) CFLCC has, initially, asked CDS for the UK to initially take responsibility for two Provinces of Iraq during Phase IV.

And in light of this, Secretary of State is asked to agree that:

- c) UK forces may exploit further north to take all of the Maysan Province into the UK Area of Operations, once Al Amarah is secure, allowing GOC 1 Div to begin the process of engaging locals leaders in the same way as he has in Basrah Province and allowing elements of I MEF to be reallocated for operations at Baghdad.

Timing

3. Urgent. UK forces arrive in Al Amarah today and should ideally be able to press beyond the city to keep it out of range of Iraqi artillery.

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Background

4. Secretary of State will recall that he has previously given CJO authority to deploy UK forces to a Northern limit in the area of Al Amarah (the minute at Reference). The current UK Area of Operation (AO) includes all of Basrah province, but bisects the Maysan province, with approximately a third of the province lying outside the AO to the North (see Annex A).
5. Given the current progress UK forces have made in Basrah, with work beginning to set up conditions for Phase IV, CJO believes that the time is right to be able to release forces northwards. The initial operational task will be to secure Al Amarah (already within our AO) and work to flush out any remaining elements of Iraqi 10th Armoured Division that may be present in the area. The US Task Force Tarawa has already explored Al Amarah and found that it had been self-liberated and currently stable.
6. Once this task is complete, we will wish to begin work to aid reconstruction of the region. Secretary of State should note, that although a final agreement has not been made on the number of Provinces that the UK will support during Phase 4, CFLCC has already asked CDS to take responsibility for both Basrah and Maysan Provinces. Whilst the initial UK AO boundary made operational sense during war fighting in terms of co-ordination with the US, if the process of reconstruction is to start, it makes sense to include the whole of Maysan province at the earliest opportunity. This will allow locals to become exposed to UK forces, enabling the necessary rapport and trust to be built up. Our occupation of this area would also release elements of I MEF for tasking in the vicinity of Baghdad.
7. Our assessment of this additional area is that it is relatively quiet and therefore should not add any unmanageable burden on UK forces - the only real resistance has been in Al Kut, further to the north-west. It is on this basis that we wish to seek approval to extend the UK AO as far as the Northern Maysan provincial border in advance of any overt Phase IV activity.
8. At this point, Secretary of State may wish to be aware that we may be asked by the US to extend our Area of Responsibility to further Provinces in due course. This will be dependent on the permissiveness of any additional areas we are to take responsibility for and also on the response to the requests that are currently being made for additional Coalition members to offer support during the reconstruction of Iraq. This is currently the subject of discussion by COS and further advice will be provided in due course.

Presentation

9. The concept of a specific UK area of responsibility is not in the public domain. However, reports that we are moving further north may suggest that our job is done in Basrah. We will need to counter this, without overstating the difficulty of restoring order in Basrah. We will also need to respond to any suggestions that British forces may move still further north - perhaps to Baghdad or Tikrit - by making clear that we have

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no plans to move into any other area at this time, but that our posture remains agile and flexible enough to respond to the events on the ground.

Annex A: Expansion of 1(UK) Armd Div Battlespace.

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EXPANSION OF 1(UK) ARMD DIV BATTLESPACE

