

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED

TO 0049

DAVID MANNING

cc Jim Drummond
Nick Gibbons

CHIEFS OF STAFF MEETING: 15 APRIL

The Chiefs of Staff spent some time talking about the possible UK military contribution to the post-conflict phase in Iraq. The general idea is to provide a divisional headquarters and a brigade (of four battle groups). On the basis of the emerging level of consent in Southern Iraq, they believe that this brigade could look after, in security terms, the provinces of Basra and Maysān. The divisional headquarters would enable the British to supervise two additional provinces, provided two brigades' worth of troops (and two headquarters) were made available by either the Americans or other coalition partners. MOD thinking revolves around contributions from Denmark, Spain and Italy in the first instance, with the additional option of integrating a putative GCC force in some manner.

2. There was some debate about which other provinces it was reasonable to assume security responsibility for. The existing provincial arrangements are on the attached map and there are various pros and cons in respect of provinces adjacent to Basra and Maysān: Iranian border, population centres (eg Al Kut), lines of communication etc. There was concern that the civilian administrative boundaries of ORHA might not coincide with those of the military structure. ORHA's planning has been based on three regions but given more resources they could operate on a provincial basis. Some of this will become clearer after Mr Hoon speaks to Mr Rumsfeld later today.

3. Withdrawals were also on the agenda:
withdraw our aircraft based there and this can be done rapidly now that operations in the West are over. A submission is on its way to the Defence Secretary today for action before the weekend.

4. The Chiefs will be taking a paper later this week on the roulement/withdrawal of its forces, starting with extraction of 3 Commando Brigade in mid-May. The aim is to reduce to a divisional headquarters and a brigade by about August/September.


DESMOND BOWEN

15 April 2003

DECLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL