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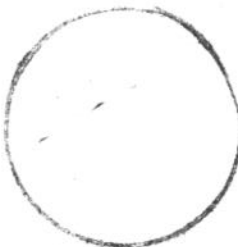
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23 May 2003



*less David,*

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SECURITY IN BAGHDAD

Security in Baghdad is crucial to coalition success. The security situation in Baghdad is poor, and

This is now recognised by the US who expect the situation to improve following the arrival of a fresh US Division with peacekeeping experience. It would be possible to deploy 16 Air Assault Brigade (16 AA Bde) into Baghdad to support the training and use of the Baghdad police for the short term. But set against the scale of the problem and of the US forces deployed, the Chiefs of Staff judge that deployment of 16 AA Bde is likely to have only a marginal effect. It would carry significant risks – of our forces being tied down in Baghdad and of an adverse impact on our exemplary approach in the South.

has decided not to request the deployment. The Defence Secretary considers therefore that the withdrawal of 16 AA Bde should proceed as planned, with the next significant movement on Tuesday 27 May 2003.

Situation

Security in Baghdad is clearly crucial to overall success in Iraq; if the Coalition fails there, we fail completely. The security situation in Baghdad is poor. There is therefore a strategic dilemma. To some degree, the poor security could be seen

in the manner that is proving successful for us in Basrah - and for US forces elsewhere in Iraq.

Ambassador Bremer and General Abizaid are seized of this problem.

Their expectation is that the arrival in June of the 1st Armoured Division (1 AD), which will be fresh to theatre and has Balkans experience, will

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10 Downing Street

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bring a new and more effective approach. In the meantime, however, there is a

## UK Input

The UK is already taking steps to help to fill this gap :

We have over sixty personnel seconded to ORHA, which in time will be vital to achieving wider success in Baghdad. But more immediately we have senior personnel embedded in key positions within their military headquarters. Crucial among these will be General Viggers who will soon be a deputy commanding general in the Headquarters in Baghdad. This will place him in a position of great influence with General Sanchez (the incoming American commander) who, with his Balkans experience, is likely to be receptive to UK views on how to deal with the situation in Baghdad. At lower levels, we continue to provide specialist advice and assistance; for example, we are providing Information Operations personnel to boost operations capacity in Baghdad.

It was against this background that you and Major General Richards discussed with Bremer the possibility of the short-term deployment of 16 Air Assault Brigade to assist US forces in Baghdad. The specific purpose of this deployment would be to support the developing Baghdad police force until the replacement of the current US forces in Baghdad in mid to late June. A possible spin-off of such a deployment would be to demonstrate

what we would hope would be a successful modus operandi. There is a very narrow window of opportunity to pursue the option of such a deployment. In accordance with existing plans, the Brigade has already started its withdrawal from theatre. Once withdrawn it would be very difficult for the UK to support the US in the way proposed - although, crucially, it does not remove the option for the Coalition.

The Chiefs of Staff have concluded that for such a deployment to be justified we would have to believe:

That the US lack the will and capacity to take action to deal with this problem;

And that the deployment of what would be a relatively small force could have a strategic effect that would make the difference between coalition success and failure.

## US Intent

We have been discussing the security situation in Baghdad with the US at all levels, including the

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The US certainly do not lack capacity to deal with the problem.

i - in exactly

the manner we would hope :

It is safe to assume that should the situation worsen to the point that the US perceived they were approaching strategic failure, they would deploy the resources necessary to deal with it.

### Impact in Baghdad of the deployment of 16 Air Assault Brigade

The Chiefs of Staff question whether such a deployment would have the desired effect. In baldly numerical terms, what is being considered is the deployment of some 1,200 personnel into a very large city where the US already have in excess of 25,000 troops (and with the arrival of 1 AD will have 40,000). It is quite likely that such a deployment would have only a tactical local effect within the city. Baghdad is a uniquely difficult environment. Its sheer scale, the presence of large slum areas and the lack of the sort of local political structures that are developing elsewhere all contribute to the difficulty of rapidly achieving results similar to those in Basrah or Mosul.

*But this is a gain in its own right*

The Chiefs of Staff have thus concluded that deployment of 16 AA Bde would, at best, not ensure Coalition success, but would rather provide only temporary and limited assistance, the gains from which are likely to be similarly limited.

*of course it would not*

*ensure success*

### Risks

*but better to try than not try at all?*

The Chiefs of Staff concluded that the deployment would carry considerable risks. First, there is no clear concept of operations for such a deployment. Establishing both this and, in particular, the vital command and control links with a force that is in the process of, and focussed on, withdrawing from Baghdad would be difficult and potentially risky (and not necessarily quick). Secondly, and paradoxically, tactical success for the deployment would bring its own problems - principally pressure to remain. We would thus run the risk of fixing a significant component of our forces in Iraq in Baghdad. Not only would this have longer term implications for our forces, but the UK could consequently face pressure to take ownership of numerous other problems in Baghdad by virtue of being effectively in occupation there; this could have serious implications for the rest of our reconstruction effort in Iraq.

*Which we would refuse to do. Hand over to US.*

### Implications for the UK effort elsewhere in Iraq

The deployment as proposed would require us to denude 1 UK Division of a number of and capabilities - particularly among and personnel. This would come at some cost to operations in the UK's primary area of responsibility around Basrah. A deployment to Baghdad could, ironically, weaken the exemplary effect that we are aiming to demonstrate of how and which is serving as our most eloquent argument with This success is built on a nexus of activities that go beyond the 'boots on the

*There may be a real argument here.*

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street" approach, and includes, for example, the programme of "hearts and minds" quick impact projects.

Some of our "hearts and minds" effort in the South might thus need to be shifted to Baghdad to support a 16 AA Bde effort, further reducing the effectiveness of the UK military effort but also possibly compromising other UK objectives on reconstruction.

#### Implications for UK Service Personnel

16 AA Bde are tired from a long and demanding deployment (having previously been assigned to fire fighting duties in the UK) and are already on their way home. There is a pressing need to return these personnel to the UK so that they can recover and re-train. There is a clear expectation on the part of the personnel and their families that the Brigade will be withdrawn from theatre soon; a further deployment to Baghdad would have a negative effect on them. To make a deployment to Baghdad work, a significant number of personnel (potentially as many as 500) who are already in the UK would have to return to Iraq.

#### Conclusion

Any deployment of 16 AA Bde is thus most likely to have only an uncertain, limited and temporary ameliorative effect in the short period until 1 AD take over, and will not, in the view of the Chiefs of Staff, have strategic impact. The United States does not view such as deployment as necessary

NOT  
Premier's  
view.

Viewed in these terms, and against the significant risks and difficulties associated with a deployment to Baghdad, the Defence Secretary believes that we should continue to withdraw 16 Air Assault Brigade, as planned, with the next significant planned movement of personnel on Tuesday 27 May 03.

This does not mean that we shall not continue to do our best to influence the developing situation in Baghdad; success there is crucial. Through our personnel embedded in key positions in both the US military headquarters and ORHA we shall continue to influence and guide American operations in Baghdad. With the arrival of 1 AD and Sanchez, who will be predisposed to taking a new approach, that influence is likely to be increasingly effective and fruitful.

I am copying this letter to Simon McDonald (FCO), Anna Bewes (DfID), and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office)

P D WATKINS  
Private Secretary

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