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D/CGS/51/9/4

10 Mar 03

CDS

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| PS/SofS | CAS | DCDS(C) | ACGS | DOMA |
| PS/Min AF | VCDS | DCDS(EC) | SBLA Kuwait | Hd Sec(O) |
| PS/Min DP | CinC LAND | CDI | GOC 1 Div | DMO |
| PS/USofS | CDL | Pol Dir | DG Op Pol | DCC(A) |
| PUS | CJO | DGCC | Hd Sec (Iraq) | DOC |
| CNS | NCC Qatar | ACDS (Ops) | COSSEC | |

CGS VISIT TO OP TELIC

GENERAL

1. I visited British troops deployed on Op TELIC between 6-8 Mar 03. During the visit I met HMA Kuwait and was hosted by GOC 1 (UK) Armd Div. While with 1 Div, I visited units from 7 Armd and 16 Air Asslt Bdes, as well as the JHF and JFLogC. I also met CFLCC, Lt Gen Dave McKiernan and Comd 1 MEF, Lt Gen Jim Conway. In Qatar, I was briefed by the NCC and called on DCINCCENT, Lt Gen John Abizaid.

THEATRE POL-MIL ISSUES

2. In discussion with DCINCCENT, he perceived Saddam as increasingly out of touch and guilty of two miscalculations: first, in under-estimating the will of the President and Prime Minister to finish the task; and second in over-estimating the leverage of Fr, Ge and Ru on Coalition resolve. As far as Lt Gen Abizaid was concerned 'the die was cast' and there was a limit to how much longer US forces, and 3 ID in particular, could stay poised.

3. In conversation with HMA, it was clear that the Coalition build-up in Kuwait continues to enjoy the support of the host nation, particularly amongst older Kuwaitis, who perceive imminent retribution for past

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atrocities and who seek answers to the fate of the 605 Kuwaitis abducted by Iraqis upon their departure in 1991. But amongst younger Kuwaitis, who have no memory of the last war, the American build up, fuelled by occasional acts of insensitivity, is beginning to attract resentment. I was briefed that in the wider Gulf region, particularly in Bahrain, it will be difficult to keep the lid on increasing and potentially violent popular opposition. US commanders put this more starkly: in Lt Gen Abizaid's view, the situation could be controlled for around 7 more days. I judge that British forces have acted with considerable sensitivity, but the risk of being tarred with the same brush is ever present and the longer our forces remain poised, the more vulnerable our political position may become.

PHASE 3

4. I was briefed extensively on the Phase 3 plan and was struck by a number of key issues. My first observation is that the UK's limited role in the opening gambit is by no means ideal given the considerable capabilities inherent within 1 Div. Perhaps as a result of the variable nature of the ground, which is channelled by pipelines, oil installations, built up areas and salt marsh, the plan is also relatively complex. However, I recognise how the plan evolved and accept that we must now live with it.

5. My second observation relates to correlation of forces. While the US commanders are confident of success, I was struck by just how little combat power the US have on the ground now that 4 ID cannot deploy in time to influence the outcome. Holding a little under one third of the available coalition armour, 1 (UK) Armd Div has combat power that may prove decisive in operations around Baghdad. For this reason, US commanders made very clear their wish to use 7 Armd Bde for subsequent tasks. This American request, along with further tasks for 16 Air Asslt Bde, will form the basis for discussion in COS this week. Two key questions will inform this debate:

a. *Have these formations had time to prepare logistically and train for more demanding tasks?* I am clear that for reasons to do with the logistic outload, 7 Armd Bde would not have been ready for a demanding task at the outset of operations and that its relatively modest role in the opening gambit is therefore appropriate. I am however satisfied that, from 19 Mar when it completes its logistic and training preparations, 7 Armd Bde will be a formidable asset capable

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of achieving decisive effect, that it will have sufficient combat supplies, and that it therefore should be made available further north, subject to logistic time and space considerations. I am also clear that 16 Air Asslt Bde is ready now as a contingency force of choice, although the provision of sufficient fixed wing aircraft will be critical, and I suggest action is put in hand now to identify appropriate tactical airlift.

b. *Will the onward move of British Forces from the UK AOR impact upon our ability to deliver an exemplary outcome in Phase 4?* While success in Phase 4 is critical, a rapid and decisive outcome to Phase 3 is an absolute prerequisite to success. The trick is in being agile enough to concentrate sufficient force at the decisive point for Phase 3 (probably around Baghdad), while preventing humanitarian suffering and score-settling in the rear at the outset of Phase 4. The key to pulling this trick off will be early cooperation with the Iraqi civil and military establishment. Recently, concern has been expressed as to our ability to cope with large numbers of PW and I am aware that COS will shortly discuss again options for deployment of a PW force. While real PW must be treated in an exemplary manner, we should avoid a problem of our own making by arranging local ceasefires that allow Iraqi formations to return to barracks without having been taken prisoner, or simply take them under command. Additionally, the focus should be on early reactivation of the police without recourse to extensive military involvement in law and order. In this way, we should seek to avoid fixing critical combat power in the south before Phase 3 finishes.

1. What is also clear is that it would be difficult to release both brigades to the north without denuding the British AOR, but it must be for GOC 1 Div to decide which brigade is used on the basis of the tactical circumstances pertaining at the time.

TIMING

7. Lt Gen Abizaid told me he had held a video conference with SecDef and Gen Franks the evening before my visit in which the former had made clear the President's intent to stick to a timeline of 17 Mar in order to coincide with current plans for an ultimatum. While one might have inferred

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that A Day would therefore be 17 Mar, Gen Abizaid suggested that the US may start operations before this and expressed concern at the possibility of a last minute split between UK and US as a result. While I said I could not see the UK resiling, I made clear that we would need to treat 17 Mar as the expiry date of the proposed ultimatum and would find it difficult politically to conduct operations before this. Gen Abizaid acknowledged the UK's domestic difficulties, but pointed out that the President had his own domestic opponents who might coalesce unless early action was taken.

PHASE 4

8. Hampered by lack of domestic and international consensus on Phase 3, planning for Phase 4 remains the most immature aspect of the operation. The key to success in Phase 4 will be legitimisation through multi-nationality, if possible underpinned by a further UNSCR. Ideally, the rapid and successful completion of Phase 3 will allow the current international impasse to melt away like the spring snow. Early multi-nationalisation of the occupying force should provide the perception of legitimacy that the current narrow coalition lacks. But realistically, current ill-feeling may run deep enough to prevent a thaw. I was briefed by US commanders that SecDef and other hawks in the administration

9. He also made clear the US military wish to disengage rapidly by bringing on board as many allies as possible. Lt Gen Abizaid would like to avoid an occupation model based on sectors as used in the Balkans, which he calculates would require as many as 84 units of which 36 would be manoeuvre battalions. I observed that a territorial solution may be difficult to avoid as nations would wish to influence a given sector and military commanders would want clear boundaries for operations and interaction with civil authorities. I was however heartened by increasing US recognition of the need to preserve a functioning civil administration and by the requirement to look hard at the Phase 3 target set to avoid destruction that may set the wrong conditions for Phase 4.

10. The US assessment is that Sp, It, Ca, Aus, Scan and Eastern European countries form the most promising source of stability forces. The US would

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also value a sizeable Islamic contribution, but recognise the political sensitivities inherent in delivering it. But I judge that, realistically, it will be some time before coalition partners join US and British forces in any real strength, if at all. I draw two conclusions from this: first, that as much as possible of Iraq's administrative and military structure should be preserved; and second, that we should beware rapid US drawdown on the American assumption that UK (perhaps through the ARRC) will form the focus for an international force that in the event fails to materialise.

11. British AO. GOC 1 Div made it clear to me that in clarifying his role in Phase 4, he needed simply to know what his title was, to whom he would be responsible, and how quickly a civil administrator would be appointed. While he judged that Basrah has adequate short-term food stocks, it will urgently need water, electricity and medical supplies in the early days of Phase 4. The possible targeting of the Um Qasr-Basrah railway would sever a key supply route and the main entrepot for the Oil for Food programme. Only the ICRC has humanitarian stocks in position and other NGOs appear ill-prepared; there was little confidence within 1 Div that DFID has a coherent plan in place. I support GOC 1 Div's intent to manage Phase 4 with as light a touch as possible, but it will be important to establish the rule of law quickly – the question, as in Kosovo, will be whose law? and there will be an urgent need to establish the legal basis for our activities in Phase 4. I understand that work is in hand within Theatre to establish the legal position, which should form a basis for discussion COS in due course. I also judge that early clarification of DFID's position would be helpful.

C2

12. The political nature of PSO, combined with their slow pace, has allowed close Ministerial involvement in the course of most recent British military operations. The start of operations in Iraq will however presage a period of intense conflict involving high tempo manoeuvre not seen since the last Gulf War that will require more devolved C2 arrangements. Moreover, the need for delegated authority will be all the more pressing in a coalition that sees CINCCENT only a phone call away from the President and which requires equally timely decisions from the UK chain of command. I suspect we therefore need to adjust our culture a little to allow for Mission Command rather than Command by Submission if tactical and operational decisions are to be taken in a timely and effective way.

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MEDIA

13. Despite some improvement following SofS's recent visit, UK remains reticent about granting access to the in-Theatre press corps compared to the US. While I understand the domestic communications strategy underpinning this, I am also sure that such reticence is ultimately counter-productive. With 700 journalists in Kuwait, lack of access can only lead to the kind of mischief making we observed in Afghanistan and again now see in Kuwait. Moreover, shielding the domestic audience from the fighting echelon fools no one at home and serves only to dissipate the effect of our 'Force on Mind' strategy with Iraqis. I also believe that in the interests of the moral component, it is time to demonstrate to the troops, their families, and the public that we are proud of the fighting quality of this force.

SUSTAINABILITY

14. The most obvious manifestation of media boredom has centred on our logistic arrangements, which have, quite unjustly, been characterised as inadequate in the press resulting in a corrosive effect on the morale of troops as well as undermining our reputation. I am quite clear that far from being inadequate, the despatch of a force of this size and complexity in such a short timeframe has been an outstanding success. From a virtual standing start in late January the outload is almost complete. 72 ships have been used to deploy the force in 10 weeks compared to the 22 weeks taken in 1990-91 - a remarkable achievement by any standard.

15. That said, there will always be things that could have been done better and in retrospect, I am unsure as to why the last 2 battlegroups of 7 Armd Bde were left quite so late in the DOAST. It may (quite reasonably) prove that a decision was taken to lay down the complete CS and CSS infrastructure in advance of the fighting echelon, but I should be grateful for advice from PJHQ and HQ LAND as to whether this decision was conscious and not an accident of the loading plan.

16. The one area of the media feeding frenzy that has some justification lies in the readiness of stocks for expeditionary operations. The introduction of resource accounting has created an imperative to drive down stockholdings. As a result, in the name of accounting orthodoxy we lack basic items such as desert clothing. I am unsure whether the cost of storing such items would really have been more than the inflated price we have no

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doubt paid by procurement under UOR action, but I am certain as to the negative impact on the moral component that failure to provide these items has had. I am also clear that in the run up to operations commanders should be free to focus on the training of their forces without giving over valuable time to last minute and avoidable logistic preparations and equipment modifications.

17. The root of this problem is partly financial, but also systemic and we currently have no mechanism within the Central Staff to safeguard the operational logistic interest. As a result, there has been a consistent lack of visibility of the state of our overall holdings. While plans for the reorganisation of the DCMO are well advanced, I believe that a 2* equivalent to the old ACDS (Log) could be established in place of another position to address this lacuna within the DCMO.

MORALE

18. I was struck by the high morale of all those troops I encountered and, while some questions were asked as to the extent of public disquiet, I sensed that British troops are focussed on the task in hand and are not unsettled by the political churning at home. Not unnaturally, the troops' primary concerns lie in the here and now of their living conditions, rather than politics. Negative comparisons have been made with conditions previously experienced on PSO in the Balkans and elsewhere. Given the speed of the deployment and its essential warfighting rather than PSO nature, some recalibration of expectation may be required to remind troops of what should be expected in such circumstances.

SUMMARY

19. In a remarkably short period a large British force has deployed and is prepared for a wide range of warfighting and aftermath tasks. We are ready not just to demonstrate solidarity with our coalition partner, but to contribute considerable and potentially decisive combat power to achieve rapid success in Phase 3. Rapid success will set the conditions for Phase 4, which in turn will determine the overall success of the enterprise.

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