



SECRETARY OF STATE

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 line letter

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4 September 2003

*This is the result of
 the military review
 + fits with what Geoff + CDS
 said at your Iraq meeting:
 an increase of 2 battalions, or 30%,
 announced on Monday. We recommend
 Dear Matthew that you agree. Do you?*

IRAQ: UK FORCES AND RESOURCES REVIEW

Matthew 4/9

Following a review conducted in the light of the changing security situation in the South East of Iraq, and in view of likely next steps by the CPA, the Defence Secretary has concluded that there is an immediate requirement to deploy a further two infantry battalions and certain specialist capabilities to Iraq. Furthermore, we intend to identify and put on reduced notice to move a Brigade HQ, Infantry battalion and engineer capability as a contingency to support the implementation of the CPA(S) plan for emergency infrastructure work due to be delivered by Sir Hilary Synott on 8 September. The reinforcement is aimed at shifting the balance of military activity from essentially fixed, defensive tasks in favour of proactive efforts to improve the wider security situation. In percentage terms, this could represent an increase of over 30% in our deployed strength inside Iraq with some 12% deploying very soon. This is a decisive move to support the accelerated reconstruction of Iraq; it is the worryingly slow pace of infrastructure development which is undermining the consent of the Iraqi people and posing the strategic risk to the UK's efforts.

My letter of 28 August explained that Multi National Division (South East) (MND(SE)) were conducting a Forces and Resources Review to assess whether additional capabilities were required in Southern Iraq. This was to be conducted in the light of the changing security situation, expected CPA-led initiatives (in particular, acceleration of the Security Sector Reform process), and the proposals on work to improve essential services. An initial review is now complete, although further work will be required following clarification of Sir Hilary Synott's plan for the region.

The Commander of MND(SE) has concluded, and the Chiefs of Staff and Defence Ministers agree, that there is an immediate requirement to deploy two additional battalions as well as some additional specialist personnel and equipment to MND(SE) to reinforce the UK troops already in theatre. The first

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of these battalions will provide surge forces to shift the balance of current operations to a more proactive and less fixed posture and to offer protection to the CPA. It will be provided by 2nd Battalion The Light Infantry, currently in Cyprus. The second battalion and the specialist personnel would be employed to relieve the enduring requirements to increase force protection, commence training of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC), and to improve the intelligence gathering and surveillance capability in MND(SE). It will be provided by 1st Battalion The Royal Greenjackets, currently the Spearhead Land Element. In total, we intend to deploy up to around 1200 servicemen and women, representing an early increase of 12% to the UK forces currently in theatre. These personnel will be supported by the deployment of a quantity of armoured patrol vehicles, some of which will be drawn from Northern Ireland. This will have a limited, but manageable, effect on our ability to conduct current operations in support of the PSNI.

In addition to this requirement, there are already indications of additional tasks that may require the allocation of military assets and personnel, although these have not yet been fully identified or scoped. Foremost among these will be the need to support critical infrastructure work being managed by DFID, and to provide military protection to civilian contractors. As a sensible preparatory measure, we intend to identify and put on reduced notice to move an additional Brigade Headquarters, infantry battalion and engineer capability. This will allow us to respond rapidly as and when any additional requirements are identified.

Taken together, these additional forces will provide additional troops for tasks other than the static guarding of key infrastructure nodes and close protection roles which have, in the immediate aftermath of the Jordanian and UN bombings, resulted in a shift towards fixed, static tasks as opposed to the essential active prosecution of operations to achieve security in the long run. They should allow commanders in theatre to shift the balance of military operations in favour of proactive efforts to improve wider security, creating improved conditions for the economic, physical and political reconstruction of the country. The total increase in our land forces could be over 30% of our current commitment.

Initial estimates are that the cost of this additional deployment could reach around £5M a month (for the brigade headquarters and three battalions) in Running Costs (already assumed in MOD estimates for the costs of Operation TELIC to be charged to the Reserve). Movement will largely be done using MOD in-house air and sealift, but we anticipate that additional force protection and internal security equipment may be required. Although we will use what we can from stocks held in Northern Ireland, we need to ensure that it is appropriate to the threat in Iraq, and thus some development effort may be required. Costs of additional equipment (a new call on the Reserve) may be £15-20M.

There is clearly scope for critical comment along the lines that we are having to reinforce because of a deteriorating situation. In particular, this could be seen as endorsing the warnings in a confidential brief recently exposed to 'The Daily Telegraph' of a "deteriorating security situation". While there is some truth in

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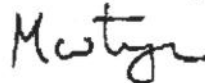
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this, it is not the full picture. While acknowledging current challenges over security and infrastructure, publicly we shall portray this robustly as part of a wider Coalition plan to accelerate the reconstruction of Iraq – we should also emphasise that some of this force will be starting the immediate training of the ICDC. It does remain the case, however, that we can only operate in Iraq with the broad consent of the Iraqi people and that this consent is being eroded by Iraqi frustration on quality of life issues reflecting poor progress with infrastructure improvement. Armed Forces can only assist in creating the conditions for this work to progress, but cannot solve the strategic problem. Without urgent progress on infrastructure, we will remain at strategic risk.

The Defence Secretary intends to announce this move in the House in the form of a written Ministerial statement on Monday, following which Ministers will respond in the Chamber to oral questions in Defence Questions later that afternoon.

I am copying this letter to Geoffrey Adams (FCO), Moazzam Malik (DFID), (HMT), and Desmond Bowen (Cabinet Office).

Yours



M J WILLIAMS
Private Secretary

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