

PJHQ/J9-01-01-14

2 April 2008

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

PS/Minister(AF)  
 PS/Minister(DES)  
 PS/PUS  
 PSO/CDS  
 MA/2<sup>nd</sup> PUS and VCDS  
 EA/CNS  
 MA/CGS  
 PSO/CAS

MA/CJO  
 MA/DCDS(C)  
 PS/Policy Director  
 ACDS(Ops)  
 DG Op Pol  
 PJHQ CmdSec  
 DJC-D(MIL)  
 DJC-D(POL)

PJHQ J3 ACOS  
 PJHQ J5 ACOS  
 PJHQ DCmdSec(Ops)  
 DGMC-DNews  
 SBMRI POLAD  
 TELIC POLAD  
 Special Advisers  
 Resident Clerks

*4/5/2*  
*1888*  
*YES if*  
*no significant*  
*have up to a needed to*  
*continue*  
*Control*  
*cohesive*  
*strongly*  
*Communicated*  
*Impact of*  
*Port*  
*sheehi*  
*as the*  
*sheehi fully*  
*understand act*  
*hooked into*  
*PJHQ*  
*thinking*  
*Had!*

OP TELIC: ENHANCING UK OPERATIONAL SUPPORT TO THE IRAQI ARMY

Issue

1. The enhancement of UK support to the Iraqi Army's 14th Division (14 Div) in Basra by embedding UK Military Transition Teams (MiTTs).

Recommendation

2. That the Secretary of State **notes** that:
  - a. planning is underway in MND(SE) to consider how best to move from the current security situation to align more closely with the original Basra Security Plan, as envisaged by General Mohan, and from there to redefine the security relationship in Basra City;
  - b. an important element of this plan is further to enhance the capabilities of the Iraqi Army, especially in terms of its ability to draw upon key coalition enablers such as aerial surveillance and close air support;
  - c. MND(SE) intend to achieve this by embedding UK MiTTs within key elements of 14 Div, in a manner akin to the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) concept successfully used in Afghanistan, and initial force generation to enable this process has already commenced;
  - d. suitable command and control mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that these UK MiTT teams are not employed on any operations with which we would have policy, force protection or legal concerns;
  - e. this plan has the endorsement of General Austin (the US Corps Commander), General Mohan and CJO; and

- f. there are a range of policy and presentational issues related to this initiative, which are set out below.

### Timing

3. Priority. We intend to deploy UK MiTTs into Basra City from as early as last light today.

### Background

4. The Secretary of State will be aware of recent developments in Basra.

### **Op SEVERN**

5. In cooperation with both the Iraqis and the Americans, MND(SE) have given careful consideration to how best to move forward following the recent offensive launched by the Iraqi Government in Basra (Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS).

6. Under the name Op SEVERN, MND(SE) are examining ways in which we can move from the current security situation to align more closely with the original Basra Security Plan that General Mohan had envisaged. Most immediately, this will entail working to relieve the pressure on the ISF to give them an opportunity to rebuild and retrench. In the longer term, our goal is to redefine the security relationship in Basra City and allow greater access for both MND(SE) and the ISF. This will require a renewed effort, in line with General Petraeus's strategic intent, to engage with mainstream JAM and isolate and strike against extremist elements who will oppose any future political accommodation with the Iraqi Government.

### **Deployment of UK MiTTs**

7. In the short term, we aim to help the ISF stabilise the security situation in Basra by strengthening some of the key vulnerabilities that have been demonstrated during recent operations. It is true to say that most armies around the world would have struggled in the circumstances faced by 14 Div over the last two weeks. We should not therefore rush to criticise what we were already aware was still some way from a properly trained Division. Our main focus will be to help resolve the following concerns: a lack of situational awareness; a lack of clear command and control; poor planning; and an inability to coordinate effectively with Coalition assets and experience, in particular with regards calling on Coalition forces for fire support and in extremis extraction when these can only be delivered within Coalition rules of engagement.

8. MND(SE) assess that, in addition to recruiting eight officers shortly due to leave the Iraqi Army to assist with our situational awareness, the optimum way to address the concerns outlined above is by embedding UK MiTTs within 14 Div. This will enable us to provide material aid support to the Iraqis: for example, with UK air controllers on the ground controlling aerial surveillance and fire support, we will be able to identify and strike tactical targets within our rules of engagement more quickly. The lack of MiTTs within 14 Div is likely to have been a contributing factor to their poor performance in recent encounters with the militias. Furthermore, the

**DECLASSIFIED**

deployment of UK MiTTs will form part of the wider Coalition strategy for MiTTs in southern Iraq, outlined by General Austin and allow us to harmonise our operational approach with that of the US MiTTs already deployed. The US chain of command has made it clear that they would welcome UK MiTTs to embed in 14 Div. Like us, they envisage the future security relationship in Basra to be very different to that of the past few months with much greater access for both the Coalition and ISF. PJHQ have already arranged for the deployment of some additional assets and specialist personnel in preparation for implementing the MiTT proposal.

9. In the coming days, MND(SE) plan to create and embed a total of six MiTTs: one with the divisional headquarters, one at brigade level, three at battalion level and one specifically focused upon logistics. These will be bespoke teams tailored to address the most pressing shortfalls in Iraqi capabilities. This will involve the embedding of some 150 UK military personnel into 14 Div. The teams will be equipped with WARHORN and MASTIFF armoured vehicles plus the necessary communications equipment to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

10. Each UK MiTT will function as an autonomous unit whilst sharing the same command and control relationship as any other deployment outside the COB and maintaining contact with the brigade headquarters at all times. They will have access to fire support and a dedicated Quick Reaction Force, if required, and there will be combat medical technicians embedded with them. There will be mechanisms in place to ensure that they are not employed on any operations with which we would have policy, force protection or legal concerns.

### **Operational Risks**

11. Clearly, implementing this initiative will increase the risk that UK Forces will be more directly drawn into combat operations in Basra City. However, we believe that the risks are manageable, providing that we have sufficiently robust mechanisms in place to oversee how these teams will be employed.

12. We do not yet have a clear sense of the political/military context in which 14 Div might be used in the coming weeks. At present, much of the Division has been severely disrupted by recent operations and will need time to recuperate and complete its training. However, when it is re-used operationally it could either be in the context of a ceasefire and coherent move back to the original Basra Security Plan – or, more worryingly, in a continuation of the ineffective methods employed in recent days. If it is the latter, we will need to watch especially carefully that our people are not put at excessive risk or that we are drawn into supporting ill-founded or potentially illegal operations. We will keep Ministers closely informed as in-theatre planning matures.

### **Presentational Issues**

13. The presence of a substantial number of UK Forces back in Basra will be certain to attract media interest, both locally and nationally. There are many potential positives, with UK Forces visibly taking an active part in assisting the ISF. However, it is likely to again raise questions on whether we handed over Basra to Provincial Iraq Control too early and whether we have acted too late and only under pressure.

**DECLASSIFIED**

14. The impact of embedding MiTTs on force levels in the medium and long term is subject to a full review of ISF performance to identify weaknesses and how they can best be addressed. Continued embedding of MiTTs is likely to be part of any future monitoring, mentoring and training concept, although the existing MND(SE) task set may need significant adjustment to provide a potentially greater requirement for Quick Reaction Forces.

15. Defensive LTT are being developed by PJHQ in liaison with DJC and Theatre.

[original signed]

Northwood Headquarters