

TRANSITION IN SOUTHERN IRAQ: PROGRESS AND PLANS

SUMMARY

1. This paper sets out our assessments and plans on security transition, and associated military and civilian reposturing in Southern Iraq.
2. Ministers are invited to consider and endorse the following assessments and proposals at the DOP meeting on 1 February, to prepare the way for a statement by the Prime Minister on 7 February:
 - i. continuing our fundamental strategy of building Iraqi capacity and progressively transferring responsibility for security to the Iraqi authorities, and how this process has been delivered nationally to date;
 - ii. progress towards creating the conditions for formal transition to Provincial Iraqi Control in Basra and Maysan provinces; the key tasks that remain; and how and when we intend to deliver them;
 - iii. plans to reposture our military and civilian presence in the light of progress towards PIC in Basra, and what our military and civilian effort will focus on in the period ahead.
 - iv. the rationale for the collocation of military and civilian staff at the Basra Air Station, the impact this will have on operations, and the need for further work on a proposal for the future of the Basra Palace Compound;
 - v. the key messages we should use to explain and support our plans with Allies, Parliament and the public, and a timetable of milestones around which to structure our communications plan. Recent heightened concerns among some US interlocutors regarding the situation in Basra, and the viability of our plans and timescales, mean that further work will be needed to convince them;
 - vi. the success of our plans will depend greatly on the ability of the Iraqi government to deliver the necessary political conditions. Other risks and challenges to our plans include our ability to tackle police corruption, continuing Iranian influence and militia activity, and the willingness and ability of Iraqi Army 10 Division to provide security.
3. The Defence Secretary will update DOP following his visit to Iraq on 29-31 January.

1. TRANSITION**The National Strategy**

4. Transition – in particular security transition – is fundamental to the Coalition's strategy in Iraq. The Coalition has worked hard in the last 3 years to build the capacity of Iraqi institutions – notably the Army, Police and the Government's national security apparatus – so that lead responsibility for security can progressively be handed back to the Iraqi authorities.
5. Assuming – and being seen to assume – full control of Iraq's security institutions has also been among the Iraqi Government's highest priorities. President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki agreed at their meeting in Amman in November 2006 that this process needed to be accelerated.
6. There are two particular processes underway. One is progressively to pass command of the ten Divisions of the new Iraqi Army to Iraqi control. 5 Divisions have already been transferred in this way. The shared Coalition and Iraqi goal is to have all ten Divisions under Iraqi command by end-2007.
7. The second process is the formal transfer of lead responsibility for security in each of Iraq's 18 provinces to Iraqi control. Thus far, Muthanna, Dhi Qar and Najaf have formally reached this goal – known as Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). President Bush reaffirmed in his 10 January speech the goal that all 18 provinces should reach PIC by November 2007.
8. Both in provinces which have formally reached PIC, and which have yet to do so, the Multinational Force has adjusted its posture significantly in response to local circumstances and requirements. In the process, over 50 MNF bases have already been closed. As Iraq's second city, Basra has special significance. As the Baghdad Security Plan ramps up, we will need to ensure that the situation in Basra does not deteriorate.
9. Transition is not something the Coalition can achieve on its own. It is by definition a joint process, and the Iraqis need to play their part in its delivery. That includes lending the firm political support from Baghdad needed to resolve issues beyond our control. There are some key issues in respect of Maysan and Basra which we will need to push the Iraqis to deliver.

The PIC Process

10. The process of deciding whether individual provinces in our area of responsibility in Southern Iraq are ready for PIC is a joint one. The first step is for the UK Divisional Commander in MND(SE) to make an assessment and a recommendation. This is sent to Baghdad, where the Multinational Corps comment on and forward recommendations to the Iraqi/US/UK Joint Committee on the Transfer of Security Responsibility (JCTSR). If the JCTSR decision is positive, a recommendation then goes to the joint Iraqi/US/UK Ministerial Committee on National Security. Ultimately it is for Prime Minister Maliki to take decisions. But in practice, the agreement of the Multinational Force Commander (shortly to be General Petraeus) is critical.

11. This process is governed by a set of agreed conditions:

- i. threat levels in the province;
- ii. strength of the Iraqi Security Forces;
- iii. local Iraqi authorities' capacity to control the security environment;
- iv. coalition ability to re-intervene should the security situation require it.

In addition, MND(SE) has monitored an additional issue which we judge will be critical in improving security before and after PIC:

- v. economic governance capability of the provincial authorities.

2. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE PIC CONDITIONS

12. We recognised in summer 2006 that significant work was needed to achieve the conditions for PIC in Basra in particular. We therefore devised and launched an ambitious programme of cross-Government activity – under the 'Better Basra' umbrella - which aimed to create the conditions for the formal transfer of security responsibility in Basra province.

13. The military dimension of this effort has principally been delivered through Operation SINBAD, which is now drawing to a close. The civilian dimension has principally been delivered through our Consulate General, the Basra PRT, and the extra resources found last summer for work in the Justice & Rule of Law sector. The key strands of this work have continued

despite the disruption following the enforced draw down of civilian staff from the Basra Palace in October.

14. The intensified cross-Government effort in Basra in recent months is yielding results, though it will need to be maintained in the period up to and following PIC. Although we should avoid setting unrealistic and rigid benchmarks for PIC, we do need to agree a pragmatic minimum, credible to ourselves and the US, that the situation is stabilising, and that improvements in Iraqi security and governance capabilities will ensure it is sustainable. Faking the PIC conditions in turn:

i) Threat levels in the Province

Reported levels of violence are relatively low across Southern Iraq, with only some 4% of all attacks in Iraq occurring in the four MND(SE) provinces. However, much of the data on threat levels is either incomplete or conflicting. For example, although the reported murder rate in Basra has dropped from around 100/month in summer 2006 to around 30/month, many murders are not reported. The reported kidnapping rate has halved since summer 2006.

Although recent polling commissioned by MND(SE) suggests that public perceptions are more positive in Basra than in other parts of Iraq, with 90% of respondents saying they felt more secure than a year ago, we should be cautious about giving too much weight to polls of this sort, which are hard to conduct in Iraq. Indeed, some other sources of information paint a different picture, of a deteriorating security situation, an increase in indirect fire attacks, continuing militia activity and intimidation, in part influenced by the Iranians, and a pervasive culture of fear among Basrawis. Although Iranian influence will remain a fact of life in the South, it will need to be tempered through both political and military means, and at the very least, Iranian-sponsored militia activity must be curtailed as we reposture, in part through stemming the flow of increasingly sophisticated weapons across the border. While some 80-90% of recorded attacks in Basra are currently against Coalition forces rather than Iraqis, it is likely that violent activity will continue against other targets after post-reposting.

MND(SE) have stepped up targeted detention operations against those believed to be responsible for these attacks. The planning of these operations has been significantly improved through assistance received from Special Forces. The success of this intelligence-based approach was highlighted in December when Sayyid Naji, thought to be a key player in militant JAM activity in Basra, was captured in Baghdad. However, the strikes have had

limited effects – the arrests have been well-received on the streets and appear to be having a disruptive effect on the militias. But the threat, particularly from Iranian-sponsored activity, persists and JAM intimidation remains a problem for Basrawis.

Our re-posturing plans, and MND(SE)'s tactical response plan will go some way to reduce the threat. With more key assets coming from MNF(I) to support MND(SE)'s efforts in the next few months, (notably ISTAR and UAVs), more can be done. But in a large urban environment such as Basra city, eliminating the threat altogether is impossible - just as it is in Baghdad.

ii) **Strength of the Iraqi Security Forces**

Iraqi Police Service (IPS)

Basic police capability has improved and the Basra IPS is on target to achieve the 72% Transitional Readiness Assessment (TRA) level 2 required for transfer to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) by April. Over 70% of Police Stations in Basra Province have already reached this level. This is up markedly from a starting average TRA level of 3.3 (out of 4) in September 2006.

However, for all the efforts made, Basrawi levels of trust in the police force remain low, and some assessments indicate that the IPS continue to do more to undermine rather than guarantee security. The Serious Crimes Unit has not been wholly disbanded and operations against those identified have been hampered by counter-attacks, intimidation and corruption. Firm action by the MOI in Baghdad will be required. Overall, militia infiltration of the IPS remains the key barrier to preventing the IPS from adequately tackling the militias.

Iraqi Army (IA)

10 DIV has led on SINBAD security pulses since November 2006, and is now conducting the security pulses without overt MNF support. Co-ordination mechanisms are in place to respond to requests for assistance, via the PJCC, demonstrating an improved ability to respond to security threats.

However, 10 DIV showed its unreliability during the Serious Crimes Unit operation, and there remain question marks over how it might perform in supporting the Baghdad Security Plan from April. The main issue facing 10 DIV, as with the IPS, is the quality of its leadership, in addition to unwillingness to stand up to militia activity and a lack of equipment.

iii) Local Iraqi authorities' capacity to control the security environment

Our leadership engagement strategy has focused on the Governor, the Provincial Director of Police, the Basra Emergency Security Committee (ESC) and the Provincial Council. Despite past difficulties, Governor Wa'ili has been increasingly, and publicly, supportive of our work.

The current unofficial disengagement from the MNF by the Provincial Council, in response to the operation against the SCU, demonstrates the tightrope that is walked by MNF in their dealings with the Provincial Council, many of whom are under militia influence.

Our goal remains to put local Iraqis in the lead, and showing ownership of the actions needed to reach PIC. It is essential that we have firm support from the Iraqi Government in Baghdad in replacing the 10 DIV commander and the weak Provincial Director of Police, and abolishing the Emergency Security Committee.

iv) Coalition ability to re-intervene should the security situation require it

Following PIC, MND(SE) will need to provide over-watch capability in Basra and Maysan. In Basra the effect of closing the bases in the city will be to reduce our tactical and situational awareness, making any re-intervention high risk. However, MND(SE) will retain the capacity to re-intervene following the re-posturing if necessary. In the event of a re-intervention, UK forces would be redeployed to carry it out, and training of the ISF would cease until the operation was complete. Re-intervention will only occur at the request of the Iraqi government or if the security of Basra is threatened.

v) Economic governance capability of the provincial authorities

Despite a short lived boom in 2003/4, the overall economic conditions in Basra are pretty gloomy. Unemployment is high, hovering at 45-50%, with under-employment estimated to be considerably higher. The economy remains largely cash based, with disposable income limited. The availability of public services remains limited: water treatment is invariably poor; there is a shortage of medical and health supplies; rubbish collection is infrequent in some areas; the sewage system is a problem in heavy rain; and people queue for fuel for between 1 and 3 hours. Considerable activity takes place in both the informal and black sectors. This probably accounts for some 50%

of all economic activity in the province. Banking services are limited, with little or no lending activity.

However, there is considerable potential. Where there is or has been growth and employment generation in Basra, it has been in agriculture, oil operation and maintenance, service industry (e.g. car maintenance) and small, privately owned enterprises servicing the construction industry. Local opinion suggests trade is starting to pick up. With Basra a critical element of Iraq's 'bread basket', food processing offers considerable possibilities.

That said, the barriers to economic growth are clear - continued insecurity, over-bureaucratisation, limited access to credit and barriers to trade with Kuwait.

The focus of the PRT Governance team has been to help the Basra Provincial Council (PC) to take the lead, to establish and legitimise its authority, and to accept responsibility for its role in improving services. There has been a focus on enabling the Council to plan for, access and spend resources in a prioritised way.

This work is bearing fruit. The PC adopted a Provincial Development Strategy in 2006 for which Baghdad provided \$172 million to fund development projects. The PC has already let over 300 contracts in health, education, transport, infrastructure, agriculture, recreation and other sectors. It has plans to create 3000 full-time jobs in its technical directorates to deliver these projects and expects to generate an additional 6,250 jobs in the community (1.5m working days). The PC has also developed a three-year plan and is likely to receive approx. \$188m from Baghdad in 2007.

The successful conclusion of our work to build capacity in the Basra Provincial Council to plan, access & spend Iraqi resources will be the best way sustainably to address Basra's economic challenges and realise the city's potential.

Direct UK investment

DFID's own direct infrastructure investments to provide more electricity and water to people in southern Iraq have resulted in repairs to a chimney at Hartha power station to secure 170 megawatts (MW) of electricity; re-blading of turbines at Khor Al Zubayr power station will secure a further 40 MW and add 60MW; and a state of the art centre for training Iraqi water technicians. When DFID contractors complete the installation of a gas

compressor in March 2007, DFID will have provided the equivalent of 24-hour electricity for 1 million people.

Similarly, we are refurbishing water pumps at Basra's Al Hartha pump station to improve supplies to 500,000 people, as well as a water purifying plant at Az Zubayr petrochemical works to provide safe drinking water to an additional 500,000 people. All of these projects will be complete by end March 2007. A further project to improve water supply in Basra is ongoing and likely to complete in late summer 2007.

Further action needed before PIC

15. Important challenges remain that we must address in preparation for PIC. There has been demonstrable progress with the ISF, but in both the Army and Police the key weakness remains at the leadership level. The incidence of IDF against the Coalition remains high. The support we believe Iran gives to anti-Coalition militants is of particular concern. Insecurity and poor governance continue to hamper the economic development of the city. Despite high unemployment and strain on public services including water and sewerage, there has been some growth and employment generation in agriculture, services, SMEs and the oil sector.

16. We therefore plan the following key activities:

Military

Training and mentoring.

- Address concerns regarding 10 DIV's capabilities and readiness to deploy through plans for further training and the use of embedded Military Transition Teams (MiTT). A dedicated Security Sector Reform (SSR) Battle Group will provide the bulk of training for the Iraqi Army through provision of 4 MiTTs, each comprising 5-6 people. This will carry out training at Divisional and Brigade level and mentoring as required in the City bases, developing leadership and providing formal training packages. This is the minimum requirement and the MOD have been asked to review it against current needs, and MNF(I) expectation. We are also preparing elements of 10 DIV for operations in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.
- Open a Leadership Academy for 10 DIV (and the IPS) at Basra Air Station and an Iraqi-led Divisional Training Centre at Shaibah Logistics Base.

- Specialist UK military border transition teams, alongside the US, will mentor the Department of Border Enforcement at the four points of entry in MND(SE), in order to tackle smuggling.
- We will need to retarget our Iraqi Security Force (ISF) capability training. Our re-posturing plans outlined in Annex B will allow us to increase the number of sub-units available to deliver training and mentoring up to and following PIC.

Operations

- Counter-IDF: MND(SE) has planned a number of security operations to counter the IDF threat. Improved defensive systems and procedures will be deployed from BAS.
- Militant JAM & Iran: Increased emphasis on operations against militant JAM/death squad leaders and Iranian proxies. The level of Iranian influenced militia activity is an increasing concern for the US.

Personnel

- A number of changes of personnel and committee structures will be required. In particular, we should press Baghdad to replace the weak Provincial Director of Police and the QOC of 10 Division.
- Press Maliki to abolish the ineffective Emergency Security Committee (ESC), although this is unlikely to happen until we have reached PIC. Ultimately, the Governor must have overall responsibility for security in the province.

Security Sector Reform

- Iraqi Police Service: We are increasing police advisory capacity at the PJCC site in order to stand up the new Basra Crimes Unit. We will establish a new Leadership Academy at BAS to train police leaders in command and control skills, to build leadership and specialist capacity.
- Maintain civilian police support to the DIA, and legal support to those prosecuting cases doubled, in order to ensure that the first high-profile police corruption prosecutions are made before PIC.

- Continue work to increase the caseload of the DIA in their pursuit of corrupt and criminal police officers, primarily the SCU.
- Increase prison capacity through the construction and commissioning of a new central prison in Basra which will hold up to 1500 prisoners. This will include training and mentoring Iraqi Correctional Service staff to manage the prison effectively once completed in October 2007, generating sustainable employment opportunities.
- Continue to build the capacity of the Basra judiciary through continued training and mentoring and improving security measures for judges and courthouses.

Political

- Press Prime Minister Maliki and central government to take political responsibility for promoting a more cooperative political environment in Basra, preparing the parties and factions for PIC and working with us to achieve the right conditions.
- Help Basra Provincial Council show it is in charge and delivering services. We will help them secure central Government approval for their provincial development strategy and the associated budget. We will work in Baghdad with central Ministries to release the necessary funds in a timely way. And we will help the PC in accounting for these funds transparently and in addressing local blockages to disbursement.
- In addition, we will help the PC to communicate its achievements to ordinary Basrawis and to the authorities in Baghdad.
- We are currently refreshing our Better Basra work plan for the immediate pre- and post-PIC periods. We have revitalised the Southern Iraq Steering Group as the main vehicle for the co-ordination and delivery of the cross-Government effort in theatre.

Infrastructure

- Using Coalition funds, \$23m worth of new projects (water, sewerage, roads) have been developed by MND(SE) and approved by MNC-I. They will start in January and run throughout 2007.

3. REPOSTURING OUR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PRESENCE

17. The progress described above, and our plans for further work to reach formal PIC form the context for our plans to re-posture UK forces in Southern Iraq over the coming months. When this process (known as Operation ZENITH) is completed in June, the total number of UK troops in southern Iraq will be reduced from some 7000 to approximately 4500. The key tasks that the troops will perform is set out in detail in Annex B.
18. As set out in Annex C, we do not believe these plans will diminish our ability to deliver the agreed conditions for PIC. Once the process is complete, Coalition forces operating from Basra Air Station and the Warren site will be able to:
- Deliver enhanced Iraqi Army training through enlarged military transition teams and a dedicated Joint Leadership Academy.
 - Improve the rule of law via concentrated work with the Iraqi police in areas such as forensics and continued mentoring at the Provincial Joint Co-ordination Centre.
 - Maintain a dedicated force reserve to ensure that we can react to events and support ISF operations if required.
 - Reduce our vulnerability to attack, particularly indirect fire, although this will remain a problem.
 - Improve the co-ordination of our efforts across all lines of operation, and between all civilian and military agencies working in Basra. Following PIC, MND(SE) will need to provide over-watch capability in Basra and Maysan. The UK force will maintain without change its role in relation to coalition partners in MND (SE).
19. MND(SE) will retain the capacity to re-intervene if necessary anywhere in Basra or Maysan following the re-posturing.
20. They will also retain the mobile force they currently have on the Iranian border, conducting operations to counter arms smuggling and training the Department of Border Enforcement.
21. MND(SE) will continue to provide protection to vulnerable strategic points along Route TAMPA, to ensure security of supply routes, and will retain the

capacity to surge forces to deal with a contingency on the major supply route.

Basra Palace

22. Further work will be required on the future ownership and use of the Basra Palace Compound. We currently occupy (we do not own) the Basra Palace site in the city. It houses a UK military presence; UK & US Embassy Offices (both substantially drawn down because of the growing IDF threat); and an empty UN compound guarded by Romanian troops (to which the UN have no intention of returning). The US are keen to retain the option of returning to the site,

23.

We should consider retaining a military presence there at least until PIC. This might be achieved through the presence of an embedded MiTT and MOD is also looking at whether it might be sensible for a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) to be based at the Palace. This could involve an increase in residual force levels. Preventing the overrunning or looting of the site, as occurred in Camp Abu Naji, will be crucial to preventing the militias gaining an information operations victory by portraying our withdrawal as a defeat. Nevertheless, keeping a presence there inevitably brings with it risks, from continued indirect fire attacks, and financial implications.

24. A separate proposal on the future of the Basra Palace Compound should therefore be commissioned. Until this has been decided, **we recommend that we avoid definitive public statements about the future of Basra Palace.**

4. PRESENTING OUR PLANS

25. We need to set out and explain our plans clearly to Allies, the Iraqis, Parliament, and the public. This process has already begun, through a series of briefings in theatre and elsewhere to the US and key allies in MND(SE).
26. The most immediate challenge is to address US concerns. Notwithstanding the Bush-Maliki agreement in Amman, General Casey remains cautious about the timing of PIC in Basra and Maysan. He has expressed serious concerns about our reposturing plans, and there are indications that General Petraeus may be more, not less cautious. Defence Secretary Gates has also raised questions. The Defence Secretary will need to speak personally to

him after his visit to Iraq; and this needs to be followed up on military and policy channels with the Pentagon and elsewhere in Washington.

27. The US worry that our plans signal reduced commitment to southern Iraq and potentially threaten the integrity of the Coalition & MNF-I supply lines. Perhaps most of all, **their growing concern about Iran's role** in Iraq is reinforcing their caution about transition in the south. Like us, they are keen to avoid any public impression that our actions could be seen caving into pressure from Iran or Iranian proxies in Iraq.
28. It is important that we are clear about what we are proposing. We are **not** suggesting that PIC must happen in Maysan and Basra on any fixed timetable. We accept that the case for moving to PIC in Basra in particular will be finely balanced. Our current assessment is that we have made sufficient progress to be confident that MND(SE) will be able to recommend that Basra can be transferred to PIC by the end of the June. But the final decision will rest with MCNS and Maliki, and some of the key actions needed to get to PIC will require Iraqi decisions. Past experience suggests slippage may well occur before formal decisions get taken – indeed it has already done so for Maysan.
29. What we are saying is that, in the light of progress thus far, and in anticipation of PIC, it makes sense now to set out a programme of change that will have a demonstrable impact before PIC, and will pave the way for Iraqi-led progress beyond. This will include some reposturing of both our military and civilian effort. But our commitment, both military and civilian, will endure up to and beyond PIC.
30. We will need to be robust in defending our assessments. Major challenges remain in Basra. But it is not Baghdad. The case for transition in Basra, particularly if made strongly by the Iraqis themselves, is credible, and we therefore need to encourage the Iraqis to help us persuade the US that Basra is ready. Ultimately, many of these problems can only be addressed by Iraqi political and development solutions, so we need to renew efforts to persuade Maliki and others to drive forward the reconciliation agenda, and through personnel and structural changes, enable the Basra Provincial Council to grip responsibility for security and governance.
31. We will draw on the following core script:
- There is no separate UK agenda in southern Iraq. We remain committed to the Coalition and its strategic aims and are acting in accordance with wider Coalition plans in Iraq.

- We remain committed to the conditions-based approach, and are determined to make a success of transition in the south.

The situation in Basra poses significantly different challenges to the situation in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq. Our efforts in the city have delivered promising and measurable results over the past few months.

- Our hope remains that sufficient progress will be made for our Commander in MND(SE) to recommend that Basra be transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control by the end of June;
- Against this background, it makes sense for us now to plan to adjust the posture of our existing military deployments in and around Basra. This will enable us better to focus on the key issues that need resolving before PIC. It will also enable us to reduce the considerable overhead we currently face in guarding, maintaining and supplying static bases in the city.
- We are proposing to consolidate most of our troops in Basra Province to Basra Air Station. This will help us better co-ordinate our ISF training programmes, reduce our vulnerability to attack, provide our forces more freedom of movement and help improve co-operation across all areas of government activity.
- This will see the closure of a number of bases and will represent a reduction in overall UK force levels to around 4500. But it will not mean a withdrawal of UK troops from Southern Iraq. Nor indeed will it represent a reduction in the effect we will be able to deliver.
- As well as retaining significant military forces in theatre, our civilian efforts, including the work of our Basra PRT, will continue. We will retain a military and civilian presence in the city at the PJCC, focussing on further improving the Basra Police;
- Improving the police is at the heart of our current work in the province. Over half Basra's police stations are now at the required standard for PIC and we are on track to meet the 72% target. We are disbanding the notorious Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) and establishing a replacement body, as well as pursuing prosecutions through a new Department of Internal Affairs.
- We will continue to focus our efforts on ISF training, governance capacity building work and projects aimed at improving quality of life for ordinary Iraqis throughout 2007. After re-posturing, 10 sub-units (80-100 troops), up from 8, will provide an enhanced reintervention capacity. We

will also be able to better support Iraqi Security Forces training and capacity. Our capability to respond to emerging security problems or support the ISF will be undiminished.

Our commitment to Iraq remains firm. The Division we lead in the South remains solid. All our current allies will stay with us (*If queried: Only the Danes plan to draw down their current force levels in line with us*).

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

32. Our engagement with the Iraqi Government, both in Baghdad and Basra, and with the public, will be determined by the sequencing of our announcements on PIC and Operation ZENITH over the next few months. Annex A outlines the key operational milestones for the first half of 2007, around which our programme of public announcements will need to be drawn.

Cabinet Office

31 January 2007

Annexes:

- Annex A: Timeline of key public announcements and operational milestones
- Annex B: Military requirements following re-posture
- Annex C: MOD assessment of Enhanced MND(SE) capability following re-posture in Basra Province

Annex A

IRAQ TRANSITION AND RESPOSTURING - KEY 2007 MILESTONES

February

- Target date for PIC in Maysan
- End of Operation SINBAD in Basra (end February)

March

- Transfer of Shiabaa Logistics Base (SLB) to Iraqi control

April

- Target date for transfer of Shatt Al'Arab Hotel
- Target date for transfer of Old State Building

May

- Next roulement of UK Forces in Iraq (Relief in Place)

June

- UK military re-posturing complete
- Target date for PIC in Basra
- Target date for transfer of Basra Palace

Our military requirements following re-posture

1. Tasks. After PIC has been achieved across MND(SE) provinces, UK forces would primarily be engaged in the following activities: mentoring and training ISF; force protection, maintenance of situational awareness, provision of security for civilian capacity building activity through the provisional reconstruction team; support to demanding ISF operations; and support to broader coalition activity, such as the protection of logistic and commercial supply routes in southern Iraq.

2. Force Package. Assuming the Australians continue to provide a battle group for overwatch in Muthanna and Dhi Qar Provinces there is a requirement for four UK battle groups to operate in MND(SE) following re-posture. Of these four Battle Groups, it is expected that 3 will be significantly involved in training and mentoring of the Iraqi Security Forces.

- Iraqi Army. One Battle Group will be responsible for mentoring the Iraqi Army. This will include the continuation of MiTTs mentoring across 10 Division
- Iraqi Police. One Battle Group will support the UK Police Training Team (PTT) Headquarters based at the Provincial Joint Co-ordination Centre in Basra and provide protection to mobile PTT's delivering police training across the 4 provinces. This commitment will be maintained for as long as possible to provide situation awareness and the principal link to the ISF following re-posture.
- Ports of Entry. One Battle Group will focus on border enforcement including the training and mentoring of the Iraqi DME. Each of the 4 Ports of Entry in MND (SE) will be mentored by specialist Border Transition Teams and a US Border Security Team and we will continue to train and develop the Iraqi Navy in Umm Qasr through the Naval Transition Team (NaTT).
- Reserve Force. A dedicated reserve Battle Group will be based at Basra Air Station to ensure we retain the capability to intervene in any of the provinces should the security situation deteriorate. This reserve force will contain one tank squadron, 2 armoured infantry companies and one mechanised infantry company. It is the

DECLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL - UK EYES ONLY

military's judgement that this is the minimum force requirement needed to conduct a meaningful re-intervention.

3. In addition to these combat forces, further personnel would be required to provide the logistic, life support and air transport requirements of the force. A small force taken from the Rear Operations Battle Group will also be required to provide force protection in Baghdad.

4. Basra Palace. As highlighted in the paper, a definitive decision on the future of Basra Palace has yet to be made. A further UK Battle Group would be required should it be assessed necessary to retain the Palace beyond the current planned timeframe.

CONFIDENTIAL - UK EYES ONLY
DECLASSIFIED

Enhanced MND(SE) capability following re-posture in Basra Province

1. Our aim in MND(SE) has been to develop a strategy that improves progress towards Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) in Basra by reconfiguring our forces to accommodate the requirements of Iraqi Security Force (ISF) training and surge security operations. Our current posture incurs a considerable overhead in guarding, maintaining and supplying bases in and around Basra City.
2. Once re-posture is complete, our refocused force at Basra Air Station will number approximately 4500 personnel. This reduction from six to four battle groups will lead to a decrease in the number of UK army sub-units operating in Iraq from 24 to 15. We will maintain the Australian and Romanian battle groups in Dhi Qar and Muthanna, where we have already reached PIC.
3. Importantly, although this represents a reduction in overall UK force levels this re-posture should preserve the 'effect' that we will be able to deliver in terms of the critical work required to get to PIC in Basra. As highlighted below:
 - i. **Today MND(SE) can deploy 8 of the 24 UK sub-units in support of the ISF, given the demands of guarding and sustaining bases.**
 - ii. **Post re-posture there will be 15 UK sub-units in Iraq, of which up to 10 could be deployed into Basra.**
4. The increase in available sub-units should allow us to deliver the conditions needed to achieve PIC more effectively. These improvements will include the delivery of enhanced Iraqi Army training through enlarged military transition teams and a dedicated Joint Leadership Academy, a reduction in our vulnerability to attack, particularly indirect fire, and improvements to the co-ordination of HMG efforts across all lines of operation in Basra.
5. The closure of Basra City bases has serious implications for UK and US situational awareness that will be impossible to mitigate fully. However, these risks are judged to be containable post provincial hand-over in Basra, and mitigation options, including the increased use of aviation and ISTAR assets, are being actively and aggressively considered.

CONFIDENTIAL - EYES ONLY
DECLASSIFIED

6. In conjunction with UK forces, our coalition partners, the Danes, the Lithuanians and the Czechs, are planning to re-posture to Basra Air Station during the first half of 2007. Some of these multinational sub-units could be used to facilitate a surge operation by offering force-protection at Basra Air Station.
7. Following our re-posture, should MND(SE) be required to deploy into Basra City during a crisis, all training of the Iraqi Security Forces would cease until such an operation was complete.

CONFIDENTIAL - EYES ONLY
DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED



The Office of the
British Embassy

Basra
Basra Air Station
FTN

@fco.gov.uk

23 May 2007
Margaret Aldred
Defence and Overseas Secretariat
Cabinet Office

Dear Margaret,

BASRA: WEEKLY REPORT

1. **Baghdad's noose around Wa'ili seems to be tightening.** The cabinet's judicial committee has said that the opposition's letter of no confidence is enough to warrant Wa'ili's dismissal, and has rejected Fadhila's subsequent appeal. **Maliki appears to have decided Wa'ili should go, but how and who should replace him are unclear.** Wa'ili's opponents seem more chipper this week, and some are thinking in terms of formal Provincial Council reengagement.
2. General Jalil has submitted his investigative report on the security situation to Maliki. But no sign of this translating into concrete decisions, yet. **Security and other essential services remain poor in town,** with continuing violence, and attacks on MNF (in Basra Air Station and in town, with one fatality).

Baghdad's noose tightening around Wa'ili?

3. Prime Minister Maliki seems to be treading carefully, but with intent, to get Wa'ili out. Late last week, the Cabinet's judicial committee formally found the letter of the 27 Provincial Councillors expressing no confidence in Wa'ili to be a **sufficient expression in law to warrant his dismissal:** no further vote was necessary. **We gather that Maliki so informed Wa'ili in Baghdad,** and advised him that he should exercise a right to appeal against the decision. Fadhila promptly lodged their appeal, but we learned on 21 May that the judicial committee had rejected their arguments. We gather that Wa'ili will be back in Basra tomorrow. Maliki late last week invited a delegation of five anti-Wa'ili Provincial Councillors, led by Chairman Mohammed al-Obadi, to Baghdad, and apparently told them that he would decide Wa'ili's fate, once the judicial committee had made its judgement.
4. We think Maliki has taken these steps to provide a context that Wa'ili has no justification in law to remain in office when he exercises his **emergency**

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED



power to dismiss the Governor (and we are beginning to hear from contacts that Maliki has signed an order to this effect). But we still think the Wa'ili brothers will not go quietly. So, the option of simply leaving it to the Provincial Council to elect a new governor by simple majority doesn't seem likely to fly. The alternative would be for others in Fadhila to jettison the Wa'ilis and settle for a political compromise that would be acceptable to Basra Islamiyya. Despite Fadhila's implacability over recent weeks, a deal remains very much in the offing. Quite what it would mean in terms of a successor to Wa'ili and Fadhila's residual degree of control over Basra and its resources remains to be seen. And, again, we can't see how Fadhila's parting with the Wa'ilis would persuade the brothers to yield, without having recourse to their security forces.

5. One postscript to all of this. We have heard today that **the Finance Minister has instructed the Central Bank to freeze all development funds in its Basra accounts until the conflict between the Governor and the Provincial Council is resolved.** This is because Wa'ili wrote to the Central Bank requesting that these funds be transferred from both his own and the Provincial Council's separate accounts to another bank account (location unspecified). The Provincial Council unsurprisingly protested; and the Central Bank sought guidance from the Ministry of Finance. We have of course been working hard for months to persuade Baghdad to provide the finance Basra deserves for development work; so, this is a further incentive for us to have the political impasse resolved as soon as possible.

The Provincial Council and engagement with the Coalition

6. **Maliki's action has given the opposition within the Provincial Council greater confidence** than we could report last week. In turn, they are beginning to turn their attention to the Council's post-Jameat boycott, which we for weeks now have regarded as irrelevant to our capacity to carry on business. Strangely, given the Governor's professed personal support for the Coalition, the boycott has been spearheaded largely by a small group of Fadhila Councillors. **Hassan Rashid, a leading opponent of Wa'ili, is openly suggesting that the Council should meet in order to lift the boycott,** arguing that such a step would also strengthen the Council's overall position.

The Provincial Council

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED



managed to meet today – to our knowledge for the first time since the letter of the 27 – although no important business was conducted.

7. Set against this, we had a reverse in our dealings this week. Following the arrest (approved by Maliki) and subsequent release (at Maliki's instruction) at Basra civilian airport of Aus al-Khafaji, a Sadrist figure from Dhi Qar, we were told by its head, Sayyid Ghali, that the Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee would no longer see us at the civilian airport. Provincial Councillors had been attending these meetings as an exception to the boycott and on what is generally perceived to be neutral ground (where we often stage large meetings); the arrest operation had increased pressure on them not to attend. Sayyid Ghali suggested several unacceptable and insecure alternative locations in the centre of town. But it looks as if this has resolved itself, following intervention from Mohammed al-Obadi with Sayyid Ghali.

Continued procrastination on security structures

8. Major General Jalil has completed his investigative visit to Basra (and not without incident – three of his team were kidnapped for a few hours on the evening of 16 May). He told Major General Jonathan Shaw and me on 19 May that he had met everybody that he wanted to, bar the Governor and members of the Provincial Council. Jalil returned to Baghdad on 20 May to deliver his report to Maliki and Defence Minister Abdul Oader.

9. Jalil was elusive about the future of the Emergency Security Committee (ESC); but

informed the Brigade Commander that the ESC would be reformed, not disbanded. He had heard that Maliki was considering a proposal to appoint General Jalil as a member

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED



Jalil's other recommendations involved exchanging police in Basra with a large contingent of national police from outside the province, and taking action to combat the militias' influence over the port and oil infrastructure (where we urged caution, for fear of causing unnecessary damage to Iraq's economy, unless the GoI could act with sufficient force to be confident of victory).

10. Locally, though, **there are signs of progress**. Lt Col Ghazi is proving a robust head of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). He has blocked Mohammed Hammadi's attempts to remove DIA officers who are attached to the PDoP office. On 21 May, the DIA arrested a key ex-Serious Crimes Unit member (Faris al-Daraji, the target of the 4 March NIIA raid), together with eight others. This follows the execution of the first arrest warrant (Madloul) on 8 May. And work will begin shortly in building the Joint Leadership Academy, which we see a key component in building the Iraqi Security Forces' capacity post-PIC.

The security situation – and a possible upswing in sectarian violence

11. **The security situation in Basra has been difficult over the past week, influenced in part by events in neighbouring Dhi Qar province.** Following the arrest of armed JAM members, there were prolonged clashes on the streets of al-Nasariyya between the Iraqi Security Forces and JAM on 15 May, during which several governmental buildings were attacked. The kidnapping of Jalil's colleagues was apparently in retaliation: they were released following intervention by Ali Hammadi and local politicians (including from Thar Allah and OMS).
12. The arrest of Aus al-Khafaji, together with the current brigade roulement, may explain the **relatively high rate of IDF at Basra Air Station**, which has endured **17 attacks (with 51 rockets in total) in the last week**. **IDF levels at Basra Palace have also been high**. In Basra City, there have been several **militia attacks on MNF operations** involving IEDs, RPGs and small arms fire (with one fatality), **displaying an ability to mount complex operations, fast**.
13. The level of **sectarian violence** pales in comparison to Baghdad, but a couple of incidents this week have fuelled concern within the nervous Sunni

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED



community: it's not clear to what degree this concern is justified. Firstly, an explosion at a Sunni mosque in az-Zubayr on 17 May. It is not clear if this was the result of a direct Shia attack, a Sunni own goal or simply an accident following locals finding an IED. A man was injured and died before he could be questioned, and the Imam was arrested (but quickly released) on suspicion on possessing a command wire. Whatever the truth of the matter, the incident was exploited by the militia, who took nine Sunni hostages (of whom two have been subsequently released: the fate of the others is unknown). Secondly, a tribal dispute on 21 May, co-incidentally involving a Shi'i and a Sunni, resulted in an attack on the headquarters of the (Sunni) Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). The situation was calmed when tribal leader Sheikh Mansour al-Tamimi and the local head of the IIP Abdul Karim Jarad called in the Iraqi Army to disperse the crowd.

Life in Basra: security, electricity and water

14. **All of our contacts speak of a deterioration in the security situation more generally, and an undertow of increasing assassinations and kidnappings.** My political adviser's contacts regularly ask him if he thinks it's safe enough to go out or to send their children to school on any given day. **The electricity supply has also deteriorated,** sparking a small demonstration on 16 May. The frequent extended periods without power are unpredictable, so people can't plan their day. Even with air conditioning, the summer in Basra is nasty: without it, it's unbearable. The electricity problems seem to stem from the usual summer increase in demand, combined with the present reblading of the az-Zubayr power plant – which the Iraqis decided to delay from last autumn, contrary to DFID advice. **The lack of power has stopped the electric water pumps from working.** Potable water is scarce and 70% of the city is without a mains supply (worst affected are poorer areas such as the Shia Flats).

15. This letter has been agreed with Major General Jonathan Shaw.

Yours ever,

Richard

Richard Jones
HM Consul-General, Basra

CONFIDENTIAL
DECLASSIFIED

