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LOOSE MINUTE

DG Op Pol/2/9 (83/03)

2 April 2003

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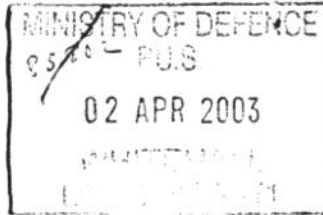
HD Sec(Iraq)

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The current issue will
will be a little more
than, I suggest, about
the TA aspects. The
submission compares two issues
: enhancement of existing TA capacity
(a) within the numbers currently called
up
(b) calling out an additional
number of TA to help cope with
the overstretched caused by TELIC
and FRESCO.

CURRENT AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS - RELATIVE PRIORITIES

ISSUE

1. Guidance on relative priorities over the next 6 to 9 months in the light of current high level of commitment.

TIMING

2. Priority. A parallel submission is being made on the TA issue summarised below.

RECOMMENDATION

3. The Secretary of State is invited to note that:
 - a. Operational commitments are running at an unsustainable rate until the Op TELIC commitment is reduced (not before Sep 03 at current planning), and Op FRESCO is terminated. *Preserve the current level of commitment, rather than increasing the Army's size by the back door, rather than aligning commitments to agreed capacity. I do not suggest the Sps should get into that argument. The point can be dealt with simply by authorising a specific number of TA for specific reasons, reviewed at 6 monthly intervals (which is sufficient to deal with C&S's point later on). But it is worth emphasising the TA measure in the reply.*
 - b. There are a number of new commitments, including further potential Op TELIC demands, that we should plan to cover.
 - c. There are two options for providing the capability to deal with these further commitments:

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(1) Find new sources of capability (from Reserves, the training stream, or multi-rolling of the Spearhead battalion).

(2) Reduce other commitments (Op FRESCO, Op BANNER, Public Duties).

d. Further specific decisions may be needed in the forthcoming weeks on prioritising Op FRESCO and homebase security.

and to endorse the guidance, which has been agreed by the COS, at para 12.

BACKGROUND

4. Ministers are aware of the level of commitment to Op TELIC and Op FRESCO. In addition there are numerous standing, home security and Ministerially directed tasks - either ongoing, or contingent. On Wed 26 Mar COS took a routine update on the overall level of operational commitments¹. The key deductions were:

a. Operational commitments are running at a level unsustainable beyond the Summer/Autumn. This is particularly the case for the Army, but holds true for the RN and the RAF.

b. We are placing particular pressure on our enabling forces. Notably we have effectively committed the entirety of the Defence Medical Services to operations.

c. Our ability to generate forces to deal with additional contingencies is very limited. We could only contemplate generating forces at Small Scale non-warfighting (and these would have to compete for scarce airlift). The RN could not deliver forces even at this level without withdrawing from Ministerially directed tasks in the Mediterranean or the Caribbean.

d. The situation is compounded by the considerable potential for short notice homebase tasks (eg terrorist incidents, or a rise in the terrorist threat leading to an increase in the alert status to Bikini AMBER). If AMBER was declared, the exact manpower bill would be dependent on the specific measures implemented by TLBs but could affect the core outputs of predominantly military TLBs within 2 days.

e. The current level of activity has only been achievable at penalty, such as gapping of RN commitments, extension of operational tour lengths, postponement of post-operational leave, and the cancellation of a large number of exercises.

5. Separately, we know that the level of operational commitments is placing pressure on our people. This year's Armed Forces Pay Review Body Report noted that the incidence of untaken leave (when reported) was increasing, as were the hours worked. This trend looks set to continue for much of this year.

¹ D/DAO/24/3 "Commitments on a rolling 12-24 months ahead - Managing the Means" dated 26 Mar 03

6. Furthermore, a number of units currently committed to Op TELIC are forecast to undertake further operational tours in late 03. 7 Armd Bde will commence their Other Tasks (OT) Year commitments from Nov 03, including operational tours in the Balkans and Northern Ireland. Likewise, 45 Cdo RM will commence a Northern Ireland tour in Dec 03.

THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

7. In this context, COS have identified the key assumptions that should drive our immediate planning:

- a. OP TELIC must be Main Effort. The focus must be on delivering operational success in Phase III and then sustaining a level of force required to achieve stabilisation success in Phase IV². There may nevertheless be a requirement to increase our commitment to Op TELIC in the short term (for additional PW handling tasks, or to replace forces already in theatre). In due course, perhaps as early as July, there will be a requirement to route elements of the in-place force, which will require units to be removed from FRESCO. Other operational priorities should, in principle, be subordinate to Op TELIC.
- b. Economy of effort is required elsewhere. Force levels on our other operational commitments should be kept at the minimum necessary and should be reviewed frequently.
- c. We should assume that we will continue to train forces at BATUS (required to provide collective training for those LAND forces needed to deliver trained high readiness forces for 04 and for Op TELIC follow-on).
- d. We should also assume that we will commence the BOWMAN fielding programme in Jul 03³, and do our best to sustain it thereafter. Similarly the re-equipping/re-organisation of key force elements should continue (e.g. Typhoon, MRA4, ASTOR, Joint Force Harrier and MFTS).

8. Beyond the next few months there are other potential commitments - both discretionary, and non-discretionary: UK command of a EUFOR (Bosnia) formation by Mid 04, whilst subject to further consideration, both on policy and the resource bill, cannot be discounted; Sierra Leone may require further deployments over the next 12 months; and we will be looking to set up a PRT in Afghanistan in Summer 03.

RELEASING CAPABILITY

9. Work has been done to identify how best we might release capability. There are two options:

- a. Find new sources of capability.

² Ministers have given guidance on the scale of our Phase 4 commitment - agreeing in principle to a reduction to one-third of current levels, maintaining a Joint Force of a 2* HQ, a Bde plus enablers, and maritime and air assets.

³ The programme includes a number of contractual obligations. Most critically, a delay in fielding will reduce military capability. The in-service radio equipment is already obsolete. This will tie up 12 Mech Bde until at least Mar-Apr 04.

- b. Reduce current commitments.

10. New Sources of Capability.

a. Reserves. Mobilisation and training of TA Major Units will take at least 46 days⁴ making them available not before 17 May⁵. Reserves could, with further training, be deployed in support of Op TELIC. They will be needed to replace Reservists on Op TELIC from September in order to ease the burden on overstretched elements of the Regular Army. They could, also, provide increased substitution for Regular forces employed on other overseas tasks (e.g Balkans and Afghanistan). The timeframe required to mobilise and deliver Reserve forces reduces their utility for short notice tasks - without prior mobilisation. Domestically there are limitations in the way we use the Reserves, and it has been the practice not to deploy them in domestic situations where they may be required to face civil protest or disorder, although there is no legal bar to this. There are also some disadvantages in deploying Reserves on static guarding tasks in UK. It would be unpopular, could result in a high number of exemption applications and could have an adverse long-term effect on recruiting and retention. However, the Reserve Forces Act 1996 does allow the employment of Reserves on these tasks.

b. Troops from the Services training and personnel organisations. Large numbers of individuals have already been deployed as individual augmentees from Second Sea Lord, Adjutant General and the RAF Personnel and Training Command. In addition, we currently have some 140 personnel from the latter deployed at RAF FAIRFORD. Given the serious long-term consequences for sustainable manning of the Forces resulting from denuding the training base we would not wish routinely to repeat this, or draw further upon the training stream. In addition, there may be retention difficulties post-TELIC (previous experience suggests this) and it is therefore essential to maintain the health of the training machine.

c. Use of the Spearhead Land Element (SLE). The SLE battalion is held at very high readiness as the UK's strategic reserve. It is currently multi-hatted against UK overseas contingencies, homebase security contingencies and, from mid-Apr, as the UK's rear based Balkans Operational Reserve Force. Furthermore, it provides the means to reinforce Sierra Leone, as seen recently on Op KEELING. If deployed, a stand-up capability to replace it can only be generated at risk to Op FRESCO.

11. Reduction of Commitments. There are 3 areas in particular where it has been suggested we might be able to release capability:

a. Op BANNER. Military support to the Police in NI is significant and the situation remains unpredictable. We are entering a critical time in the peace process and any subsequent normalisation is not guaranteed. If there is a breakthrough it will bring a reduction in military forces levels in the medium term, but, paradoxically, in the short run, there will be a greater demand on forces.

⁴ Reducible to 39 days in urgent circumstances.

⁵ Assumes a decision to mobilise by 2 Apr.

Troops will be required to reduce the physical infrastructure, to ensure the confidence of the Police and to maintain pressure on dissident republican terrorism. If HQNI were to release a battalion now it would be the largely rear based Mainland (MLD) Battalion, consisting of 4 small companies. This would result in HQNI have to commit an element of their operational reserve to South Armagh to backfill, and would also see the GOC losing a considerable reserve public order capability shortly before the start of the 03 Marching Season.

b. Public Duties (PD) Troops. Despite the difficulties, London District are currently providing manpower for Op FRESCO concurrent with PD, with 74 guardsmen and 49 bandsmen committed to PD on each 24 hour basis. Suspension of all PD would release approximately 350 personnel. However, this would be unprecedented-- even during World War Two PD were maintained, albeit with extension of guard lengths. Implementation of a similar process could release up to 200 personnel. Furthermore, cancellation or reduction of PD would result in cancellation of Her Majesty's Birthday Parade on 14 Jun. Although this is already under consideration, such a step might be interpreted as an admission of overstretch. Separate advice will be provided on this.

c. Op FRESCO. Reductions have been achieved through restructuring Op FRESCO coverage. But these savings have been consumed by other high priority commitments (including training of Op TELIC follow-on forces at BATUS). Restructuring will still leave at least 16,000 committed to Op FRESCO. Assuming that the tempo of Op FRESCO continues along recent lines (ie sporadic) then it is recommended that we be prepared to use FRESCO manpower (at risk) for any short term homebase security tasks (e.g Heathrow Airport and KP security). Such deployments will need to be considered on a case by case basis. Dependent on future FBU action, there may be a requirement for COS and Ministers to prioritise Homebase security and Op FRESCO. Op FRESCO is the only commitment with significant resources from all 3 services.

GUIDANCE

12. In summary, it would be helpful if Secretary of State could endorse the following broad guidance for managing commitments over the next 6 - 9 months.

- a. Op TELIC is Main Effort.
- b. Op FRESCO remains the second priority, but is at risk from higher priority homebase tasks and Op TELIC roulement
- c. We must protect future capability in priority areas:
 - (1) Army BATUS training for high readiness/TELIC follow-on forces (and equivalents for the Navy and Air Force).
 - (2) The Training Stream.
 - (3) BOWMAN.

- d. The SLE will be multi-roled, embracing the Balkans ORF, unavoidable short notice homebase tasks (unless covered at risk to FRESCO), and routine overseas contingencies. Once deployed it will need replacing at unavoidable penalty to FRESCO.
- e. Up to 3 companies of TA and a small battalion HQ to be mobilised for rear area tasks in the Op TELIC JOA, with the requirement to be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis while the crisis continues.
- f. The first Medium Scale roulement of Op TELIC, planned for Sep 03, will require ~3500 TA personnel.
- f. Direction be given to GOC NI that the Rear Based Mainland (MLD) Bn will remain under his OPCOM, but is to be prepared to deploy on higher priority tasks.
- g. From a commitments perspective, there is no requirement for the steady-state Public Duties to be affected. From a presentational perspective, it may be essential that they be maintained.
- h. The potential of employing contractors to assist in security tasks, or to augment existing guards, in the event of the BIKINI Alert State being raised, should be explored further.
13. In the forthcoming weeks Ministers will be invited to give further guidance on:
- a. Early Apr. Possible decision on resourcing additional EPW/rear area security requirement for 1(UK) Armd Div.
- b. Mid Apr. Decision required on whether Naval Task Group 03 (NTG03) should proceed.
- c. A decision on arrangements for continuing with her Majesty's Birthday Parade will be needed by mid-April.
- d. A decision on the mobilisation of 3500 Reservists for Op TELIC roulement will be required 61 days in advance of deployment. For an early-mid July deployment this would be as early as 8 May.

In addition, there will be a number of more minor decisions requiring COS/Ministerial approval. These will be put forward as they arise.

Ian Lee

IAN LEE
DG Op Pol