

21 December 2002

S of SIRAQ : CBS PHONE CALL : 22 DECEMBER

1. Martyn put a note in the box advising you that CBS had a meeting with CSO et al on Friday evening to discuss the implications of indications that CENTCOM are trying to advance the start of land operations from c. mid-March to early March.
2. The attached paper arrived late on Friday: CBS likely to have seen it. In theory, it does not seek any decisions now. But CBS and the staffs are looking for a steer on whether they should be pulling in the planners over Christmas to work up the detail of outloading/deploying the first few days of January rather than mid-January as currently assumed. In particular, CBS will want to get a feel for how open you are to:
 - additional visible preparatory activities (eg calling people off leave back to depots etc) between Christmas and New Year;
 - an early first call-out of reserves - ie notification to Parliament on c. 9 January 2003.

Some additional points, not in the attached paper, are set out below.

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3. There is some suspicion about the provenance of the information about US intentions - it has come straight from CENTCOM via CSO. It has not been cross-checked with the Joint Staffs in the Pentagon. I spoke to Larry in Runsfeld's office late last night. He said:

- Runsfeld has been resisting for two weeks signing off a draft deployment order submitted by Frank's because it looks too much like DESERT STORM 2. He wants it broken down into chunks so that decisions/decisions have a more reasonable - and less politically explosive - "flow".

- Runsfeld may reach first decisions "within a week", but there would be no visible steps (eg changes in alert states) until later (and certainly after Christmas).

- ~~The~~ Larry was vague about when "later" would be: reading between the lines, I would say in the first couple of weeks in January.

This calls into doubt the CENTCOM scheme quoted by CSO which, I am told, assumes movement of 4th Infantry Division before Christmas.

4. In terms of preparatory action over the holiday period, so far you have agreed:

- Bringing air elements of Package 2 to 10 days Notice to Move on 27 December and prepositioning

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equipment in Turkey on 30 December.

- Bringing deploying elements of the Amphibious Task Group ^(ATG) to 5 days NTH from beginning of January.

These are pre-figured, in general terms, in your oral Statement.

5. With regard to raising the profile of preparations over the Christmas/New Year period, it is with bearing in mind

- the risk of getting out ahead of the US Government position (we've been here before with CSO !)
- deploying heavy equipment etc before your visit to Turkey (8-9 January) risks causing a diplomatic row with Ankara.
- Alastair's communications plan (faxed to you in hi assumes a start date of 7 January with Phil's statement.
- Phil is on holiday abroad 26/12 - 5/1/03.

My suggestion would be that you tell CBS that:

- you are open to the idea of a first call-out of reserves on/about 9 January, but:
- there should be no visible shift in tempo of preparation before 6 January.



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