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DG Op Pol/4/6/1/1 (86 & 86a/03)

2 April 2003

**PS/Secretary of State**

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PS/Minister(DP)  
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Policy Director  
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Head of Sec(Iraq)  
Sec(Iraq)-AD Pol/Ops  
Cabinet Office – Desmond Bowen  
FCO - Head of IPU  
FCO – William Ehrman

**OP TELIC - DRAFT OPERATIONAL CONCEPT FOR PHASE 4.**

**Issue**

1 The draft operational concept for UK forces in Op TELIC, Phase 4, accepted by COS on Monday and our concerns about ORHA.

**Recommendation**

2 That the Secretary of State:

a. **Note** that on Monday the COS yesterday endorsed a paper by CJO recommending that in Phase IV:

- i. UK Forces' linkage with Iraqis should reflect their system of governance and should thus be arranged on a provincial basis.
- ii. UK forces should use the Joint Commission model.
- iii. Forces should be deployed on an intelligence led rather than framework basis with emphasis on indicators and warning and mobility.
- iv. The Chiefs of Staff should take a view, in due course, on the geographical area that the UK should cover;

b. **Note** that while the "Joint Commission" concept is well proven in the Balkans, its application will be adapted to the particular circumstances of Iraq.

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c. **note** that the level of consent and the tasks to be performed by UK forces in later stages of Phase IV remain undetermined and thus the geographic scope of British responsibility cannot yet be decided.

d. **note** that the role and plans of ORHA continue to develop, particularly with respect to future governance structures. Until these are firmer relationship with ORHA needs to be managed pragmatically and without long-term commitment.

e. **agrees**, in the light of indications that ORHA may soon move to an operational and public posture that the UK would find unhelpful, to phone Mr Rumsfeld to suggest a pragmatic way ahead (speaking notes attached).

### Timing

3. Urgent in respect of the phone call, timed for 1500 on 3 April.

### Background

4. To a degree, initial "Phase IV" operations have already begun in Iraq with humanitarian assistance and low level civil contacts being conducted by UK forces. There is thus a pressing need to define an operational concept for the employment of UK forces in early Phase IV operations in Iraq. Reference A. recommends the "Joint Commission" (As employed in the Balkans this is essentially a committee structure with UK military and local civil members that serves as a joint decision making structure).

5. It is, however, early days. The strategic background to Phase 4 operations remains uncertain and changeable. Very significant decisions - e.g. about Iraqi governance and the legal basis for Phase IV operations - remain to be taken. How any "Joint Commissions" will relate to Iraqi governance structures remains undecided; care will be required that their establishment does not pre-judge the development of governance structures by ORHA. While acknowledging the merits of the "Joint Commission" model, we also need to be sympathetic to Iraqi culture and wishes. Commanders on the ground are already implementing what has been called a "town hall" process. The key point is that "Joint Commissions" should not become an alien imposition or, in any way, a rival power base to an Interim Authority; their role should be obviously temporary and advisory.

6. The precise tasks that will fall to UK forces in Phase IV remain to be determined. These will depend very largely on the circumstances that obtain at the end of Phase III (the degree of permissiveness, the extent to which governance and other Iraqi structures remain etc). It is thus not currently possible to make a firm determination of the final geographic scope of UK

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responsibility that will be possible within the upper scale of effort approved by Ministers. For the moment, planning guidance, based on the "Ministerial Guidance" received refers to a focus in Al Basrah province with extension beyond that dependent on events and coalition support.

7. Discussions with the US, both in Washington, in Qatar and ORHA itself in Kuwait suggest a rapidly developing plan to operationalise ORHA and deploy it into Southern Iraq, possibly into Umm Qasr within the next 1-2 weeks. Whether deliberately planning or not, this would probably result in ORHA having a much higher public profile (eg "US Government-in-Waiting establishes foothold in UK-controlled sector").

8. The conditions for such a deployment are not yet right at many levels:

- there is no prospect (following Camp David) of early adoption of a 'fourth' UN resolution endorsing arrangements for post-conflict Iraq; to deploy what will be seen as the precursor body for such arrangements now would look like pre-emption;
- the composition of the political wing of ORHA and of the associated Interim Iraqi Authority is still the subject of State Department/DOD rivalry;
- the de facto authority in most of SE Iraq is UK 1 Div, albeit subordinated to the US land component commander; the relationship of GOC 1 Div to ORHA is not clear, though preliminary contacts have been warm.
- the pressing tasks on the ground are humanitarian and low-level administration (eg opening schools and hospitals); the political baggage that ORHA carries may be counterproductive to our efforts to win the confidence of local people.

9. In the light of this (particularly the timing mentioned above) it would be helpful if the Secretary of State could raise the issue in a call with Mr Rumsfeld. The attached speaking note seeks to address the issue in a positive spirit, though the final bullets sound a stiffer note of warning, if required.

*Ian Lee*

**IAN LEE**  
**DG Op Pol**

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SPEAKING NOTES FOR CALL TO RUMSFELD ON ORHA

(in increasing order of candour)

- have been thinking about ORHA and getting some briefing on plans for its deployment into Iraq. Umm Qasr?
- conscious also of the situation on the ground in the UK area of operations; normalisation going well but it's early days;
- struck by the success of 'local' and 'prototyping' approach we've taken to clearing villages and towns (Al Zabayr) while developing situation in Basra.
- Don't believe the situation is ready in (our bit of) Iraq for all dimensions of ORHA but a 'toe in the water' or prototyping with the humanitarian and initial reconstruction elements could be very helpful;
- End state we're looking for is a supportive high-consent population so that we can get forces out and allow Iraqis to run their own affairs; getting the transitional arrangements right is vital for this.
- President and Prime Minister agreed to a 'softly softly' approach on the big political questions about Phase IV and the form of UN endorsement and involvement; ORHA big bang would run counter to that;
- Concerned about how it would relate to (destabilise?) our UK 1 Div effort;
- UK needs UNSCR both for legal reasons and because a UNSCR delivers more military partners for burden-sharing and an exit strategy; we are still old Europeans too!

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The Iraqis are traumatised and the regional neighbours are suspicious  
gusting hostile; now is not the time to launch something so politically  
controversial; let's win the war first.

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