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IRAQ UP TO AND BEYOND JANUARY 2006 - DEFINING A UK POSITION

1. As discussed during your visit earlier this week I attach a paper that has been written to complement the presentation given to you by Sandy Storrie. I believe that it sets the case out clearly.

2. As I said whilst you were here Gen Casey has been briefed on the ideas captured in the paper but has not read the text which I have kept on the UK side only. The paper has been read by the UK Ambassador who is in broad agreement with the thrust of it. I leave it up to you as to how you choose to use it but hope that it will be a useful theatre perspective to inform further work. Finally I do believe this a key piece of work for London to come to closure on in a timely fashion. PM Allawi will have to declare a position on the MNF-I presence in the run up to the elections.

Original signed

JC McCOLL
Lt Gen
SBMR-I

Attachment:

1. Iraq up to and beyond January 2006 - defining a UK position.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IRAQ UP TO AND BEYOND JANUARY 2006 - DEFINING A UK POSITION

(A Paper by SBMR-I)

24 September 2004

1. The focus of MNF-I's current Campaign Plan is out to July 2005 (1), but beyond that timeframe there are indications that US and UK national policies and end-states could diverge and will, therefore, need to be managed carefully (2). The aim of this paper is to consider draw-down options and possible exit strategies up to and beyond December 2005 in order to inform UK policy making (3).
2. MNF-I's purpose in Iraq was mandated by the UN under UNSCR 1546 (5) which anticipates MNF-I's departure after December 2005 (6). On 19 September the PM stressed that British and American forces would not be staying in Iraq a moment longer than necessary (7). That US options for 2005 and beyond include both a rapid draw-down and the setting up of permanent bases in Iraq (8 & 9) underscores the need for the UK to be clear about its intentions in Iraq, especially since US plans will have an impact upon the UK's responsibilities in the near future, for example, with changes to divisional boundaries (10).
3. There is clear statistical evidence that the insurgency is now capable of sustaining itself at the current level for several years (12). Although made of a mosaic of different insurgent groups there are signs that MNF-I is a catalyst for coalescing the insurgency into a more popular nationalist resistance (13). The value of MNF-I's continued presence in Iraq is likely to come under closer scrutiny as the situation in Iraq develops (14).
4. Coalition efforts to foster economic development have, largely, come too late to have real impact on the Iraqi elections in 2005 (15), although good progress has been made in building up the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) (16), ISF logistic support, staff effort and command and control capability and government capacity require additional effort in the near future to enable the Iraqis to achieve regional and national control in 2005 (17).
5. The situation in Iraq is changing fast. The Iraqis are keen to exercise their sovereignty over security operations and want to constrain MNF-I freedom of manoeuvre in order to allow the ISF to take the leading role, yet ISF capabilities do not currently match IIG aspirations. The resultant frustrations strain the Iraqi-MNF-I security partnership (18 & 19). Within the Coalition, national pressures, such as Australia's forthcoming elections, continue to have a bearing on Coalition cohesion (20).
6. MNF-I will have the capability to contain but not defeat the insurgency over the next four years (21). With MNF-I's presence fuelling the insurgency, there are signs that the Coalition will reach a point of diminishing returns for its operations in Iraq (22).

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7. Two possible courses of action (COA) for MNF-I are considered. COA A sees a draw-down from the present 17 US brigades to between 3 and 7 brigades by December 2005 redeployed, thereafter, into permanent or semi-permanent bases in Iraq (23).

8. Although attractive to the budget programmer, COA A risks over-exposing the nascent ISF too soon, takes no account of the likely need to surge force levels for the December 2005 elections and could lead to MNF-I becoming locked into a protracted counter-insurgency for years (24 & 25). COA A, with its enduring Coalition presence, could incite Arab extremists and disadvantage the prospects of West-leaning political parties in Iraq. It could also render the Coalition permanently hostage to the threat of humiliating eviction and the spectre of strategic failure (26 & 27).

9. COA B sees only a limited draw-down of MNF-I troop levels in 2005, with a surge in force levels to cover the December 2005 elections, and thereafter a full withdrawal by MNF-I, leaving in its place a defence diplomacy and training assistance mission (28 & 29). COA B calls for maximum effort across all lines of operation in 2005 to take full advantage of MNF-I's final window of opportunity to influence events in Iraq. COA B also entails announcing MNF-I's withdrawal before the January 2005 elections (30), thereby dislocating the insurgency and maximizing the chances of the political process succeeding (31).

10. COA A risks handing political success to the Coalition's enemies and either humiliating eviction from Iraq or long-term embroilment in a drawn-out insurgency campaign (33). By contrast, COA B recognizes that MNF-I is increasingly part of the problem in Iraq and that the Coalition is fast approaching its point of diminishing returns (34 & 35).

11. There is an urgent need to develop a national exit strategy (36): December 2005 amounts to a culminating point and offers a natural 'break point' (37). But departure in early 2006 would call for maximum effort to put in place the structures and forces necessary for a successful outcome in Iraq (38). Early MNF-I force reductions would jeopardize the newly created ISF (39).

12. Should the UK opt to make a longer-term commitment in Iraq then it needs to be clear about what this would entail (40). Regardless of which COA is chosen, the UK will have to develop a national view in the near future, not least because of requests to change MNF-I boundaries in early 2005 (41).

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IRAQ UP TO AND BEYOND JANUARY 2006 - DEFINING A UK POSITION

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24 September 2004

Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as perhaps you think it is.

Colonel TE Lawrence¹

INTRODUCTION

1. The MNF-I Campaign Plan² covers the period of Partnership, from the Transfer of Authority on 28 June 2004, to the constitutional elections scheduled for December 2005. Current MNF-I operational planning concentrates on the initial set of elections planned for 31 January 2005, and on the achievement of regional control³ in July 2005. There is less clarity thereafter, and no firm assumptions for the period beyond January 2006.

2. Ongoing planning in Baghdad about future troop levels during and beyond 2005 has highlighted the need for Coalition members to be clear about their desired national end-states. There are indications that January 2006 could be the point at which the desired national end-states of US and UK diverge. Unless addressed early, such divergent end-states could create confusion and undermine Coalition cohesion. The forthcoming Coalition Partners' Conference in Warsaw, 25 – 29 October 2004, may provide an opportunity to consider how best to accommodate long-term differences of view without damaging Coalition unity of effort in the short term.

¹ The Arab Bulletin, 27th Article, 20 August 1917.

² MNF-I Campaign Plan dated 5 Aug 04 – "Partnership: From Occupation to Constitutional Elections"

³ Regional Control will be judged on a province by province basis and is defined in the MNF-I Campaign Plan as: 'the conditions whereby Iraqi security organizations maintain internal security with Coalition support in extremis. ISF plan, direct and conduct security operations, and assume responsibility for training, sustaining and conducting personnel administration functions, at battalion/provincial level. Coalition forces are postured for regional reinforcement of Iraqi security organizations, as well as being prepared to defeat external threats. Concurrently the Iraqi Armed Forces begin to develop the capability to plan nationally, and to direct and execute defensive operations against external threats.'

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AIM

3. The aim of this paper is to consider draw-down options and possible exit strategies for MNF-I – as seen from Baghdad in late-September 2004 – in the lead-up to and after the constitutional elections in December 2005, in order to inform UK policy making.

SCOPE

4. This paper does not consider the possible worst-case scenarios for Iraq's future, such as the complete failure of the electoral process, civil war, or the break-up of Iraq as a unified state. Any of these outcomes would in any case prompt a review of UK and Coalition policy. Instead, it seeks to define the most likely course of events in Iraq in the coming 15 months, and to draw appropriate deductions.

DISCUSSION

UNSCR 1546 AND THE DIFFERING ASPIRATIONS OF COALITION MEMBERS

5. MNF-I's presence, purpose and duration of stay in Iraq were mandated by the UN under UNSCR 1546 which stated specifically that:

... the presence of the multinational force in Iraq is at the request of the incoming Interim Government of Iraq ...⁴

... the multinational force shall have the authority to ... contribute to the maintenance of security and stability ... so that ... the UN can fulfil its role in assisting the Iraqi people [to hold elections, develop the political process and effect reconstruction] ...⁵

... the mandate for the multinational force ... shall expire upon the completion of the political process [... forming a Transitional Government of Iraq and drafting a permanent constitution for Iraq leading to a constitutionally elected government by 31 December 2005] ... and declares that it will terminate this mandate earlier if requested by the Government of Iraq.⁶

⁴ UNSCR 1546 dated 8 June, Paragraph 9

⁵ UNSCR 1546 dated 8 June, Paragraph 10

⁶ UNSCR 1546 dated 8 June, Paragraph 12

6. UNSCR 1546 anticipates that MNF-I – having created the security conditions for political progress in Iraq – will depart Iraq unless the mandate is either extended or, under bilateral or other arrangements, Coalition members are invited to remain by the Iraqi Government. It is from UNSCR 1546 that MNF-I's current mission statement was derived:

In partnership with the Iraqi Government, MNF-I conducts full spectrum counter-insurgency operations to isolate and neutralize former regime extremists and foreign terrorists, and organizes, trains and equips Iraqi security forces, in order to create a security environment that permits the completion of the UNSCR 1546 process on schedule.

7. Consistent with UNSCR 1546 and the MNF-I Campaign Plan, the Prime Minister has reiterated both the UK's commitment to see 'the job done'⁷ and to withdraw from Iraq once that job has been completed. During Dr Allawi's visit to London on 19 September, Mr Blair re-emphasized these twin goals:

The British and American forces do not want to stay and we do not want them to stay and the Iraqi Government do not want them to stay a moment longer than is necessary. And they are necessary at the moment because the Iraqi force capability has not yet been established. But as that establishes itself, so we are able to retire from the situation because in the end Iraq is a sovereign country ... as that capability in Iraq arises we can withdraw.

8. Given such clear statements of both commitment and intent to withdraw, it is important to develop a UK view on what constitutes 'job done', of plans for draw-down, and of the UK's desired end-state and exit strategy for Iraq.

9. In contrast to the British position about the need to withdraw from Iraq, the US is currently weighing up options that include permanent basing beyond December 2005, probably following a bilaterally negotiated agreement in much the same way that the US has with governments of other sovereign states.

⁷ PM, 18 May 2004, Ankara, quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 May 2004, and reiterated in video teleconference between PM and Lt Gen McColl on 14 September 2004

10. In September 2004, within HQ MNF-I's Strategy, Planning and Assessments staff section, an exclusively US team was directed to undertake staff work to reduce US forces from their current level of 17 brigades to between three and seven US brigades by December 2005. Plans for the reduced US forces include basing them in three or more (up to seven) remote bases in Iraq. Future US plans, albeit 'pre-decisional' at this stage, are of more than mere academic interest to the UK. Provisional US draw-down planning envisages extending the boundaries of the British-led Multinational Division South East (MND-SE) by February 2005 to include Wasit and Quadisyah provinces and the southern half of Babil province. That the US planning team contemplating the boundary shift was unaware of the UK's national commitments in 2006, including the likely deployment of NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), underscores the need for Coalition partners to hold early discussions about future force profiles, strategic intentions for the region and end-states in Iraq.

11. Should the UK decide that its national interests are best served by remaining close to US policy on Iraq beyond January 2006, UK policy makers must be under no illusion as to the nature of the growing insurgency, and the risks and challenges that any long-term deployment of UK forces would present. These risks are considered further in the remainder of this paper.

THE CHANGING SITUATION IN IRAQ

12. The Iraqi insurgency has reached the point where it is now capable of sustaining itself at its current level (600 attacks per week against MNF-I, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and civilian targets) for several years.⁸ Within the Sunni majority areas there is an abundance of military expertise, disgruntled and unemployed potential recruits, weapons, explosives and money (accumulated during the Ba'athist reign or from other sources). Although there was a drop in attacks on MNF-I immediately after the transfer of sovereignty, with a weekly average of 298⁹ between 29 June and 3 August,

⁸ 'Such is the strength of nationalism in Iraq that the IIG and its successors will continue to face armed opposition for the foreseeable future.' UK Defence Intelligence Staff report, *Revolt in the Desert: Human Dimensions of Insurgency in Iraq*, 8 September 2004, Executive Summary, p 6

⁹ This figure does not include attacks against civilians and ISF (unlike the previous figure of over 600 which does)

this level has since risen to 495 between 4 August and 17 September, and amounts to a substantial increase on the weekly average of 344 for the period between 1 April and 28 June 2004 (which included operations in the Spring in Fallujah and Najaf). These attacks have inflicted steady losses on the Coalition and ISF. Since 29 June 2004, an average of 13 Coalition soldiers have been killed each week in Iraq, and 130 wounded; and the trend is increasing. Put simply, the enemy is getting better. During the week ending 17 Sep 04, MNF-I casualties were 19 killed in action and 151 wounded; ISF casualties were 36 and 103 respectively.¹⁰ Further spikes in violence are anticipated over Ramadan and in the build-up to the January elections. Additional data on attacks and casualties is at Annex A.

13. The insurgency is made up of a mosaic of different elements which, over time, could coalesce into a more popular, nationalist resistance. Evidence is increasingly emerging from open and classified sources to show that the Coalition's presence is the single most important catalyst for this.

A Baghdad survey taken in early August 2004 reported a 46 percent response to a similar question from those polled in the capital.¹² The view that MNF-I's presence fuels the insurgency is shared by the UK Defence Intelligence Staff:

... the MNF and IIG are as much a part of the insurgency dynamic as the Arab Sunni Resistance (ASR) and Foreign Fighters (FF-Z). Without the MNF and IIG, the ASR and FF-Z would not have enough social distinctiveness to be able to recruit, sustain or even present a credible threat within Iraq.¹³

14. After the elections in January 2005 (if held on schedule) – which will usher in a more representative Iraqi Government – the value of MNF-I's continued presence is likely to come under ever closer scrutiny. It will be important for the international

¹⁰ In the previous week, (ending 10 September 2004) there were 23 MNF-I killed in action and 146 wounded.

¹² The Public Opinion Survey of Baghdad, 29 July – 7 August 2004, by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Social Studies (IIACSS) and the Iraq Center of Research and Strategic Studies (ICRSS), commissioned by 1st US Cavalry Division

¹³ UK Defence Intelligence Staff report, *Revolt in the Desert: Human Dimensions of Insurgency in Iraq*, 8 September 2004.

community – and especially the US, UK and other Coalition members – to form a judgment on this. However successful the elections, there will be a significant Sunni element that will feel disenfranchised and excluded: there will be a significant insurgency for the foreseeable future.

THE ECONOMY AND RECONSTRUCTION

15. The pace of economic development and reconstruction will continue to challenge the Iraqis and MNF-I. Yet despite the slow progress, Iraq's economic prospects are gradually improving. In July 2004 there was concern that only \$400 million of the \$18.4 billion of the US funded Iraq reconstruction programme had been disbursed. The pace of the programme has since picked-up, but on current forecasting only \$3.6 billion will have been allocated for projects by 31 December 2004. On the economic development line of operation,¹⁴ positive effect may start to become tangible by mid-2005, but the changes are likely to be too late to influence the deep-seated perceptions of Iraqis regarding the value of MNF-I remaining in Iraq beyond 2005, and too late to have a positive impact on the outcomes of either of the two elections scheduled for 2005.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE MNF-I-IRAQI SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

16. The essence of the MNF-I Campaign Plan is 'to hold the line', thereby creating the conditions for the Iraqis to manage their own security. The development of Iraqi security forces (ISF) is progressing. It is now assessed that by the end of July 2005 the Iraqi Police Service will have achieved 77 % of its required capability¹⁵ of 135,000 officers. The 65 battalions of the Iraqi National Guard, 9 battalions of the Iraqi Intervention Force, 18 battalions of the Iraqi Regular Army and the Iraqi Commando Battalion are assessed to be on course to be fully manned, trained and equipped by 31 July 2005. These encouraging projections have, in part, prompted

¹⁴ MNF-I's Campaign Plan is based upon four lines of operation: security, governance, economic development and communicating

¹⁵ Defined as manned, trained and equipped

MNF-I's aspiration to establish Iraqi regional (which amounts to provincial) control¹⁶ across all 18 provinces by 31 July 2005.

17. Achieving this goal will be challenging. The ISF has significant shortfalls in logistics capability – which makes them reliant on continued MNF-I support – and to date there is neither a plan nor the funding in place to provide the integral logistic support they need. More importantly, there is a significant amount of work to do to create a top-to-bottom, civilian-led, decision-making system capable of waging and winning a complex counter-insurgency campaign.¹⁷ The Iraqi National Joint Operations Centre, lacking the necessary secure communications capacity and linkage it needs to the provinces, is not currently on target to be able to exercise proper Iraqi national control of counter-insurgency operations by July 2005. There is a serious rift between the MoD and Mol (Interior), the two ministries responsible for internal security, and recent analysis of the requirements of Iraqi provincial and national control have highlighted the need for a proper national security headquarters for which there is no provision at the moment and a lack of trained staff. In the wake of the Coalition Provisional Authority that 'went away', capacity building is a major challenge and there are dangers in focusing on numbers of units, rather than Iraq's overall security capability. MNF-I is starting to address these issues, but a 'more of the same' approach will not suffice. A major cross-government capacity building effort will be required, with particular focus on the Mol.

18. Analysis of ISF capability following operations in August in Najaf indicates a short-term paucity of reliable and well-trained battalions that can be deployed away from their local areas. Ongoing planning for current and future operations in North Babil revealed that no ISF battalions could be released to support the police and MNF-I. This short-term lack of ISF capability comes at time when members of the Iraqi Government, understandably, want to exercise their sovereignty and put an Iraqi face on any major security operations.

¹⁶ See definition in footnote 1. The term regional control creates some confusion because within Iraq there is no established regional division of the country, nor is there yet any plan to impose a regional system.

19. Mr Janabi, the appointed IIG interlocutor for operations in North Babil, made plain in combined Iraqi-MNF-I planning sessions in September 2004 that he would not sanction an operation in North Babil in which MNF-I forces took the leading role. This highlights the wide gap that currently exists between what the Iraqis want to achieve by their own efforts and the readiness of ISF capability. This can be viewed positively: Iraqis are keen to take responsibility for their own affairs. But this trend will exacerbate the frustrations of the Iraqi Government and the security partnership established in accordance with UNSCR 1546. It will also increasingly limit MNF-I's freedom of manoeuvre. Tensions in the Iraqi-MNF-I security partnership will rise as it becomes increasingly difficult for foreign forces, and especially US forces, to operate within limitations imposed by the Iraqi Government. The nature of the relationship between MNF-I and the Iraqis is changing and increasingly the Iraqis will wish to manage their own security problems in their own way.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE COALITION

20. The Iraqi-MNF-I security partnership is not the only dynamic that is changing. New Zealand's withdrawal from the Coalition, and the withdrawal pledge by Australia's opposition Labour Party if successful in their national elections on 9 October, testify to continuing change within MNF-I. On the positive side, Poland and the Netherlands have indicated their willingness to remain in the Coalition. The UK's national commitments in 2006, with the possible deployment of the ARRC and the shift of the UK's medium-scale commitment to Afghanistan, may also affect Britain's position.

DIMINISHING RETURNS FOR MNF-I OPERATIONS

21. Judging by the protracted nature of previous counter-insurgency operations, for example Malaya, Vietnam and Northern Ireland, and especially in the light of unfolding events in Iraq, defeating the insurgency in Iraq with current MNF-I force levels, even after the ISF reaches full operational capability, is likely to be beyond the grasp of the Coalition in the next three or four years. Containing the security situation

¹⁷ The development of this capability will become a key task for MNF-I in 2005

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in 2005, in accordance with the MNF-I Campaign Plan, is likely to be highly challenging; and a draw-down before December 2005 would be dangerously wishful thinking.

22. There is some evidence (see table at Annex A, Appendix 2) to show that when MNF-I increases its operational tempo and profile there is a corresponding reduction in insurgent attacks. But even if accompanied by economic or other benefits, MNF-I operational surges are also likely to have a long-term detrimental effect which will further fuel the insurgency – an effect much more difficult to measure than MNF-I activities and insurgent attacks.

Taken together, these findings suggests that there is a point of diminishing returns for MNF-I's operations in Iraq, especially when increasing constraints on MNF-I's freedom of action imposed by the Iraqi Government are also taken into consideration. Carefully targeted, pre-emptive surges could and should form part of MNF-I's strategy for the coming year in order to inject some much needed tempo into a campaign where the enemy presently holds the initiative.

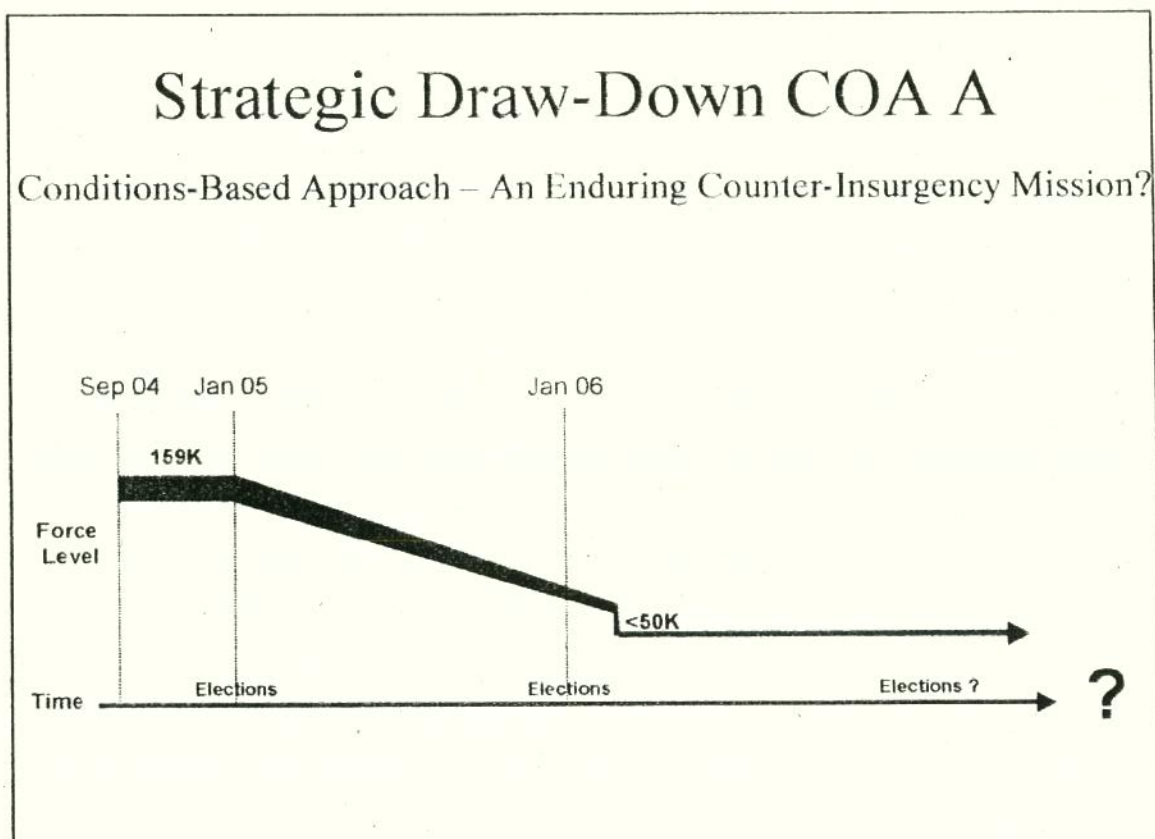
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TWO POSSIBLE EXIT STRATEGIES

MNF-I DRAW-DOWN COURSE OF ACTION A (COA A) – A CONDITIONS BASED AND POTENTIALLY ENDURING COUNTER-INSURGENCY MISSION

23. Despite UNSCR 1546's implied departure of MNF-I from Iraq, to date, thinking in headquarters MNF-I has been 'conditions based', with the implicit acceptance of a longer-term campaign. Course of action (COA) A – under consideration in September 2004 – follows this broad approach. It envisages a progressive reduction tied to the generation of ISF and achieving local control by February 2005 (requiring 12 – 17 US brigades), gaining regional control by July (necessitating 4 – 12 US brigades), and reaching national control by December (requiring 3 – 7 US brigades). This draw-down profile can be depicted graphically as follows:



24. Although superficially attractive, especially to commitments' planners and budget programmers, because it eases over-stretch and demonstrates a clearly reducing financial commitment, COA A carries the risk of locking the Coalition into an

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enduring commitment in Iraq beyond December 2005. Given that the insurgency is coalescing, at least in part because of MNF-I, COA A amounts to staying on for a long-haul fight, always assuming that future Iraqi governments will tolerate the continued presence of Coalition forces in Iraq.

25. COA A is based on the premise that the nascent ISF will tolerate shouldering an early and heavy burden of responsibility for security in Iraq in 2005. Although elements of the ISF performed well during operations in Najaf in August 2004, the fact that over 400 Iraqi National Guardsmen from two battalions went absent without leave at a critical moment during the fighting in Najaf should not be overlooked. Besides risking over-exposing the ISF prematurely, COA A also takes no account of the likely requirement to surge operations in the build-up to the elections in December 2005 – elections which are central to MNF-I's mission success.

26. Beyond 2005, the US planning assumption that Coalition forces in Iraq can redeploy into smaller, more remote bases, and will therefore be less likely to attract attack and feed the insurgency, does not stand up to scrutiny. The sight of Coalition helicopters, the need to secure the areas surrounding bases to prevent indirect fire attacks, and the accompanying logistic effort would continue to advertise the Coalition's presence. Permanent bases would confirm Iraqi suspicions that MNF-I and its successor organization amount to occupation forces and would excite fears that Coalition members have long-term designs which will impact upon Iraq's interests and sovereignty. A permanent Western presence would act as a magnet for Arab extremists from across the Middle East. It could also fatally undermine the political credibility of any West-leaning Iraqi government, in effect, offering an 'evict the occupiers' political card to their opponents. An enduring commitment would render Coalition members permanently hostage to the threat of expulsion and the spectre of strategic failure.

27. Ironically, judging by the increasing unpopularity of MNF-I reflected in opinion polls, the more representative the democracy that emerges in Iraq, the more likely it is that the Coalition forces will be evicted. Unless Coalition members had previously given an unequivocal statement of intent to withdraw, any such eviction would

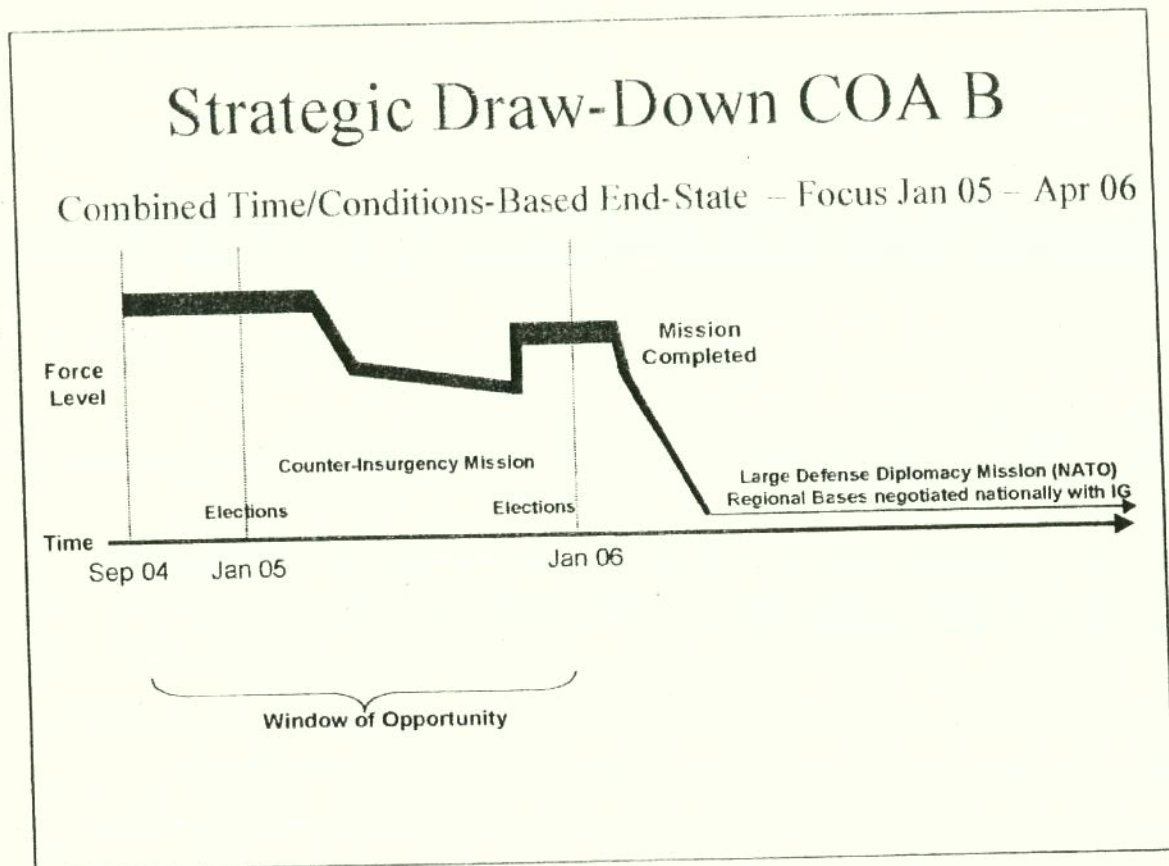
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inevitably be viewed in many parts of the world, and especially by the Arab street, as strategic failure and a victory for Islam and the Arab nation. It is hard to see how such a development would further the global war on terrorism. The UK must ensure it does not drift into a strategy that is inspired by US basing plans and which risks falling between two stools: smaller will not equate to safer, it may also not be feasible.

MNF-I DRAW-DOWN COURSE OF ACTION B (COA B) –
A COMBINED CONDITIONS AND TIME-BASED APPROACH

28. Under COA B, MNF-I would withdraw once the mission is complete, thereby removing the prime popular cause of the insurgency. The timing of the main withdrawal of Coalition forces would be triggered by the culminating point of the UNSCR mandate. By December 05 – if the Coalition has done its job – ISF capacity will have been built-up, the benefits of \$18.4 billion programme will be more apparent, the electoral process will have been completed and Iraq will be reintegrated regionally and internationally. The logic of the operation, and the expiry of the UN mandate, make this the logical “off-ramp” at which to withdraw.

29. Rather than attempting to reduce MNF-I from its present level of 159,000 troops to less than 50,000, COA B would retain a greater force presence throughout 2005, surging as necessary. Depending upon the political and security situation, and especially the development of the ISF, some force reductions could be possible between April and October 2005, but a surge of MNF-I troop levels, perhaps to the levels of September 2004, would be effected in November and December in order to maximise security prior to and during the December 2005 elections. Thereafter, in early 2006 MNF-I would draw-down completely and depart Iraq, leaving behind a defence diplomacy and training assistance mission, perhaps under the auspices of NATO, if invited to do so by the Iraqi Government. COA B is depicted diagrammatically below:



30. COA B calls for maximum effort to create the required conditions during the comparatively short and final window of opportunity between January and December 2005, or, if there are delays to the political process, whenever the second election takes place. Its focus is on frontloading Coalition resources across all lines of operation – economic development, governance, media and information operations, as well as security - and ensuring MNF-I force levels are sufficient to create the best possible conditions for lasting political transformation in Iraq. Therefore COA B would entail a withdrawal announcement before the January 2005 elections, thereby removing the issue of MNF-I's eviction from the political arena, taking away the unifying cause of the insurgents and maximizing the election prospects of politicians wishing to see Iraq emerge as an ally of the West in the global war on terrorism.

31. To facilitate progress, COA B would see the creation of a multinational defence diplomacy, training and assistance mission. This might be an opportunity for NATO, drawing upon lessons from its successful 'Partnership for Peace' programme, to make a real, lasting strategic contribution, not just in Iraq, but in the region as a whole. Ideally this multinational assistance mission would include Arab forces, perhaps even developing the Muslim peacekeeping force initiative. The involvement of non-MNF-I countries would help signify a clean break from the Coalition's presence (occupation in most Iraqi eyes) in Iraq.

32. Importantly, COA B seizes the strategic initiative by removing ambiguity and the prospect of a humiliating Coalition eviction from Iraq, and dislocates insurgent expectations. Under COA B some hard-line insurgents would attempt to 'out wait' the departure of MNF-I, but the benefits of removing MNF-I, thereby pulling the rug from under the insurgents and maximizing the prospects of political progress, while concurrently developing the economic line of operation and concentrating efforts on building robust ISF, are seen as paramount.

AN ASSESSMENT OF COURSES OF ACTION A AND B

33. COA A is a conditions-based approach which on current trends is likely to result in an enduring counter-insurgency operation. Although it has superficial political attractions by drawing down Coalition force levels early in 2005, it assumes an unrealistically positive outcome for the development of Iraq's political process, places an unacceptably heavy burden on the newly created ISF, and fails to take proper account of the seriousness of the insurgency in Iraq. Beyond 2005, to establish a permanent presence in Iraq would be to play into the hands of the insurgents and Al Qaeda. COA A risks handing political success to the opponents of the Coalition, and, ultimately, either the humiliating eviction of MNF-I and its successor organization or descent into a long-term counter-insurgency, consuming the lives of perhaps more than 1,000 coalition troops annually for no further tangible gain in the global war on terror or regional stability and security.

34. COA B recognizes that MNF-I, though currently doing a vital, dangerous, but unpopular job, is increasingly becoming part of the problem, rather than the solution, in Iraq and that the Coalition is fast approaching its point of diminishing returns. While it carries the risk of being 'out waited' by terrorists, COA B acknowledges that, having ousted Saddam Hussein, and removed the WMD threat posed by his regime, there are limits to what MNF-I can realistically achieve without positive regional and Iraqi support. COA B pre-empts MNF-I's premature eviction from Iraq and focuses effort on creating the best possible conditions for lasting Iraqi security and political success.

35. In Iraq the Coalition faces a Hobson's choice. COA B carries risk and calls for continued heavy commitment across all lines of operation, not just security, by Coalition members in the short-term (out to the second Iraqi elections scheduled for December 2005), but the demands of COA B are altogether less daunting than the prospect of either humiliating eviction or drawn-out failure inherent in COA A.

DEDUCTIONS – TOWARDS A UK POSITION

36. There is a need to develop a national exit strategy. This is in no way inconsistent with PM Blair's determination to stay the course in Iraq. On the contrary, it places the onus on the UK defining precisely what is meant by 'the job is done'.

37. At present, the campaign is timed to culminate in December 2005. Governance, ISF capability-building, and economic impacts all 'turn green' at that time. The UNSCR mandate expires – a natural "break point" for MNF-I. This is therefore the natural 'off ramp' for the UK.

38. Provided the electoral process remains on schedule in 2005, there is much to commend a withdrawal in early 2006. This is the natural political, legal and (if we do our job well) security culminating point. But a failure to build adequate capacity in the interim would leave the first constitutionally-elected Iraqi government at severe risk from an entrenched insurgency, and without the structures and security forces to combat that insurgency effectively. In the fifteen months of its mandate that remain,

therefore, MNF-I must exert maximum effort to put in place the structures, forces and economic benefits that can ensure a successful outcome. This will need to be a whole-government effort,

39. For such a whole-government effort to succeed it would be unrealistic to plan on substantial MNF-I force-level reductions, since these would risk jeopardizing the newly created ISF units emerging from basic training, and threaten the effective transfer to regional and national control.

40. If, on the other hand, UK envisages making a longer-term commitment – whether from a desire to ‘see the job through’, to stay alongside the US at all costs, or for its own regional policy reasons, then it needs to be clear about what this will entail. Insurgency is likely to remain a factor in Iraqi politics for many years, and any US/UK forces that remain in Iraq after the current UN mandate has expired are likely to be subject to continuing and effective attacks. UK must go into this with its eyes open, and, specifically, must put in place now the force protection measures required to minimize this risk as far as possible, both for the duration of the current mandate and beyond.

41. Regardless of which COA is chosen, UK will need to develop a national view on a likely request from MNF-I to extend the borders of its current Divisional area to include the provinces of Wasit, Babil and Quadisyah.

Original signed

JC McCOLL
Lt Gen
SBMR-I

24 September 2005

The correct date of
this document is 24
September 2004.

Annex:

A. Attack Data – Iraq.

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AVERAGE # OF WEEKLY ATTACKS BY CATEGORY AND TIME PERIOD -
MATRIX
01 JAN - 17 SEP 04

CATEGORY	Baseline 1 JAN - 31 MAR	Pre- Sovereignty 1 APR - 28 JUN	Initial Sovereignty 29 JUN - 03 AUG	Sovereignty Phase II 04 AUG - 17 SEP
ATTACKS ON COALITION	143	344	298	495
ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS	17	29	38	45
ATTACKS ON IRAQI SECURITY FORCES	27	35	41	56
ATTACKS ON INFRASTRUCTURE	5.0	13.4	9.9	10.7
ATTACKS ON IGO	1.3	1.1	1.2	3
TOTAL	193	423	388	610

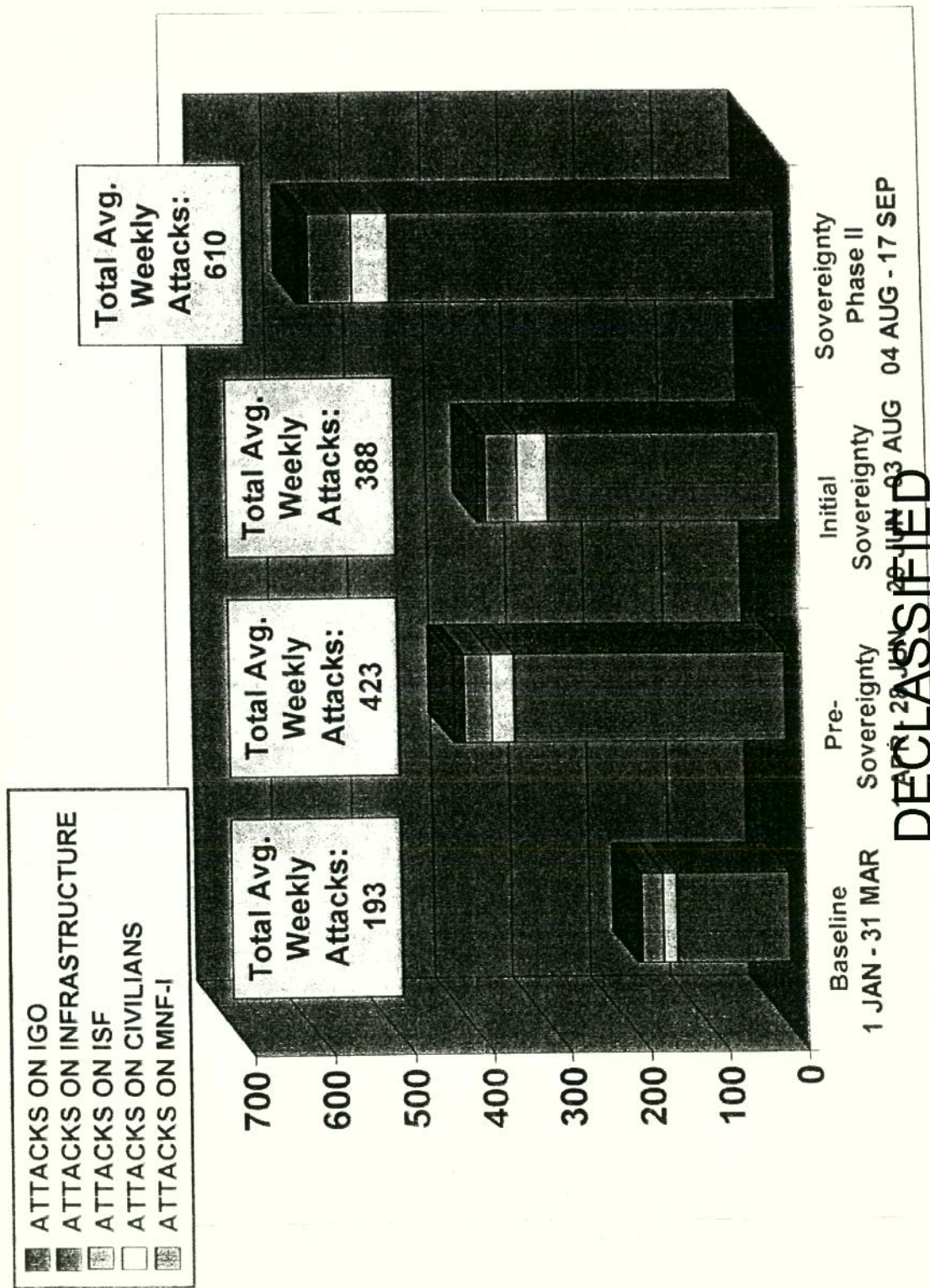
Change in Average Weekly Attacks

Category	Pre-Sovereignty to Initial Sovereignty	Initial Sovereignty to Sovereignty Phase II
On Coalition	Down 13%	Up 55%
On Civilians	Up 41%	Up 61%
On Iraqi Security Forces	Up 53%	Up 35%
On Infrastructure	Down 25%	Up 31%
On IGO	Up 9%	Up 57%
TOTAL	Down 8%	Up 41%

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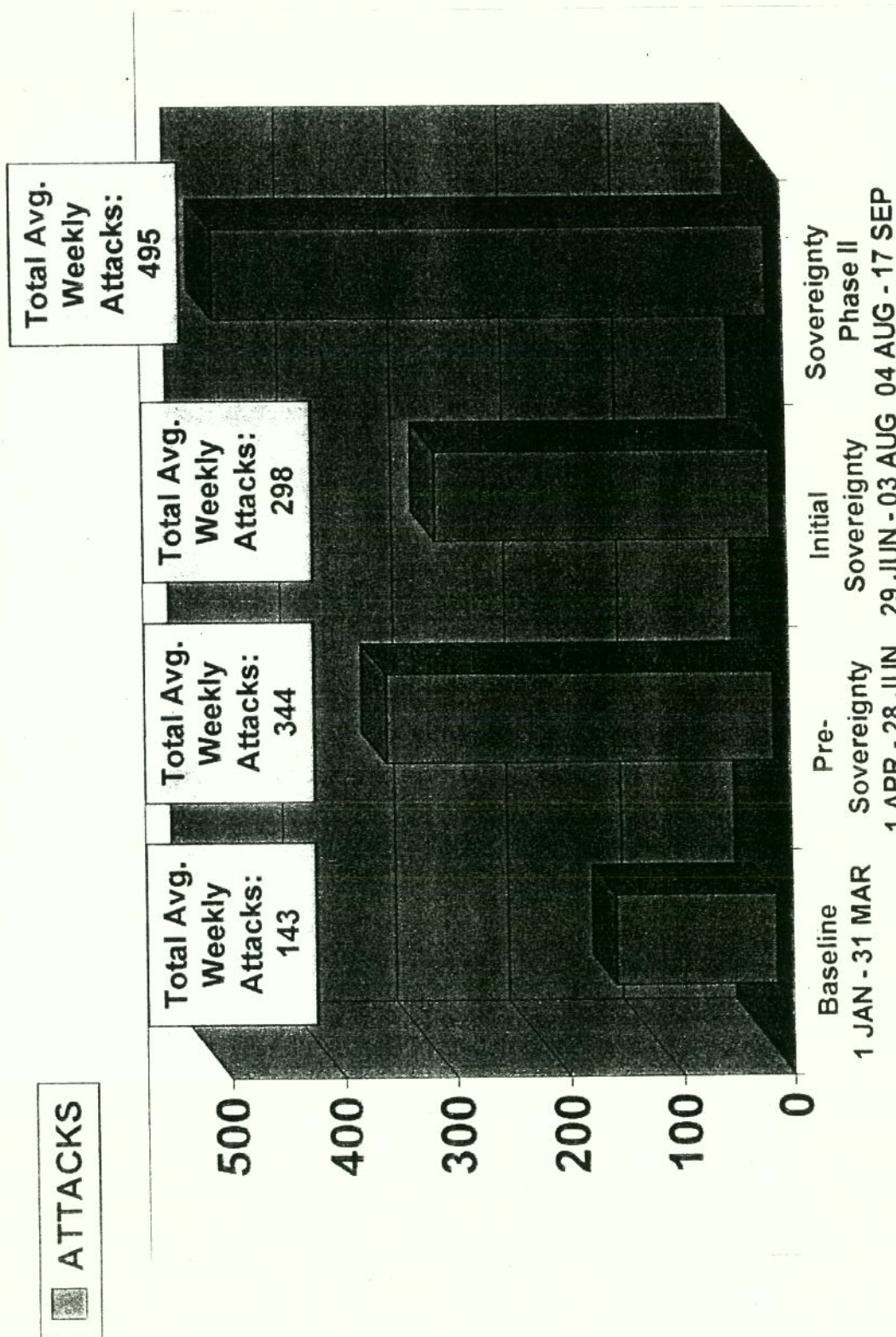
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AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS BY CATEGORY AND TIME PERIOD -
BAR CHART
01 JAN - 17 SEP 04



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AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS
AGAINST COALITION
01 JAN - 17 SEP 04

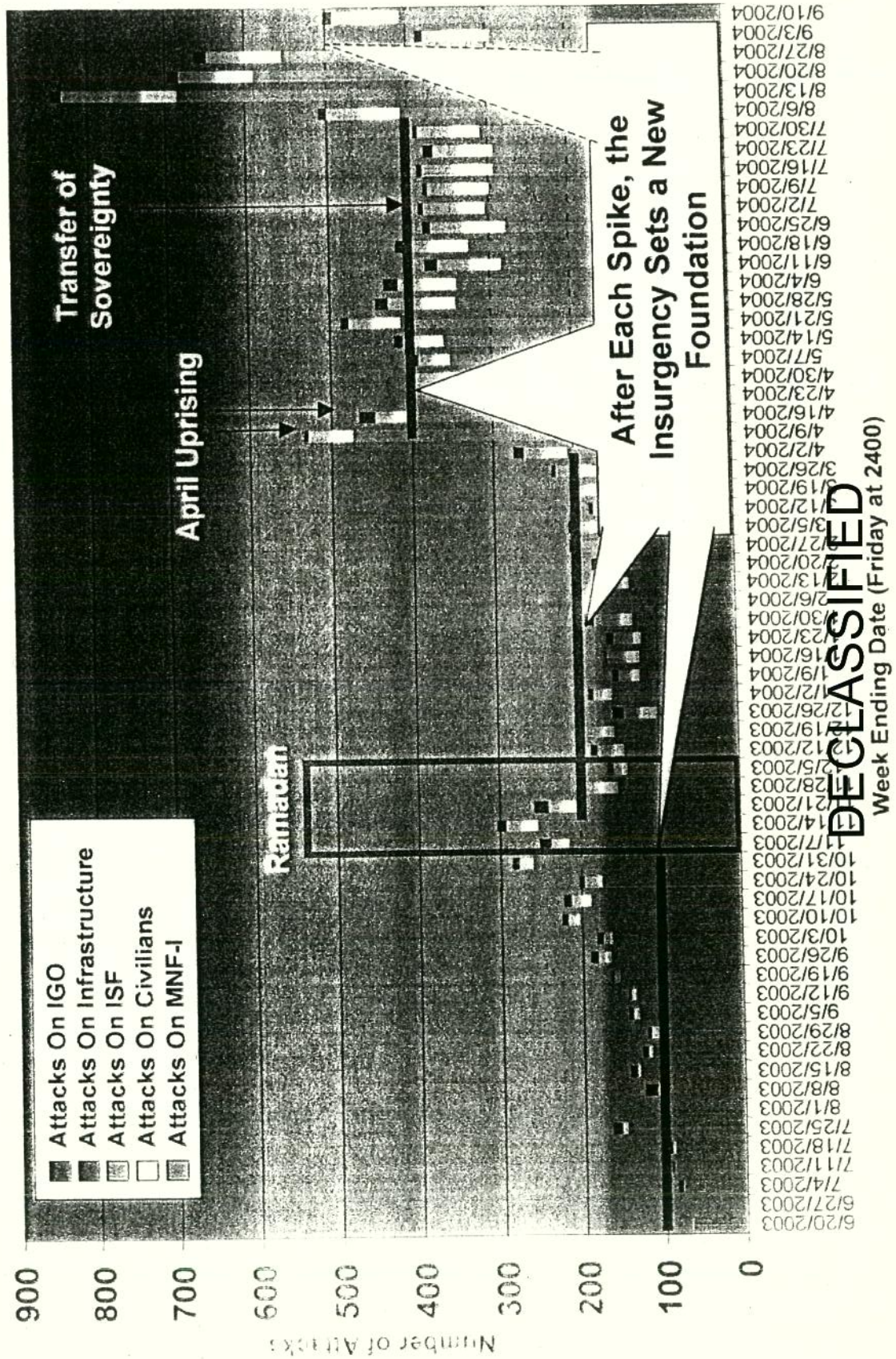


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SOURCE:

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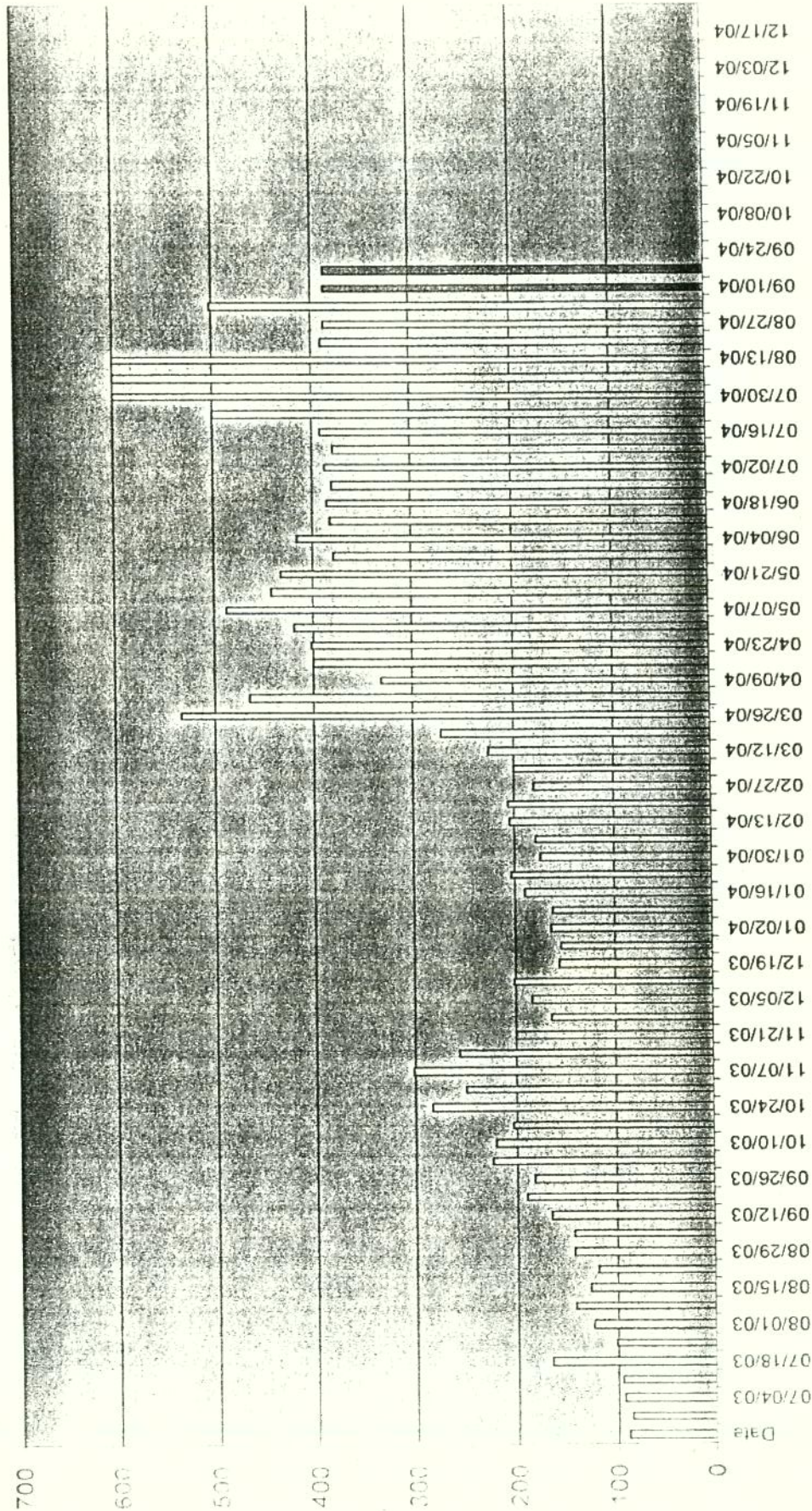
Weekly Attack Trends



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Attacks on Coalition Forces in Iraq

November 2003 – September 04



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