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CABINET

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY

SUB COMMITTEE ON IRAQ

UK MILITARY TRANSITION PLANS FOR SOUTHERN IRAQ: UPDATE

Note by the Secretaries

The attached memorandum by the Ministry of Defence is circulated to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on Thursday 11 January 2007. The meeting will be chaired by the Foreign Secretary at 08.00 in Conference Room C.

Signed:

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M ALDRED

Cabinet Office
10 January 2007

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UK MILITARY TRANSITION PLANS FOR SOUTHERN IRAQ: UPDATE

A briefing paper for DOP-I by Officials

Issue

1. An update on UK military plans for transition in southern Iraq in 2007.

Recommendations

2. Ministers to note:
 - Detailed plans for re-posturing and consolidating UK forces to enable transfer of security in southern Iraq have been developed in line with previous decisions made at DOP;
 - Consistent with US thinking, these plans will support transition to Iraqi control through further re-focussing UK military effort in support the Iraqi Security Forces;
 - Subject to further consultation with the US, we will engage with the Iraqis on the detail of our plans from mid-January;
 - The Secretary of State will write to DOP Colleagues on this issue following his meeting with US Defence Secretary Gates on 14th January.

Background

3. The overall intent for transition was set out in the "Iraq: Medium Term Prospects and Implications" paper agreed by DOP on 11th October. The paper highlighted the need for UK forces to re-posture in order to aid the handover of security responsibility to the Iraqis in Basra province in 2007 and, in doing so, the opportunity to reduce from six to four battlegroups.
4. More detailed military and civilian re-posturing plans were agreed at the last DOP on 7th December 2006.

Present Situation

5. **Dhi Qar & Muthanna** – The positive security situation in both provinces has been recognised by the transfer of security responsibility to the Iraqi Security Forces. However, Coalition forces maintain the capability to re-intervene should the security situation in either province deteriorate.
6. **Maysan** – The province continues to move towards achieving the conditions necessary for security transfer which we now expect to happen later this month or in February. We will continue to conduct security operations along the Iranian border after security handover.

7. **Basra.** Although we await a full announcement, Operation SINBAD has delivered promising results over the past few months. However, there are clear areas of work required for Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) to be declared in Basra in the first half of 2007, as highlighted in Annex i.

Re-Posturing of UK Forces

8. Our aim has been to develop a plan that improves progress towards PIC by reconfiguring our forces better to accommodate the requirements of embedded training teams and surge security operations while reducing our physical profile in Basra. Our current posture incurs a considerable overhead in guarding, maintaining and supplying bases.

9. We therefore propose a base rationalisation programme – as has been normal business elsewhere in Iraq – that will see coalition forces in Basra province located on a single operating base at Basra Air Station.

This will enable us to:

- Deliver enhanced Iraqi Army training through enlarged military training teams and a dedicated Joint Leadership Academy;
- Improve support to rule of law via concentrated work with the Iraqi police in areas such as forensics and continued mentoring at the Provincial Joint Coordination Centre;
- Maintain a dedicated force reserve to ensure that we can react to events and support Iraqi Security operations (if required);
- Reduce our vulnerability and exposure to attack, particularly indirect fire; and
- Improve the coordination of our efforts across all lines of operation and agencies working in Basra.

10. An illustrative timeline for UK transition in southern Iraq is attached at Annex ii.

Base Closure

11. Plans to consolidate at Basra Air Station have been drawn up in full consultation with Other Government Departments and this proposed consolidation will enable a reduction in battle group numbers from 6 to 4 in line with previous DOP agreement.

12. Detailed consultation with the Iraqis over the base closures is set to begin after Secretary of State has spoken with his US counterpart, Defence Secretary Gates, on 14th January. Due to the logistical issues which are associated with re-posturing, any delay in engaging with the Iraqis after mid-January would result in a significant delay to re-posturing. Such a delay would have significant force generation consequences.

US Handling

13. We see no tension between emerging US plans to increase troop numbers, and UK objectives and activities in southern Iraq. Coalition strategy

has always been based on assessing conditions on the ground in each Iraqi province. The security situations in Baghdad/central Iraq and Basra are different, and require different responses.

14. We have briefed our plans for southern Iraq to the US throughout 2006. However, before re-posturing can be implemented we need to further re-assure the US that our plans remain consistent with Coalition strategy in Iraq. In particular we need to ensure that US concerns over Indirect Fire, Iraqi Security Force capabilities and Rule of Law are being addressed.

Presentation

15. Nothing will be agreed on the timing of an announcement discussing UK force re-posturing until the Secretary of State's discussion with Defence Secretary Gates on 14th January. The Secretary of State will write to DOP Colleagues on this issue following this meeting.

Annexes:

- i. The effect of Operation SINBAD
- ii. Transition in southern Iraq (illustrative) timeline

DJC/IRAQ CCT/DOP(I)

11th January 2007

Annex i: UK MILITARY TRANSITION PLANS IN SOUTHERN IRAQTHE EFFECT OF OP SINBAD**KEY POINTS**

- The overall impact of Operation SINBAD has yet to be assessed. A clearer review will be available in March 2007.
- Aim. The aim of Op SINBAD is to improve security in Basra. However, Op SINBAD has been as much about winning consent and the perceptions of the local Baswaris, as about kinetic operations, seeking to isolate insurgents from the mainstream population in the process.

Positive Outcomes

- Iraqi Police Service (IPS). Police effectiveness has improved throughout the operation and the local Police Service is on target to achieve the 72% capability level required for Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) by April 07. Basra Province IPS is currently assessed as 69% capable.
- Iraqi Army. 10th Division has taken the lead through the latter stages of Op SINBAD without overt coalition support. Critically, Iraqi Army forces are now able to respond to requests for assistance throughout MND(SE).
- Coalition/ Iraqi co-operation. The Governor and Provincial Council have been won over by the operation's effects and conduct. Governor Wa'ili, in particular, has openly supported and acclaimed its positive impact on Basra City. However, recent disengagement by the Provincial Council in response to operations against the Serious Crimes Unit shows how transient this support can be.
- Consent. Operation SINBAD has created short-term employment for almost 25,000 Baswaris whilst MND(SE) has been able to invest over \$77M in Basra City during the operation.
- Crime. Reported murder rates are down from a high of 139 in June 2006 to 29 in December, although this may include a degree of seasonal fluctuation.

Areas requiring more work

- Iraqi Army 'expeditionary' capacity. Irrespective of Op SINBAD 10th Division still lacks the capability, structurally and conceptually, to deploy nationwide.
- Police problems. In parts, the IPS remains actively criminal and harbours the Death Squads responsible for a large proportion of the murder rate in Basra.
- Economic results. Although Op SINBAD has improved public services (90% of people are now receiving over 7 hours of electricity per day) and provided

opportunities for short-term employment, longer-term public and private investment is required to ensure sustained growth in the region.

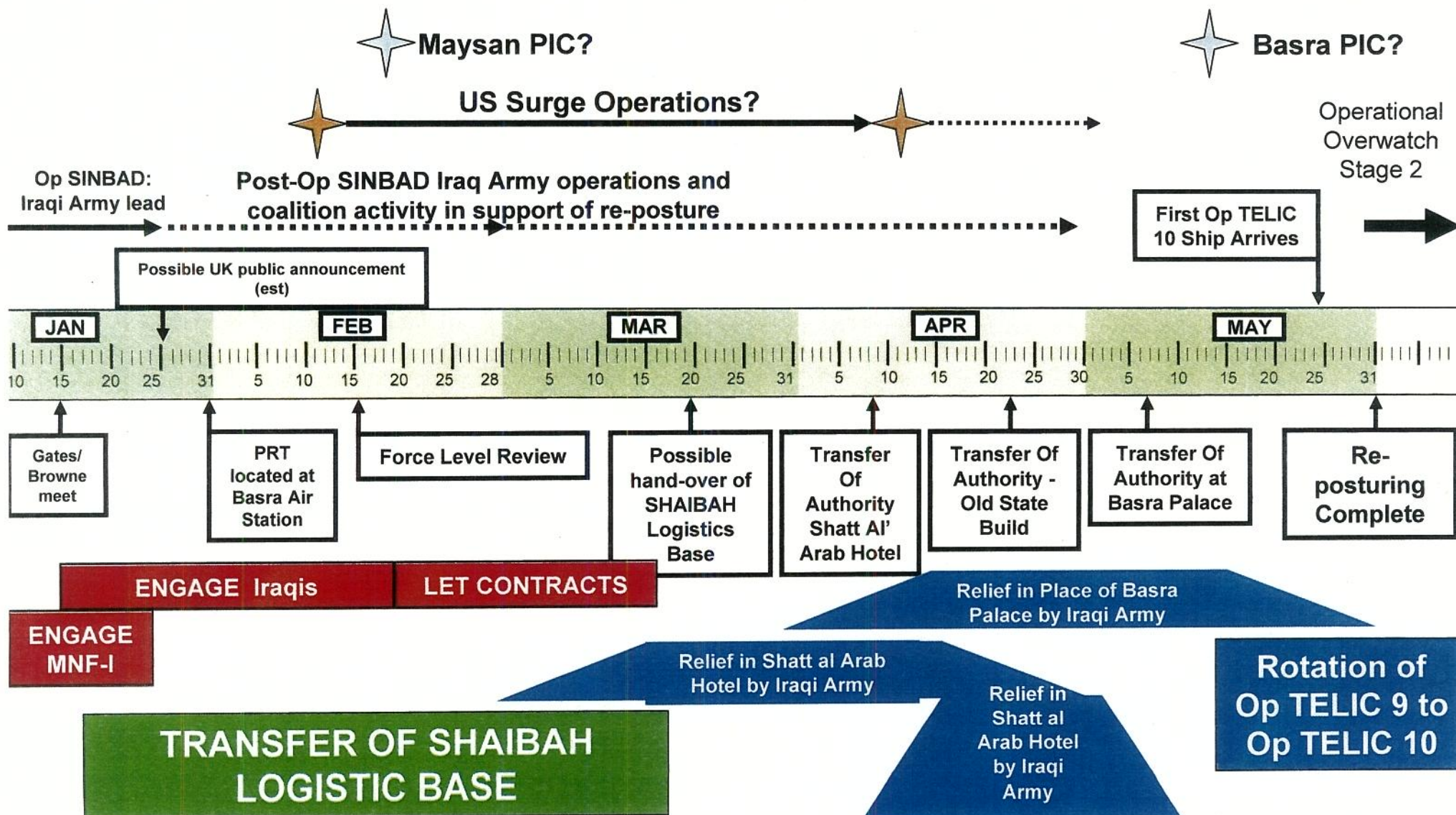
- Leadership Op SINBAD has confirmed suspicions some leaders in parts of the Iraqi security sector in MND(SE) are not fit for task, including members of the Iraqi Army and the Basra Security Committee.
- IDF against Coalition. Throughout Op SINBAD attacks against the Coalition have remained high and the threat from various terrorist/insurgents has not dissipated. This must be addressed as part of the UK's re-posturing and move towards PIC.

Should you require more information on Operation SINBAD a more comprehensive review of its effects has been produced.

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ANNEX ii TO
DJC/IRAQCCT/Transition/DOP(I)
DATED 11 JAN 07

TRANSITION IN SOUTHERN IRAQ (ILLUSTRATIVE) TIMELINE



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