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D/PJHQ/1C1/30/1

10 October 2006

APS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

APS/Min(AF)

PS/PUS

PSO/CDS

MA/VCDS

MA/CGS

MA/DCDS(C)

PS/Policy Director

DG Op Pol

ACDS(Ops)

DGMC

DJC AD 1

Special Advisers

Noted.

IRAQ: FORCE PROTECTION

1. The Defence Secretary asked for advice on the implications for Force Protection of our plans to concentrate troops at Basra Air Station (BAS), and our use of tented accommodation. He also asked for advice on perceptions of diminished quality of life for troops moving into tented accommodation from "better found" camps.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Secretary of State note that:

- Tier 1 (tented), Tier 2 (containerised) and Tier 3 (new build) accommodation are all vulnerable to overhead attack from
- Incremental improvements in the protection of our camps from IDF, through a programme of compartmentalisation is underway and will be complete within 7 weeks (reducing risk by 60%) but full protection cannot be achieved in the context of a mixed
- A single, large camp at BAS is likely to continue to attract IDF attacks, but operational analysis indicates that there is negligible difference in the threat posed to a larger base. A single base will allow us to concentrate our anti-IDF efforts to greater effect and reduce the vulnerable movement currently required between SLB and BAS.
- MND(SE) have implemented an intensive and aggressive anti-IDF programme at all bases which is coordinated with the Iraqi security forces (Op TACHBROOK).
- Revised plans for BAS seek to maximise the use of Tier 2 accommodation. Some 75% will be housed in Tier 1 which will be refurbished on an incremental basis.

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- In the longer term, a new build of hardened accommodation at BAS would offer better IDF protection, and a judgement on enduring force levels post-2008 is needed to inform further work on options.

TIMING

3. Routine.

BACKGROUND

4. The Secretary of State is familiar with the plan to concentrate our troop presence in Basra Province at (BAS) and to close Shaibah Logistics Base (SLB) in the spring of next year. Our intent is that as transition to an Iraqi Security lead continues province by province, the majority of our personnel will be based there, though operating from time to time from other locations. Mr Browne asked about the vulnerability of a single, large camp to IDF attack, and whether we had adequate force protection measures in place.

5. On the first question, Operational Analysis has shown that the same pattern of attacks would have had no greater effect in terms of casualties against the future camp planned at BAS. There is no doubt that in an atmosphere of declining tolerance for the presence of coalition troops, a large camp will be an attractive proposition for those intent on carrying out IDF attacks. Against that, a large camp allows the more efficient employment of ground and aviation assets to patrol likely mortar and rocket firing positions. Concentration at one base also removes the requirement for regular movement between the two bases which is not only a vulnerability in itself but also absorbs valuable assets particularly aviation.

6. We also need to keep the threat posed to date by IDF attacks in perspective to the wider challenges faced in MND(SE). They are disruptive but to date have caused relatively few casualties compared to IEDs, which we believe will continue to be the greatest challenge.¹ Against that, however, recent experience suggests that IDF attacks are becoming more accurate.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

7. The dynamics of mortar and rocket attacks are such that if you are unlucky enough to be directly under one, it makes little difference if you are occupying a tent, container or permanent building unless protected by a significant layer of concrete or similar material. Trials of an overhead protection system that may partially mitigate against shrapnel from an overhead blast continues but in the immediate term it is most important to contain the lateral effects of IDF. This is achieved through a programme of compartmentalisation;

¹ 2 UK personnel have been killed by IDF since May 05, a US State Dept employee was also killed, however, all of these fatalities have occurred since 1 Aug 06. By comparison during the same period IEDs accounted for 27 fatalities and direct fire a further 25.

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We estimate that all personnel at BAS and SLB, whether in Tier 1 or Tier 2 accommodation, will have this improved protection in place within 7 weeks. Taken as a whole, we assess that these improvements will reduce the risk of casualties by an additional 60%.

8. These camp improvements are being complemented by an increase in MND(SE)'s anti-IDF operations. Op TACHBROOK, a focussed anti-IDF programme of patrolling drawing on assets being implemented now by MND(SE), seeks to disrupt the launching of IDF attacks

An increase in Op TACHBROOK activity seems to have reduced the overall number of IDF attacks during recent weeks although their accuracy remains a cause for concern.

9. Similar efforts are being made to improve force protection at our other fixed bases in the City². These locations continue to suffer the brunt of the IDF threat, and Basra Palace carries the additional challenge of needing to preserve the confidence of employees from other departments. Accordingly, the latter is the priority focus for Op TACHBROOK.

TROOP COMFORT

10. Should we decide to do away completely with tented accommodation, and replace it with Tier 2 throughout MND(SE), it would cost approximately \$130m and take about 12 months to complete. This would have implications for the timeframe within which we can withdraw from SLB, and be only partially complete before summer 2007, which we assess will be the critical period in terms of our people's perceptions. Taken as a whole, therefore, it is arguable whether it would result in net reduction in risk to our people (though it might overcome some presentational issues).

11. We are therefore investigating what might be achieved by refreshing and refurbishing the TDA environment including new sun screens, air conditioning, ducting and furniture (which could be achieved relatively quickly). Additionally, a team has been deployed to Theatre to investigate the viability of utilising Tier 2 accommodation from SLB, seeking to maximise quantity and quality matched against cost and time. Further advice will be provided when this has been scoped in detail. In the longer term, anticipating an increasingly serious IDF threat and recognising quality of life, we are also examining the options for providing Tier 2 or Tier 3 accommodation for the enduring proportion of the force (beyond 2008). Initial work indicates that hardened accommodation for a reduced force would cost some \$60m to implement.

SUMMARY

12. There is a risk from IDF within coalition camps, but despite some high profile incidents, it is less acute compared to other threats encountered routinely in theatre. There is an incremental Force Protection programme in hand which combines camp improvements with an increased focus on anti-IDF operations. These measures will

² Basra Palace, Old State Building and Shatt Al Arab hotel

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ameliorate but not eliminate the risk. More could be done, but would mean delay and significant additional cost. There is a case to be made for hardened accommodation for our longer term residual presence, and work is in hand to define this.

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