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D/PJHQ/10/5335

17 January '03

The Government have agreed that the date of this document is incorrect and should be 17 February 2003

HW

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

PS/Minister(AF)

PSO/CDS

PS/PUS

Poling Director?

MA/DCDS(C)

ACDS(Ops)

DG Op Pol

DGCC

DCJO(Ops)

PJHQ - Civ Sec

Sec(Iraq)

D News

DOMA

Sec(O)1

Sec(O)4

This arrived late this pm.  
It strikes me as sloppy

- much relevant detail is absent

- why so little notice?

Suggest that we mention to SPS - in writing it, he should require them to referable to the US point about USMAA IAEA involvement.

And we should warn Schirmer avoid such boring in future. AM

## IRAQ: UK CONTRIBUTION TO SENSITIVE SITE EXPLOITATION

### Issue

1. The planned UK contribution to future Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE) operations in Iraq; the deployment of 74 personnel from 18 February, to participate in coalition mission rehearsal training. Up to another 92 personnel already assigned to the overall deployed UK force for Op TELIC may also be co-opted to participate in SSE operations as necessary.

(25 already in theatre)

### Recommendations

Should have been "approved"

2. That Secretary of State notes the details of the planned UK contribution to SSE operations, and the associated training deployment.

### Timing

3. Urgent. The personnel will deploy tomorrow.

### Background

4. As Secretary of State will recall from the briefing for his Washington visit, Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSEs) operations are complex and consist of seizing and searching facilities; collecting intelligence and/or WMD samples for analysis; and, if necessary, securing Iraqi WMD facilities until final disposal is determined. As such, these operations would also support the elimination of Iraqi WMD programmes (and the destruction of terrorist networks). It follows that they are potentially a very significant

interest to  
the  
approval

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element of the overall campaign, not least in terms of their presentational value in reinforcing the legitimacy of the campaign.

5. The US will lead the theatre SSE operation. The US Concept of SSE Operations is designed to take maximum advantage of the collocation of scarce resources, through the establishment of an Intelligence Exploitation Base (IEB). The IEB will consist of experts covering the fields of CBRN (identification, collection and transportation of samples), counter terrorism, EOD, data and PC exploitation, recovery of enemy equipment and interrogation/debriefing of PW and personnel associated with sites. Regular ground forces will be expected to carry out initial SSE using the exploitation forces allocated to them and will secure the site until any hazardous material is removed. Conventional SSE operations will only be conducted in either a permissive or semi-permissive environment.
6. The US have invited the UK to contribute to SSE operations. In considering this request, our priorities have been to ensure that any UK contribution will:
  - a. be coherent with our wider policy objectives;
  - b. not put any response to a CBRN incident in UK at risk; and
  - c. be efficient and effective, i.e. be no more than is needed to achieve our aim and support the US.

*Who? When?*

We have further had to take account of the fact that, although the UK has strong EOD and CBRN resources, few can be made available for SSE because of significant Home Base and Force Protection tasks.

7. Against this background, we have identified a team of some 166 personnel who could form a cogent SSE contribution providing a range of capabilities. These personnel would include, amongst others, computer forensic specialists, technical intelligence experts, radar operators, linguists, EOD personnel and CBRN experts. Around 25 would be drawn from personnel already deployed in Kuwait, to undertake planning, intelligence, medical and equipment responsibilities. It is envisaged that all elements of the SSE contribution, including those from other agencies, would come under CJO's operational command.

*From what units, & establishments*

8. The precise concept of operations for SSE teams is still being developed, and we continue to press the US on the need to ensure that 'impartiality mechanisms' are established, and that UNMOVIC and IAEA would be involved once the situation was sufficiently stable. In the meantime, and as part of the overall process of developing a concept of operations, the US Land Component Commander is planning to hold a rehearsal in Kuwait from 23 February. Our ability to influence overall US SSE planning, and to play a subsequent part in operations, would be undermined if we did not participate in this mission rehearsal. In order to play a full part, those not already in Kuwait need to deploy this week, some as early as tomorrow. However, our participation in the mission rehearsal will also raise US

*Usual, no conversation line!*

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expectations that we will contribute to SSE operations in due course, even if our concerns about impartiality and UNMOVIC/IAEA are not resolved entirely to our satisfaction.

Presentational Issues

9. Against the background of deployments already announced and underway, we would not expect the deployment of a UK SSE personnel to attract media interest, nor – given the relatively small numbers - will it require a further announcement to Parliament. The main presentational issues lie downstream, in the potential exploitation of the sites themselves, and the rehearsal process will help to establish how best to take this forward. A key issue, as alluded to above, will be the level of scepticism we might expect from some quarters to US/UK revelations of WMD development/capability, and possible accusations that we are 'planting the evidence'. Hence the continuing need to press the US to establish impartial mechanisms, and to accept the involvement of UMOVIC and IAEA in due course.

[signed]

DepHd Pol/Ops(ME)

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