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IRAQ: AFTERMATH – MEDIUM TO LONG TERM UK MILITARY COMMITMENT

Issue

1. What assumptions should we make about the scale, posture and duration of UK military operations in post-conflict Iraq - to inform Iraq Planning Unit work in advance of US Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance "Rock Drill" this weekend.

Recommendations

2. That the Chiefs of Staff:
  - a. **Agree** the assumption that our aim should be to reduce to a Medium Scale post-conflict TELIC commitment as soon as possible and pursue discussions with the US and potential coalition allies (to determine our AOR and burdensharing) that will facilitate this.
  - b. **Note** that without a UN mandate for occupation (not necessarily the same thing as a second UNSCR) finding coalition partners will be more difficult and that the UK may face an enduring commitment that will be difficult to sustain and damaging to the long-term health of the armed forces.
  - c. **Agree** that in discussions with the US, the scale and nature of UK involvement is made conditional on satisfactory UN involvement.
  - d. **Agree** the assumption that the UK will administer a sector of Iraq; within the constraint imposed by the maximum level of commitment being Medium Scale; this would correspond to the UK's *initial* AO, *not* one of the somewhat larger sectors currently being considered in US planning.
  - e. **Note** that some US thinking now sees a role for HQ ARRC as a follow on HQ for post-conflict Iraq under a US 3\* capping HQ, at some (undefined) stage.
  - f. **Agree** that if the political gains are sufficient, we should entertain a role in Iraq for HQ ARRC – **but note** that a countrywide military remit for HQ ARRC (ie as HQ CJTF-I) risks the UK assuming too great a portion of the responsibility for the stability and security of Iraq from the US (though it may have a role as a HQ for one or two sectors).
  - g. **Note** that senior UK officers will attend a key meeting of the US Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance this Friday and require

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immediate Ministerial policy guidance if they are effectively to influence US planning.

### Timing

3. **Priority.** Although the situation will of course evolve and assumptions can be changed to meet new circumstances, guidance on policy now will reduce the risks of our getting locked into an undesirable force posture or employment by 'accident'. Choices on the extent of the UK's AOR or on the use of the ARRC may need to be made soon to influence US planning. Specifically, General Cross, the UK representative on the US ORHA (the body that will lead on civil governance in post-conflict Iraq) is due to attend a meeting in Washington this Friday at which we expect that many of the conditions for the shape of post-conflict governance may be set. This paper seeks COS endorsement of an MOD position to inform Iraq Planning Unit (IPU) work in advance of that visit.

### Key issues

#### **Wider Commitments**

4. *Excluding Op TELIC*, UK forces are already very heavily committed. The combined impact of Op FRESCO, increasing deployments in Afghanistan (a commitment to PRTs), the Balkans and Sierra Leone is severe, both on our ability to meet unforeseen tasks and on the long-term health of the Armed Forces (because of the negative effects of extended commitments on both training and retention).

#### **US framework**

5. US planning for "Phase 4" continues to develop at the strategic and operational levels. The crucial aspects that will affect UK participation are the structures that the US plan to put in place for the post-conflict administration. In the very early stages post-conflict, Iraq will be administered de facto and as a point of necessity by the occupying military forces; in effect Gen McKiernan (the CFLCC) will rule Iraq. He will be followed into Baghdad (how quickly is a point of debate in the US, but the likelihood is that it will be very rapid – possibly within days of US forces taking control of Baghdad) by retired 3\* General Garner. General Garner heads up the ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance - formerly the Office of Post War planning), the upper command structure of which is comprised largely of US military personnel (serving or retired). The administration of Iraq will then bifurcate – with Garner taking responsibility for civil issues, and CFLCC everything else; though in effect, the principal levers Garner will have to pull will be exercised through CFLCC's forces (or CJTF Iraq, as they will become). The current plan appears to be that over this structure will then be placed either a (4\*) US civilian, who will rule Iraq until an Iraqi government is put into place, or COMCJTF-I. Though the timescales are unclear (and dependent on events) it thus appears that there will be a much more rapid transition to a form of civil administration than had hitherto seemed likely – weeks rather than months.
6. **Implications of US framework.** The apparent rapidity of a transition from a military to a civil administration is welcome news. Less so is the likely character of General Garner's organisation, which is shaping up as being very military in character and, aside from a handful of embedded UK officers, will be exclusively American. This will strongly colour Iraqi and regional perceptions of the government being set up over them. Even if a US civilian is set over the whole structure he will depend entirely on a military organisation (CJTF-I) and a

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quasi military one (OHRA) to do his bidding. Furthermore, this structure offers very little scope for substantive UN or international involvement (barring contributions to CJTF-1 – see below), other than as sub-contractors on humanitarian issues. Nor will the UN be encouraged to endorse an organisation in which it will have no say. Even *with* a UN mandate, this will look, particularly to concerned regional actors and the Iraqi population, like a US occupation of Iraq. The Foreign Office and Iraq Planning Unit assessment is that without a UN Mandate Iraq will rapidly become ungovernable and the legality of military presence increasingly debatable and disputed.

7. It is against this background, and also our experience of US conduct in Afghanistan which - with notable exceptions - has taken an inordinate length of time to shift from warfighting to nation building, that decisions will be needed on the scope and depth of UK engagement in the medium to long term.

#### UK posture

8. **Scale of effort.** Once fully deployed the level of our commitment to Op TELIC will be Large Scale across all three services. Unless very significant risk is to be placed on the deployed force, and UK forces more widely, the force must be reduced to Medium Scale by October/November this year; this implies that the reduction must begin by July/August. Factors that drive this conclusion are:
- a. A large scale commitment can only be sustained with the callout of certain trade groups of reserves, who have already been mobilised in toto.
  - b. There will be severe disruption of the Formation Readiness cycle and Operational Commitments Plot that will have deleterious effects on training and wider capability in the medium to long term.
  - c. A longer deployment at Large Scale would imply a breach of Harmony guidelines for a very significant number of service personnel which may lead to a marked reduction in morale, retention and, eventually, recruitment.
9. Factors b. and c. are difficult to quantify – but, particularly when viewed against the continuing commitment to Op FRESCO, we run a risk of hollowing out capability and doing long term damage to the armed forces.
10. Once reduced to Medium Scale – all other things being equal – it would be possible to maintain a Medium Scale commitment to Iraq indefinitely and remain within DPAs without great damage to capability; though this would, of course, constrain our ability to take on other new tasks. Such a commitment would, however, be extremely expensive (in the region of £750M pa - see para 19, below)
11. **Sectorisation.** US plans for managing Iraqi administration remain in flux. They have not yet taken a decision in principle to sectorise; though it would perhaps be surprising if they did not. There are outline plans being developed within CFLCC that divide Iraq into five or seven divisional areas; one of which is notionally allocated to the UK. (See attached Powerpoint slide at Annex A) On the assumptions related to scales of effort outlined above, and assuming a rapid and successful conclusion to the conflict *and a permissive environment*, in pure military resource terms, the UK would be able to support this only until August 03. Beyond this point, however, we judge that the allocated area would



require forces above our capacity to provide without substantial long-term harm to our readiness (and recruiting and retention). Thus there would be a requirement for substantial coalition support – which will very largely be dependent on a UN SCR providing a mandate for the occupation of Iraq.

12. Sectorisation would be attractive in that it may provide an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate exemplary administration of a sector, setting the standard for others operating elsewhere (and thus encouraging success). There would be advantages in congruence between military AO boundaries and civil administrative boundaries, particularly in the early stages of post-conflict. However, there are risks. A primary concern is that sectorisation may make our objective of a united Iraq more difficult to achieve by embedding different administrative approaches in different geographical areas. It may make eventual exit more difficult. If there is not buy in from other coalition partners the UK could be left with an unsustainable commitment. The current CFLCC planning assumption leaves the UK with a geographical area that includes a very substantial portion of the Iraqi population, a substantial oil-field content and responsibility for key religious sites.
13. **HQ ARRC.** US thinking on the internationalisation of the military occupation remains unformed still. However, they are actively considering HQ ARRC being the second CJTF-I HQ, ie eventually being the lead for security issues for all of Iraq – not merely a sector – though after a US Corps had performed the task first. The role might be performed under US civilian leadership, providing pol-mil guidance and ensuring overall US responsibility is retained – though US plans remain unclear on this point.
14. There are generic advantages employing HQ ARRC in an aftermath role:
  - Provides a focal point for the co-ordination of Coalition contributions, with agreement to use embedded staff possibly opening the way for more significant contributions.
  - Gives the UK a high profile role in the AM, which may enable greater influence to be applied on wider policy issues such as a UN role and governance matters.

There are also generic disadvantages:

  - Maintains an already significant UK commitment. The alternative is likely to be a more manageable 2\* HQ and Bde or Bde only commitment.
  - Leaves the UK with a significant military role in arguably the most challenging phase of all.
  - May place major force generation and multi-national co-ordination requirements on the UK rather than the US. (Though the UK has much more experience than the US in this area).
15. As well as taking on the CJTF-I role, HQ ARRC could have a role as a Sector HQ in a structure in which Iraq was divided in two sectors (North & South) under a US HQ in Baghdad. The CJTF-I role has few advantages for the UK, other than the influence it would provide on overall Iraqi issues. It does, however, have significant disadvantages:
  - UK assumes responsibility for Baghdad and the north – after initial conditions have been set (not necessarily to our advantage) by US



- UK may assume force generation responsibilities for the complete post-conflict force.
  - HQ ARRC is best suited to a LCC role. A JTF role would require additional staff augmentation from an already overstretched resource pool.
16. Offering HQ ARRC for the role of CJTF-I will expose the UK to considerable risk of taking on an uncertain (but undoubtedly large) commitment with no guarantee of support from Allies. As a sector HQ the exposure may be less, but the risk still considerable. It might be possible to start as a sector HQ (which would allow the UK to shape the environment) and then, subsequently (if we judged conditions were right) take over CJTF-I.

### Policy considerations

17. A number of policy considerations will shape our decisions here. Firstly, there is the degree to which we wish to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the United States. This is a fundamental political judgement that needs to be taken; where are the UK's red-lines regarding the depth of participation? One can posit four scenarios that relate to the transitional government stage. We need to judge what our policy should be on engagement in each:
- a. A UN mandate for occupation, the civil transitional administration demonstrably international with a UN-appointed High Representative for Iraq, with CJTF-Iraq providing the Security pillar and UN agencies providing humanitarian aid. This is our best case. Currently it looks unlikely.
  - b. A UN mandate for occupation, the civil transitional administration run by ORHA (General Garner), CJTF-Iraq providing the Security pillar but a UN appointed High Rep set over this structure and UN agencies providing humanitarian aid. The next best case. Also unlikely.
  - c. A UN mandate for occupation, the civil transitional administration run by ORHA (General Garner), CJTF-Iraq providing the Security pillar, UN agencies providing humanitarian aid under a US Civilian 4\* or COMCJTF-I. This is the current US plan.
  - d. No UN mandate for occupation, but the civil transitional administration run by ORHA (General Garner), CJTF-Iraq providing the Security pillar, UN agencies providing humanitarian aid under a US Civilian 4\* or COMCJTF-I.
18. For wider policy reasons (internationalisation of occupation, handling of regional actors) a UN mandate for occupation is essential for the UK, and a structure along the lines of para a., above, desirable. As leverage it may be possible to make clear to the US that we are unwilling to take responsibility for a sector for more than Phase IVa (stabilisation) unless our presence is clearly and expressly authorised by the UN and it is understood that we can employ the UN and other states to assist. The US is keen to draw down its forces in Iraq, and as such is attracted by the prospect of HQ ARRC taking on the role of CJTF-I. Notwithstanding the points made at paragraph 15 and 16, above, a UK offer of HQ ARRC, conditional on the UN mandate that would both in any case be required for us to consider making such an offer, and which will serve our wider interests, may provide additional leverage. This requires further detailed consideration, and so is not an offer we can make at the moment.

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#### Financial considerations

19. DG RP has written to HMT setting out initial estimates of the solely military additional costs. These were based on assumptions drawn up by the commitments staff. The assumptions were that the scale of effort would be Large Scale for 6 months (though assuming a rapid demobilisation of Reserves that would reduce land forces to 20 - 25k) followed by 6 months at Medium + (a Div HQ plus Bde and support; 15k), then 12 months at Medium (9k) followed by 6 months at small scale. (Medium scale for 6 months is estimated to cost c.£375M) Adding HQ ARRC for 6 months concurrent at some stage would add c.£40M. These assumptions give estimates for additional cost in the order of £2Bn. These are broad order, early estimates, and rely on current planning and historical data (Kosovo etc). Depending on events the true figure could be less, or more. The US plan for rebuilding Iraq encompasses a wide range of activities which are not military; there will be very significant non-military additional costs to reconstruction.
20. **CIMIC funding.** The Chiefs of Staff have recently endorsed a UK policy for Civil Military Co-Operation (CIMIC) (that states that where CIMIC activity has a force protection angle or directly benefits the military as well as the local community it can be carried out from within the budget for the operation. In practical terms this would mean GOC 1 UK Div having a "pot of gold" that he could employ on humanitarian assistance, *but guided by military not solely humanitarian priorities*. This is currently unfunded. The amounts will be relatively small, but this will be a novel approach. In the past, such monies have always been funded, and prioritised, through DfID and thus such an approach may require the agreement of OGD ministers.
21. **Humanitarian assistance.** DfID have limited confidence in the robustness of US humanitarian assistance planning. The likelihood is that if the US plan is found to be wanting its limitations will be most immediately apparent in the UK AO. To this end it would make sense to have funds and resources available to serve as a UK "safety blanket" verall UK funding for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance within a UK sector, which has yet to be identified.

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