

# **IRAQ INQUIRY – WITNESS STATEMENT**

## **AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR GLENN TORPY**

### **Introduction**

1. This statement covers my involvement in Iraq in the following appointments: UK Air Component Commander during the combat phase of Operation TELIC (February 2003 – April 2003); Chief of Joint Operation (CJO) Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) (July 2004 – March 2006); and as Chief of Air Staff (April 2006 – July 2009). Specifically, the statement addresses each of the issues requested by the Inquiry Committee.

### **UK Air Component Commander**

#### **Any reflections on the planning and conduct of Operation TELIC and your personal role in this as the Air Component Commander.**

2. I was nominated to be the UK Air Component Commander in late summer 2002. At that time I was Air Officer Commanding No 1 Group based at HQ Strike Command, RAF High Wycombe. My involvement in the operation progressively increased during the latter half of 2002 as planning matured (on both sides of the Atlantic) and I eventually deployed to theatre (Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia – the location of the Coalition Air Operations Centre (CAOC)) on 8 February 2003. I returned to the UK on 29 April as the UK force was redeploying home at the end of the combat phase.

3. As UK Air Component Commander I was responsible for the deployment, employment and recovery of UK air assets in support of the broader Coalition operation – Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. As such, I saw my responsibilities as:

- Ensuring that the UK Air contribution to the operation was delivered and integrated as effectively as possible
- That UK operations were conducted in accordance with UK political and legal intent
- Operations were conducted as safely as possible, whilst acknowledging the inherent risks associated with combat operations
- Ensuring UK operations caused minimum operational friction within the Coalition

Throughout, I worked very closely with the overall Coalition Air Component Commander (Lt Gen Buzz Moseley USAF) and the other Coalition continent commanders (Australian and Saudi). In all, the UK contributed some 8100 RAF personnel, together with 113 fixed wing and 27 rotary wing RAF aircraft to the operation; these assets were distributed across 8 Deployed Operating Bases in 7 countries.

4. On completion of the operation I submitted 2 detailed reports: one to the National Contingent Commander (NCC) (1.ACC.1 dated 20 April 2003 – OP TELIC – UK Air Contingent Top 10 Lessons<sup>1</sup>) and another to CAS and CINC STC (1G.AOC.1 dated 9 May 2003 – Operation TELIC – UK Air Contingent perspective). Having reviewed both reports they accurately reflect my memory of events, the key issues that emerged during the

operation and the main lessons. Rather than regurgitate the content of these reports both are available to the Committee from the MOD Inquiry Secretariat.

### **Chief of Joint Operations**

#### **The position of UK forces and the circumstances they faced when you assumed this role.**

5. I assumed the post of CJO in July 2004 from Lt General John Reith. At that point, the UK had responsibility for 4 provinces in the south-east of Iraq that constituted Multi-National Division (South East) (MND(SE)). The Division was commanded by a UK 2-star major general located in Basra, who reported to the 3-star US commander of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) and, ultimately, to General Casey, the US 4-star commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I).
6. In July 2004, the UK had some 8100 personnel in MND(SE), together with a further 248 in Baghdad. In addition, a further 570 RAF and 560 RN personnel were supporting the operation from bases located in the region (for instance, in the case of the RAF assets were located at Al Udeid, Seeb and Bahrain). The total coalition force in MND(SE) numbered some 14165. Twelve nations contributed personnel, with the Italian (2850) and Dutch (1360) contingents being the largest after the UK. In terms of responsibility, the UK commanded the forces in Basra and Maysan provinces, with Dhi Qar and Al Muthanna falling respectively to Italy and the Netherlands.
7. The main tasks of the UK Land Component in MND(SE) were frame-work security operations and training of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The RAF provided a broad range of capabilities to support Coalition Land and Air operations across Iraq; these activities were not focused solely in MND(SE). The RN contingent provided maritime security in the North Arabian Gulf and the sea lines of communication into the region; particularly attention was focused on protection of the major oil infrastructure.
8. Since the end of combat operations the situation in Iraq had been showing positive, if slow, signs of improvement, although the security situation across the country varied significantly. The most serious violence was concentrated in the Baghdad area, Mosul and the predominately Sunni provinces in the west. MND(SE) was relatively calm. The most troublesome province was Maysan (as it had been under Saddam's regime); levels of insecurity in Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar were low; Basra was relatively benign.

#### **What direction you received from the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and MOD as to the UK's strategic objectives in Iraq**

9. The following is an extract from my Directive to the General Officer Commanding (GOC) MND(SE) and reflects the direction I received from CDS/MOD as to HMG's strategic Objectives:
  - Political Goal and Strategic Endstate. To rid Iraq of its WMD and for Iraq to become a stable, united and law abiding state, within its present borders, cooperating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations, and providing effective representative government for all its people.

- Interim Strategic Goal. Enroute to the Strategic Endstate, and Interim Strategic Goal has been set as follows: an effective, transitional representative government in Iraq, capable of providing sufficient security, in conjunction with MNF-I, to allow the achievement of Iraqi economic and social objectives and further representative political process.
- The UK's Operational Endstate. The UK's Operational Endstate would be achieved when the following conditions apply:
  - A safe environment has been established in Iraq with a responsible Government that no longer has the wherewithal or intent to possess WMD
  - Iraq is capable of maintaining its own security
  - Iraq is capable of maintaining its own territorial integrity
  - Iraqi authorities, supported by international agencies, are responsible for governance and reconstruction
  - Formed UK forces have recovered from Iraq

**The objectives and intent you provided your subordinate commanders both in Iraq and PJHQ**

10. The following is an extract from my Directive to GOC MND(SE) (in this particular case Major General (MG) Riley) and reflects the direction and objectives I set both the in-theatre force and my staff in the PJHQ:

- Mission. As directed by Commander Central Command (CENTCOM) and Commanding General (CG) MNF-I (*reflects the dual US and Coalition nature of General Casey's post*) you are to:
  - Develop, train and equip the ISF so that they are capable of dealing with a complex insurgency and other threats to internal and national security
  - In partnership with the ISF, conduct operations to help defeat the insurgency and other threats to internal and national security
  - Support the development of the reconstruction and governance lines of operation where they contribute to security
- In order to establish an indigenous sustainable secure government that sets the conditions for effective, representative government in Iraq
- My Intent.
  - Achievement of the Interim Strategic Goal before completion of UNSR 1546 by transitioning from post-conflict security operations to a security assistance mission and towards normal bilateral defence relations

- Partner and mentor ISF
- Maintain consent for our operations
- Development of indigenous capability is underpinned by political transformation in MND(SE) and not dislocated by lack of progress (comparable) in reconstruction and governance
- Continue to act as guarantors of a secure environment until Iraqi capability allows
- My Scheme of Manoeuvre.
  - Creation of capable ISF fit for handoff to provincial security control in 2005/06
  - Focus on Iraqi Army (IA) but support Iraqi Police Service (IPS) through operations with the IA
  - Development of Directorate of Border Enforcement (DBE)
- Main Effort. Priority is given to IA

11. The above guidance reflects the 3 strands of the overall campaign plan for Iraq: security, governance and reconstruction. The security line of operation was further subdivided into 2 strands: providing a secure environment for the governance and reconstruction activity to be undertaken (until this could be undertaken by the ISF); and training and equipping the ISF so that they could take ultimate responsibility for the internal and national security of Iraq. Although all 3 elements of the ISF – IA, IPS and DBE - were important, priority was given to the IA because they were seen to be the most capable of the ISF, the least corrupt and, importantly, the capability that the Coalition military force was most able to effectively train. That said, given the porous border, a significant amount of effort was directed at developing the DBE in order to stem the flow of insurgents and equipment (particularly Improvised explosive Devices (IED) and Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFP)) from neighbouring countries. Support was also provided to training of the IPS but this was limited given the lack of specialist police training capability within the British military.

### **The resources available to you in order to deliver the UK's objectives and any constraints you encountered**

12. I inherited a Joint force structure from my predecessor that was appropriately sized to deliver the military objectives I was given. In order to maintain configuration control of the force and ensure that it was appropriately sized for the required tasks the various in-theatre component commanders (GOC MND(SE), UK Joint Force Air Component Commander and UK Maritime Commander) were required every 6 months to conduct a Force Level Review to validate their force requirements. This review was undertaken in consultation with the PJHQ, and ultimately presented to CDS (and the Chiefs' of Staff) for endorsement. This process imposed an important level of discipline on the force and prevented unnecessary growth or the retention of capabilities that were no longer necessary. At the same time, the review provided the vehicle for force level increases if conditions in a particular component demanded additional capability.

13. From a military perspective, during my tenure as CJO I was content with the force levels allocated to Operation TELIC. That is not to say that everything was perfect. Well-documented shortages of specialist personnel - such as medical - needed careful handling, vehicle protection - from the threat posed by IED and EFP – became an increasing concern and the fragility of the RAF's aging air transport fleet undermined the robustness of the strategic airbridge to the region.

14. There were, however, 3 areas that I believe constrained the speed and effectiveness of our ability to deliver HMG's objectives as swiftly as possible; namely, funding, police training and coordination and delivery of the non-military (reconstruction and governance) elements of the campaign plan. The UK's overly bureaucratic and parsimonious approach to funding prevented in-theatre commanders from facilitating the security (and reconstruction) lines of operation through civil-military activities (improved health care, water, electricity) aimed at securing and maintaining the consent of the local population. To a degree this was caused by the use of traditional value for money procedures that whilst suitable for 'peace-time' circumstances had little relevance in a combat zone. The US gave much more authority and flexibility to in-theatre commanders and, as a result, they were able to deliver results more quickly and effectively. In terms of police training, operations in Iraq (and Afghanistan) have exposed a serious lack of capability in this area across the international community, despite the acknowledged importance to security of an effective indigenous police capability alongside the army. The UK is poorly placed to deliver the type of police training required in the likes of Iraq and Afghanistan, which is more akin to the para-military police forces found in Spain, Italy and France. Our lack of capability in this area hampered the speed with which the IPS developed and inevitably slowed the pace towards handing responsibility for provincial security to the Iraqis. As already mentioned, the campaign plan for Iraq centred on delivering improvements in security, governance and reconstruction. There will, inevitably, be differences in the speed with which these activities are delivered but to achieve maximum effect close synchronisation across the activity streams is essential. Although valiant efforts were made by many people, especially at the tactical level, to achieve the closest possible integration there were many occasions when the UK's procedures and structures (in-theatre and in the UK) failed to deliver this outcome. I am pleased to say that the 'Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) model' adopted by the UK for Helmand has brought a step change in capability at the tactical level but weakness still exist at the strategic level in coordinating cross-Government activity.

### **Your management of the UK campaign in Iraq and of relationships with your subordinate commanders in Iraq**

15. The role of the PJHQ is to act as the interface between the in-theatre force and the MOD and frontline commands (FLC), particularly in ensuring that the in-theatre force is provided with the wherewithal to deliver its objectives. This required a constant dialogue, at every level, between the MOD, PJHQ, FLC and in-theatre force. Within the PJHQ, a dedicated Iraq Operations Team acted as the focus for coordinating all PJHQ activity connected with Iraq. Daily meetings chaired by my operations deputy (a 2-star Army officer) provided the formal coordinating mechanism within the PJHQ. Once a week, I chaired a video-conference (VTC) between PJHQ and the senior UK commanders in Iraq (and the other operational theatres in which UK forces were operating). A weekly VTC was also held between PJHQ and MOD (one chaired by CDS and another by the Defence Secretary) during which I reviewed activity in Iraq and key issues were discussed. These

regular events were supplemented as required by routine calls and face-to-face meetings. Regular visits to Iraq by PJHQ staff provided an important means of ensuring close coordination between PJHQ and the in-theatre force, and making sure that the concerns of people on the ground were fully reflected throughout the command chain. During my own regular visits to Iraq (every 6-8 weeks) I would meet (as a minimum) with GOC MND(SE) and his staff, General Casey in Baghdad, and the UK Air and Maritime Commanders.

**The role of your headquarters in providing advice to the MOD, including Ministers, on the progress of the campaign and in particular of the implications for operations in Iraq of committing additional UK forces to Afghanistan**

16. As reflected in my Directive to GOC MND(SE), during my tenure as CJO the main focus in Iraq was to develop a coherent plan for training the ISF and transitioning security responsibility to the Iraqis. In general, levels of violence in MND(SE) were relatively low, which meant that whilst framework security operations were an important part of the force's day to day activity, Security Sector Reform (SSR) was main effort. Thinking on transition was also more advanced in MND(SE) than in Baghdad because of the relatively benign security environment and the progress made with SSR. MND(SE) was, therefore, felt to be a good place to start the transitional process.

17. Significant progress was made in this area during MG Riley's time as GOC MND(SE) (30 November 2004 – May 2005), the upshot of which was a plan developed jointly between MND(SE) and the PJHQ that was endorsed by both the UK MOD and MNF-I as part of a broader Iraqi-wide transition plan. The plan centred on a conditions-based judgement of the capability of the ISF to assume provincial security responsibility. Transition would be undertaken in 3 phases: Tactical overwatch (UK forces acting in support, SSR continuing); Operational overwatch (UK forces providing support only when requested, consolidate Coalition forces onto a small number of bases, eventually reducing to a single location); Strategic overwatch (over the horizon force). Judgement of when a province was ready for transition was undertaken by a Joint (Iraq/MNF-I) Commission on Iraqi Self Reliance, based on progress against the following criteria; level of training, equipment holdings, logistic support, infrastructure, C2/leadership and performance. In the case of MND(SE) it was envisaged that Al Muthanna and Maysan would transition in March 2006, with Dhi Qar and Basra being handed over in July 2006.

18. Given the importance of transition to the UK's exit strategy regular reports were provided to MOD and Ministers on progress against the transition criteria and this, coupled with normal reporting on incident levels and progress against the other lines of operations (reconstruction and governance), provided an overall assessment of campaign progress.

19. During the course of 2005 an important opportunity arose in Afghanistan to continue the planned expansion of NATO operations to the south of the country (Stage 3). This next phase was brought about by a willingness of Canada and the Netherlands, together with the UK and US, to take responsibility for key provinces in the south. For the UK this meant relinquishing responsibility for the PRTs in Mazar-e-Sharif and Meymaneh in the north and shifting the UK focus southern to Helmand. Notwithstanding the positive progress that was being made in Iraq both the PJHQ and MOD realized that expansion of operations in Afghanistan would require more resources and there was a risk that if conditions deteriorated in Iraq the UK's Armed Forces would be placed under potentially considerable strain. As a result, the MOD made it quite clear that operations in Iraq

remained UK Main Effort and our contribution to Afghanistan should do nothing to jeopardize a successful outcome in MND(SE). It was against this backdrop that the objectives, and thus size and shape, of the UK force in Helmand were determined. The PJHQ, together with the FLC, contributed to the advice given to the MOD on the implications of increasing force levels in Afghanistan, particularly the implications for the strategic airbridge, helicopter numbers and certain specialist capabilities.

**Your reflections on the development of particular trends or any notable events during your tenure, for example the growth in the IED threat or Iranian influence or the Jameat Police station rescue in September 2005**

20. IED/EFP Threat. During my time as CJO we saw a gradual, although not dramatic, rise in the number of IED/EFP attacks against UK troops. Considerable effort was directed at developing tactics, techniques and procedures to mitigate the threat (building on experience from operations in Northern Ireland), whilst at the same time seeking improvements to equipment, particularly the introduction of new Electronic Warfare equipment, additional vehicle armour and better body armour for personnel. Additional intelligence effort was also directed against IED/EFP networks to enable disruption operations to be undertaken.

21. Iranian Influence. The Iranian influence in southern Iraq was not something new; it existed during Saddam's time in power, particularly in Maysan province. The main threat posed by Iranian activity was the supply of IED and EFP components and the support provided to Shia militias, primarily Jaish-al-Mahdi. Given the length of the border and the terrain it was extremely difficult to prevent illegal cross border activity but a substantive amount of MND(SE)'s effort was directed at patrolling the most likely crossing points, gathering intelligence and training the DBE in order that they could provide a more robust and effective deterrent capability.

22. Jameat Police Station Rescue. This incident occurred on 19 September 2005 when 2 UK soldiers were illegally arrested by the IPS and held in the Jameat Police Station. This Police Station was notorious with local people and the Coalition for being populated by some of the most corrupt elements of the IPS, with close links to Shia militias groups. As a result, there was significant concern within HQ MND(SE) that the soldiers might be handed over to one of these groups, and a swift decision was taken to surround the Police Station to contain the incident and prevent further movement of the soldiers. At the same time, the UK Consul General in Basra and our Ambassador in Baghdad worked with a variety of Iraqi interlocutors to secure release of the captives. By the evening, agreement appeared to have been brokered for an appropriate release mechanism but the situation rapidly deteriorated and Acting GOC MND(SE) rightly ordered an immediate operation to secure the Police Station and return the 2 soldiers to safe custody. Although a tactical level incident, without the prompt action of the Acting GOC the outcome could have been extremely serious.

23. Operation BRACKEN. During late summer 2004 the UK received a request from MNF-I for the deployment of a UK battlegroup from MND(SE) to North Babil (south of Fallujah) to support a large operation to stabilise the town of Fallujah, which had become a major focus for the Sunni insurgency. After considerable debate the UK agreed to the deployment, which took place in October/November 2004. The US provided significant logistic support to enable the deployment north. Regrettably, a number of UK casualties

were sustained during the course of the operation but the US was deeply appreciative of the support provided by the UK.

24. Dutch Withdrawal from Al Muthanna. As lead nation in Al Muthanna the Dutch were an important contributor to MND(SE) and there was, therefore, considerable concern when they announced their intent to withdraw from Iraq in Spring 2005. Despite the serious gap this would leave in the force structure, which potentially risked having to be filled by the UK, the FCO (and MOD) were slow to engage the Dutch diplomatically to persuade them to stay, to the extent that when they were eventually engaged preparations for their departure were too far advanced to reverse. Although the Australians stepped into the breach the outcome could have had serious implications for the UK, which could possibly have been avoided by earlier and more substantive action in Whitehall.

### **Chief of Air Staff**

#### **The impact on the RAF's ability to support operations in Iraq following the decision to commit additional forces to Afghanistan, including in relation to people, resources and equipment capability**

25. Concurrent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan exposed the lack of resilience in the RAF's force structure following successive force reductions and endemic underfunding over many years (common to all 3 Services). I would highlight the following areas as those put under most strain by the increased commitment in Afghanistan: strategic and tactical airlift; helicopter capability; and RAF Regiment.

26. Air Transport. The fragility of the RAF's aging strategic and tactical air transport fleets are well documented and will, over time, be mitigated by the arrival of the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft (FSTA) and A400M. In the meantime, the unreliability of the Tristar and VC10 fleets and the retirement of the C130Ks, despite delays to the A400M programme, resulted in a significant proportion of the strategic airbridge task being undertaken by charter aircraft, at considerable cost. The procurement of additional C17s partially mitigated some of the risk but concurrent support to both Iraq and Afghanistan placed significant stress on the RAF's Air Transport force.

27. Helicopter Capability. The demand for helicopters in Iraq centred on 2 main tasks; operations in MND(SE) and operations in the environs of Baghdad. Prior to the expansion of the mission in Afghanistan Puma and Chinook initially undertook these tasks but as the introduction into service of Merlin gathered pace this third type was included in the force mix in order to spread the load and reduce the amount of time crews spent away from home. Indeed, as confidence in Merlin grew it was possible to withdraw Chinook from Iraq to allow the force to recuperate from a prolonged period on operations. It also gave the force the opportunity to prepare for operations in Afghanistan, where the hot and high conditions and heavy lift requirements singled out Chinook as the obvious favourite to support operations in this demanding environment. As a result, concurrent support to operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan once again saw all 3 RAF helicopter forces committed to operations. Whilst the Operation HERRICK deployment did not adversely affect support to UK forces in Iraq, it reduced Joint Helicopter Command's flexibility to reduce time away from home for personnel.

28. RAF Regiment. The RAF Regiment's main task in Iraq was to provide airfield defence and security at Basra Airport (also the location of HQ MND(SE)); this required the

permanent deployment of a Field Squadron and associated Tactical HQ. In all, the RAF was established to maintain 8 RAF Field Squadrons, although resources pressures meant that funding was only available for 6. This was manageable when only one Field Squadron was employed on operations but a requirement quickly emerged in Afghanistan for a further Field Squadron and Tactical HQ to provide airfield security at Kandahar. This doubling of the requirement meant that with only 6 RAF Field Squadrons personnel were breaching harmony guidelines.