

REQUEST FOR WITNESS STATEMENT

Name	Relevant Role	Dates
Admiral the Lord Boyce GCB	Chief of Defence Staff	February 2001-May 2003

The answers to the questions (in italics) posed to me below are provided to the best of my recollection of events occurring some 8-9 years ago.

Policy Development: December 2001-April 2002

During your appearance before the Inquiry on 3 December 2009 you outlined your participation and contribution to, discussions about possible UK military action in Iraq between April 2002 and March 2003. Please provide a list of any discussions or meetings on military action in Iraq in which you participated, with UK or foreign officials or Ministers, before the Prime Minister's visit to Crawford in April 2002.

I do not recall participating in any meetings on military action in Iraq, other than those associated with No Fly Zones, before April 2002. There was a meeting with the Prime Minister on 2 April just prior to his visit to Crawford to discuss, amongst other things such as Afghanistan, a wide range of options about how to deal with Iraq, from containment and sanctions to conceptual military action. There was no discussion on the detail of military action or military options. With respect to the comment I made in my oral evidence on 3 December 2009 "I was not involved in the briefing of the Prime Minister just before going to Crawford" (Transcript p.11), I was referring to the policy briefing paper on ways of dealing with Iraq that was provided for to the Prime Minister towards the end of March 2002.

Military Planning

What consideration was given to the implications of the decision in January 2003 that UK forces should participate in the southern approach, including:

- How the force levels required for the operation were derived and how the balance was struck between the UK and US contributions to the campaign;*

The land force levels were largely based on what were already being prepared for the northern option. However, because of the change in plan, the US agreed to assist with some enabling and logistic assets in the south. Maritime (including amphibious) and air force levels were much the same. The thinking about a possible southern option had started in late autumn 2002 and so the concept was already well developed by the time the northern option was abandoned.

- The ability to procure sufficient equipment for the deploying force;*

As above, the equipment being procured for the land forces previously designated for the northern option largely serviced them when they were re-roled south, although there was a need to recognise the more extensive desert environment.

- The risks associated with an operation from the south rather than the north, including the UK's likely post-conflict area of responsibility and the military and non-military roles;*

In January, the risks were related to the longer time it would take to deploy and become established – although the US offer of help in the area of support greatly mitigated this. The UK's area of responsibility was seen as a move in the direction of de-risking, as we would have greater control of our own destiny both in the conflict and aftermath phases. It would allow the US forces to make best speed towards Baghdad knowing

their rear was covered. And it also meant our land forces would be adjacent to the UK-commanded amphibious task force entering through Al Faw.

- *The impact of this switch on the importance of the UK's contribution to the overall US campaign plan as it stood at that point;*

Even in January, with the US making slow progress with the northern option through Turkey, thus freezing the deployment some of their fighting strength, they recognised that the UK had an important contribution to make from the South. This became more significant as time went on. By the time that fighting started, UK was providing some 30% of the tank capability; and thus the UK contribution was critical at the start of hostilities on 19 March 2003.

- *The process by which those issues were considered, and the advice provided to Ministers to inform their decision making.*

The process by which the Ministers and the Prime Minister were briefed and consulted (and which was part of what was colloquially known as 'battle rhythm') was well honed as a result of engagement in a number of previous recent operations, particularly Afghanistan. Issues were considered by the Chiefs of Staff (Operations) Committee [COS(Ops)] and then Ministerial Committee meetings, briefed by the CJO and DCDS(C), with advice also being provided by the UK cell in CENTCOM. The Prime Minister would then be briefed.

Advice to the Prime Minister

What was the basis and criteria for your assurances to the Prime Minister that:

- *UK forces had access to sufficient amounts of the right equipment with which to conduct the operation;*

Readiness (in terms of equipment) of UK forces to conduct the operation was assessed by CJO, taking advice from his command chain, with strong input from CsinC Fleet, Land and Strike. This was in turn briefed to the COS(Ops) Committee and the Ministerial Committee and the Prime Minister. Inevitably there were some equipment shortfalls which were still in the process of being remedied on 19 March 2003, but none which were being advised as show-stoppers or of critical importance to mission accomplishment.

- *The US plan for the invasion represented a 'winning concept, in particular the degree to which the status of the aftermath (Phase IV) planning formed part of your assessment and assurance?*

The threat was carefully assessed, including taking into account the possible deployment of CW/BW weapons by Saddam, and measured against the capability of the coalition forces. There was complete confidence from CENTCOM and ourselves that Iraqi forces would be defeated. Phase IV was integral to all aspects of our planning for the campaign as it was deemed of equal importance to the fighting phase. By March, it was felt that a satisfactory level of preparation for Phase IV had been put in place, based on best assumptions of how Iraq might behave once the fighting phase was complete.

The Legal Debate

- *At what points during the planning for the operation did you express a view to Ministers, including the Prime Minister that you would need an assurance of the legal base of the conflict for your Directive?*

I made it clear to the Prime Minister in January 2003 (once we had started to deploy our forces), that I would require an assurance of the legal base of the conflict. This was reiterated more than once in the following

weeks, and formally and explicitly in March once it became clear that it was probable that coalition forces would invade once political approval was obtained.

- *Did the timing of the Attorney General's final legal advice pose any practical difficulties during the military planning phase for operations against Iraq, for example in relation to targeting or aftermath management planning?*

No. Planning was always contingent upon political and legal authorisation. If that had not been forthcoming at the end of the day, UK forces would not have engaged in hostilities.

Force Levels

- *What advice did you provide to Ministers, including the Prime Minister on how long and at what scale UK forces could be sustained? What was your expectation in March?*

The expectation in March was that the fighting phase could, in the worst case (for example, if Baghdad produced fortress-like resistance), last as long as 3-4 months, although the more realistic assessment was that it would last weeks rather than months. My feeling was that Phase IV could last years and that large numbers of boots on the ground would need to be sustained. However, my advice also was that the UK contribution would need to be scaled down by about two-thirds by the autumn; and therefore that it was of vital importance to get other countries to provide significant force level contributions for Phase IV as soon as possible after the fighting phase.

- *What direction did you give to the Chief of Joint Operations about the pace of UK troop withdrawal following the invasion and what was the basis for this direction?*

I do not recollect giving CJO any specific direction about the pace of UK troop withdrawal prior to my retirement on 2 May 2003.

- *Prior to your retirement in May 2003, what was your assessment of the rate of UK troop withdrawals from southern Iraq, and what impact do you believe this had on the ability to maintain security?*

I do not recall there being any UK troop withdrawals from southern Iraq before the beginning of May 2003. However, the subject of reducing force levels was under consideration in the COS(Ops) Committee.

Basra

- *From your perspective what prompted the decision to take control of Basra at that time?*

The campaign plan was to by-pass and 'fix' Basra (but take the airfield) until the threat of the Iraqi divisions in the UK AOR had been neutralised. And that, thereafter, UK would enter Basra if there was a permissive environment. Such was the situation when UK took over Basra.

- *The original US concept of operations for the invasion did not include taking control of Basra; did you discuss the change in the plans with Ministers, including the Prime Minister? Did London or PJHQ seek to influence the decision?*

By the time of the invasion, much had moved on from the original US concept of operations; and the plan for Basra (as above) was formulated before hostilities. Ministers and the Prime Minister were appropriately briefed before and during the invasion. PJHQ would have, as always, provided all operational and tactical options.

The actual timing of entry into Basra would very much have been down to the operational commander's tactical appreciation at the time.

- *What consideration was given to the implications of the change of plan for the military and other parts of HMG?*

Senior officials from the FCO, DfID, the Agencies and the Prime Minister's office were always in attendance at my COS(Ops) Committee meetings. Thus all relevant departments were fully apprised at each turn of events.