

Declassified

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IRAQ – THE AFTERMATH – MILITARY OPTIONS

Ministers are to be asked their views on the UK role in Iraq after Saddam.

US/UK military planning assumes that the UK Division will take responsibility for an area of Iraq for the first few weeks after they finish their fighting role.

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This raises several important issues.

Key points

- On public finance grounds there is a strong case for stepping back from military leadership in the aftermath and allowing other countries to take on this role.
- If Ministers want Britain to continue to be in a leadership position there will be significant costs – perhaps £1 billion a year for at least two years.
- There may be scope for bringing other countries in to play a part and to reduce our burden, but the extent to which this is realistic is at the moment uncertain.
- There are risks that our taking on military leadership will result in our being sucked into wider responsibilities for reconstruction with even higher costs.
- This is on top of the cost of fighting a war and any contribution to humanitarian aid.

Background

2. The “Day After” or “Phase IV” as the US planners call it subdivides into three parts:

- **Short term / Phase IVA (‘Stabilisation’)**. In the short term, the coalition military will effectively be in charge of the administration of Iraq in the areas where they are operating. The US plan sees the US-led coalition military providing security, and through its Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), some degree of civil

administration. The key coalition tasks will be to overcome resistance from Iraqi forces; stabilise the country; find and secure Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; work in support of humanitarian organisations to mitigate the consequences of any hostilities; and enable the reconstruction of essential infrastructure.

- **Medium term/ Phase IVB ('Recovery')**. The UK view – which the US gradually seems to be starting to accept – is that in the medium term an international transitional civil administration (TCA), mandated by the UN, needs to be established. The UN mandated administration will manage Iraq through the transitional period until a representative Iraqi government is able to take its place. The role of the coalition military will be to provide a secure environment.
- **Long term/ Phase IVC ('Transition')**. This phase begins once a new broadbased, effective and representative Iraqi government is able to assume its role. Some international involvement is likely still to be necessary, but that is beyond the scope of this briefing.

3. Phase IV will not neatly follow Phase III ('decisive operations' – ie fighting). Phase IVA effectively starts the moment coalition troops enter Iraq.

Implications for the UK military

Phase IVA

4. In Phase IVA, the UK military will be responsible for the area of Iraq where they end up following the decisive phase of any conflict. They will have operational responsibility under the chain of military command leading to General Franks. The expectation is that the UK division will be in the south east of Iraq, in or near Basrah.

5. The way events will evolve is uncertain, but the planning assumption is that Phase IVA will last for 3-6 months. Our assumption is that the full UK land component will remain engaged

over this period at a cost of about £600 million¹. There is little policy discretion at this stage. Once we enter Iraq, our commitments will be determined by events and by our obligations under the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

Phase IVB

6. As we move from the immediate aftermath of conflict into the recovery phase, real choices become possible.

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8. The options open to the British – based on our understanding of what US military planners have been offering – are:-

- a) to coordinate security for the whole of Iraq (by providing the HQ);
- b) to take responsibility for security in a sector of Iraq (possibly the governates of Al Basrah, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Wasit) – see attached map.
- c) to take responsibility for security in only a smaller area of Iraq (eg the Basrah governate only)
- d) to hand over responsibility for the security in our area to other coalition forces.

9. While nothing is certain, the Al Basrah governate seems most likely to correspond to where UK forces are likely to end up.

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Military constraints

¹ These costs are on top of the cost of getting onto the start line – about £1 billion, already spent; the cost of the fighting estimated at about £800 million (running costs) for a short war – possibly split between 2002-03 and 2003-04 – and the costs of subsequent recuperation which might be as much as £400 million in 2003-04 with more in subsequent years.

11. The Chiefs of Staff consider that it will be necessary to scale our commitment down by the end of Phase IVA from a Division to a Brigade plus a Headquarters (this would involve perhaps 10,000 people). They believe we could sustain this level of intensity indefinitely, though it would be a stretch and it would limit our capability to take on other operations. They believe that any larger commitment would be unsustainable.

12. With this level of commitment MOD think it is probable that we would be able to fulfil our responsibilities for Basrah province (ie option c), although this depends on the security situation on the ground. We could not manage a larger sector (option b.) on our own. We could lead the wider sector, but we would need the help of other countries' armed forces to deliver our responsibilities.

13. The cost of such an ongoing operation is likely to be about **£1 billion** a year (depending on the precise configuration it could vary between £750 million and £1350 million). It is hard to predict how long the commitment will last for, but a reasonable assumption would be at least two years and possibly significantly longer.

14. The option of running the national headquarters (option a) would involve fewer people but a broadly similar cost.

Impact of financial constraints

15. We have pressed MOD on how these costs might be reduced. The options are:-

- a) to tell the US that we feel we will have played our part after Phase IVA and that other coalition partners must be found to take on our role (option d);
- b) to give up the leadership role and to contribute a small component to the leadership of others;
- c) to lead a sector (either of several governates or a single governate) with a range of forces drawn from other countries.

16. To keep costs to the minimum, we should scale down our commitment as rapidly as possible. However it seems unlikely that the Prime Minister and other Ministers will want to walk away from a leadership role. Nonetheless, taking on any leadership role for the aftermath in present circumstances runs high risks because we

do not know how much support we will be able to count on from other countries. We will need to lobby hard for assistance once the diplomatic picture becomes clearer.

Wider responsibilities

17. If we were to take on responsibility for the security of a particular area, we could come under pressure to take on wider responsibilities for reconstruction (which would include humanitarian assistance and civil administration). We understand that the Prime Minister has said in the past that he wants Britain to demonstrate an "exemplary" approach to rebuilding Iraq. However, there are major drawbacks:-

- We do not want to introduce artificial administrative boundaries with different countries leading on civil administration in different regions in Iraq.
- The burden of taking on the reconstruction of an entire "British sector" of Iraq would have huge costs on top of what we are already committing to.

18. So we should strongly resist taking on wider responsibilities on a sectoral basis. Moreover, there is a risk that by leading on the security in particular sector, we will be sucked into leading on wider issues if the UN mandated administration finds itself unable to cope.

Conclusion

19. On public finance grounds there is a strong case for stepping back from military leadership in the aftermath and allowing other countries to take on this role. If Ministers want Britain to continue to be in a leadership position there will be significant costs – perhaps £1 billion a year for at least two years. There may be scope for bringing other countries in to play a part and to reduce our burden, but the extent to which this is realistic is at the moment uncertain. There are risks that our taking on military leadership will result in our being sucked into wider responsibilities for reconstruction with even higher costs.

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4 March 2003

