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9 May 2003

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Minister

This is - at last - a serious attempt to respond to your concerns about equipment delivery/supply. There is much better, and acknowledge the importance of providing Ministers with proper advice. The story it tells however, about the flow of information from theatre which has dominantly been favourable - is pretty depressing. You should note the advice on clothing and combat.

IRAQ: OP TELIC UORS

You asked for further advice on a number of points about the supply, and in some cases, fitting of various equipment and kit, notably desert combats and combat identification. The annex which I have seen

We are still investigating the exact status of UORs delivered to, and their fitment in, theatre and of clothing and boots. We hope to submit a detailed report early next week. But the basic position is set out at Annexes A to C. I have seen the annex

Overall it is clear that Op TELIC has been a great success both in terms of performance of equipment and the successful delivery of an enormous amount of kit in a very short space of time. But it is also becoming clear that there were problems in theatre, of which we were not aware, in relation to the fitting of UORs and the delivery of kit. At this stage potential contributory factors appear to include the sheer speed and scale of the deployment, the large number of UOR equipment, the significant advance of G day, and the absence of an in theatre asset-tracking system with the consequent mismatch of people and equipment. These factors will crystallise during the lessons process and we ought to avoid commenting in detail before that time. In the meantime I attach, at Annex A lines to take which have been agreed with DCRS and DLO. The annex which I have seen

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to follow up the advice you have already seen on Boots, has also been provided I attach copies of our previous notes

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In the case of combat identification and combat clothing the detailed picture of distribution in theatre is only now beginning to become clear. We were not previously aware that there was a problem on the scale that appears now to be emerging. (I use the word 'appears' deliberately because no thorough-going investigation has taken place to establish precisely the size of the problem and we ought not to rely on anecdotal evidence which may or may not coincide with the ground truth.)

It appears to be the case as set out at Annex B that some tanks went into Iraq without combat identification fitted. This was an operational judgement taken by the Commander on the ground. We were unaware of it and were therefore not in a position to inform Ministers. I well recognise that this could have put Ministers in an extremely difficult position had one of those armoured vehicles been hit by friendly fire. It is clear that this is an area which the lessons process will need to examine: at this stage all we can say is that had we been aware of it we would of course have reported it (but it unlikely that such reporting would have altered the Commanders judgement).

On clothing and boots there was a concern in the logistic community that it would be difficult to provide all the desert clothing required in the time-scales. My recollection is that we were told that sufficient kit had been delivered to provide each soldier with at least one set of desert combats and boots but there was a need to carry out a redistribution in theatre because of delivery problems (involving sizes etc). It has subsequently emerged that the problem with desert combats and boots was apparently significantly worse (but again a good deal of further work is required to establish the precise position). In the case of desert combats the problem was not highlighted as a major issue by Commanders in theatre because it was not judged to have a serious operational impact.

In your minute of 7 May you referred anecdotal evidence of further problems. I am not clear to what you refer. I have since seen an anecdotal report by an End to End logistic study team which recently visited theatre and which reports some comments of individuals. I have no idea of the context of those comments nor of their validity which, I would argue, need to be understood in the context of the wider problems of deliveries which I presume will be covered in the lessons exercise. I understand work is in hand to consult key logistic organisations to place these comments into context. In the meantime while we should rightly be concerned about perceived short-comings voiced by any individual, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to try to respond to each of those in advance of the lessons exercise.

Paul Flaherty
PJHQ Civ Sec

*I have some sympathy for this
in terms of our public statement
but it would be nice to know the
facts.*

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Annex A

UORS Delivered to Theatre

The processes currently in place for tracking UORs only tracks them until they arrive with the original consignee in theatre. There is therefore no means of tracking whether UORs reached the end user for whom they were intended. Work has been set in train to establish this and separate advice is being submitted by CJO to VCDS.

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In the meantime there will obviously be a requirement for Ministers to say something to press and Parliament on this issue. The line below has been agreed with DCRS and the DLO.

"It is too soon to draw conclusions about potential shortfalls in logistic support. Given the number of people and equipment deployed, and the distance and terrain involved, it is likely that some parts of the process did not run as smoothly as we should liked. Action is in hand to look at where lessons must be drawn and we will publish the results. But the exaggerated reports that have appeared in parts of the media should not be allowed to mask the real story, which is largely one of success."

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Annex B

Combat Identification

Summary

Three ISO containers of Combat ID were temporarily misplaced in theatre meaning 32 Challenger 2s were not fitted with combat identification prior to the start of combat operations. All tanks in the two lead battle groups were, however, fitted with Combat ID. GOC 1 Division assessed that proceeding with the advance without Combat ID was preferable to delaying the advance. In both the UK blue-on-blue CR2 incident and the incident involving a US A-10 firing on 2 CVRTs, all UK vehicles were fitted with the appropriate Combat ID.

Background

We were not able to approach industry to place orders for Combat ID until the US agreed the Combat ID concept of operations. Once these were agreed the equipment was manufactured in around 4 weeks. The majority of this was then flown into theatre but 3 ISO containers were sent by ship and subsequently misplaced. Further detail which has recently become available on the fitting of the various elements of the Combat ID UOR to Challenger 2s is below:

- 18 March: Combat ID was fully fitted to 58 tanks. These comprised the lead 2 battle groups. Although ships carrying remaining equipment had arrived in theatre a few days before, the equipment had yet to reach 7 Armoured Brigade. A further 26 tanks were fitted with combat ID before they moved forward into Iraq. These sets had arrived in theatre on 14 March, but had taken time to reach the Brigade.
- 27 March: 24 sets of combat ID were located in the Brigade's rear area in Kuwait, moved forward to Iraq and fitted which had previously been misplaced.
- 4 April: final 8 sets located but not fitted as decisive combat operations involving armour were over in the UK Area of Operation.

Other Vehicles

The UOR called for a number of items of combat ID to be fitted to armoured vehicles, including passive thermal imaging panels and an active infra-red beacon. Soft skinned vehicles were fitted with a visual coloured panel and an identifying horizontal chevron. The only major hitch in the fitting process was that with CR2 reported above. It may be worth mentioning, that although both incidents are still subject to investigation, in both the UK blue-on-blue CR2 incident and the incident involving a US A-10 firing on 2 CVRTs, all UK vehicles were fitted with the appropriate Combat ID.

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Desert Clothing and Boots

Summary

The shortage of desert clothing was caused primarily by the fact that the stocks held were insufficient for the speed and size of this deployment. The inability to equip even all fighting formations prior to the start of combat operations was caused by in theatre supply priorities. The weakness of our asset tracking system meant there was limited visibility outside theatre of these problems. During decisive combat operations the shortage of desert combats was not flagged up since it was not seen to have a serious operational impact. Sufficient desert combats have now been despatched to theatre to meet previously declared shortfalls.

Background

The story so far

It was apparent during early planning for Op TELIC that the provision of desert combat clothing to the entire land based force, within the expected timescales required would be difficult. Strategic provision of desert combat clothing was insufficient for an operation of this size and the necessary constraints in the planning last autumn meant that orders could not be placed for additional clothing until the end of November.

To make best use of available stocks priority was given to those fighting formations – 3 Commando Brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade and 7 Armoured Brigade – who most required the camouflage property of the desert uniforms. It was accepted that if necessary other formations would start the operation in green Combat Soldier 95 uniforms. In addition it was decided in January the each individual would only be issued with two suits rather than three which is the standard issue.

In the build up to and during the war-fighting part of the campaign the movement of desert uniforms were prioritised behind fighting and communication equipment, meaning stocks were despatched to theatre only as airfreight space was available, or by sea, and that once they arrived in Kuwait, were not always moved forward immediately. This meant that some elements of the front-line fighting formations mentioned above crossed the start line still in green camouflage uniforms.

Clarification that all declared short-falls would be met by 26th April.

Some 100,000 suits of desert combat clothing have now been despatched to theatre (including the 20,000 suits which arrived on 20 Apr 03), which is sufficient to meet previously declared shortfalls. Excess stocks, including 11 000 pairs of boots, 13 500 pairs of trousers and 18 000 jackets are now held centrally in theatre. Units can call on these stocks, as required to top up holdings. There may still be isolated cases where individuals have yet to receive the correct size of suit or boots, and these will be dealt

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with by theatre staff as they are reported. The DLO has action in hand to ensure that there will be sufficient stocks to equip roulement forces with at least two suits per person before they deploy.

Why didn't the shortage of desert clothing come to light earlier?

The shortage of desert clothing was not seen as operationally significant during combat operations and so was not reported by commanders in theatre. The tracking systems established prior to OP TELIC only tracked the delivery of equipment until it arrived with the original consignee in theatre. Thus we were not alerted as a matter of routine to the fact that some equipment, including desert combats, had not reached the end user. Instead we relied upon Commanders in theatre to flag up any concerns they had on equipment issues. During the decisive combat operation phase of the campaign this only happened when equipment shortages were assessed to have a serious operational impact. Since green Combat Soldier 95 is suitable, although not ideal, for the climatic conditions it was assessed that the shortage of desert combats would have no significant effect on operational capability and thus Commanders saw no need to raise the issue up the chain of command. Delays with in-theatre distribution were caused by the low operational priority of clothing behind fighting and combat equipment. Now that decisive combat operations are over the shortage of desert combats is having a negative impact on morale and has thus been flagged up as a concern.

So commanders did not worry about it when Ministers did, but are now shouting like mad for it because their troops want it.

To what extent was the requirement for desert clothing met in practice by (a) 15th March (b) when ground operations commenced on 20th March (c) by 31st March and (d) by the end of April.

While records do exist for despatch of consignments from the UK, there is no readily accessible reliable record of when the consignments reached the units for whom they were intended. The table below shows the cumulative totals of desert combat clothing issued from the UK for the dates required. Equipment would have been moved, in theatre, in accordance with the priorities outlined above. As of 1 May all of the 28 April figure has been moved to theatre.

Item	15 Mar 03	20 Mar 03	31 Mar 03	28 Apr 03
Suits	43,241	51,089	56,683	100,184
Boots	30,831	32,494	33,48	56,433
Land Contingent Personnel Problems	27 683	30 315	30 133	29 803

Note:

1. These statistics do not include the desert clothing already in stock or issued prior to the operation.
2. The standard scale of issue is three suits per person. In January, this was reduced by PJHQ to 2 suits per man to spread the stock more widely.

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