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D/CGS/51/9/4

13 May 03

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CGS VISIT TO OP TELIC 7-10 MAY 2003

GENERAL

1. I visited British troops deployed on Op TELIC between 7-10 May 03. I was initially hosted by GOC 1 (UK) Armd Div, in southern Iraq, visiting units from 7 Armd and 16 Air Assit Bdes, as well as the JFLogC based in Umm Qasr. In Baghdad I also met CFLCC, Lt Gen Dave McKiernan; Comd ORHA, Lt Gen (Retd) Jay Garner, and his Deputy, Maj Gen Tim Cross; HM Representative Christopher Segar; and the British Government's Special Representative to Iraq, John Sawers. Whilst at the British Embassy I took part in a press conference which included Mr Sawers, Mr Segar and Gen Cross. In Qatar, I visited DCINCCENT, Lt Gen John Abizaid.

PHASE 3

2. Without wishing to circumvent the lessons learnt process, there are a number of important issues worthy of note that have been reinforced at every level during the visit. These lessons must contribute to the shaping of the Army's Force Structure work prior to it reaching DMB later this year and contribute to the wider development of Defence in the joint arena:

- Battle Winning Equipments. CHALLENGER 2 (95% + availability), WARRIOR, AS90 and PHOENIX have proved to be remarkable battle-

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winning equipments, able to prosecute dynamic and rapid manoeuvre with seriously capable protection and firepower. They were invaluable in both the open and the more complex urban environments, applying combat power in a manner that continuously out-maneuvred the enemy.

- Training. Land Command's training mechanisms work well and delivered. We must continue to train in an integrated all-arms and joint manner, down to the lowest tactical level and across a range of environments. However, we must look at the inclusion of more urban training, particularly for our armoured battle groups, and focus on closer interoperability with air and AH.
- Land/Air Integration. This is an area that requires more work, and one that I believe we must and can improve on. Firstly, due to the complexity of the campaign, the interface between ground manoeuvre elements and air tasking was not always sufficiently refined to exploit ground targets in a timely way. However, my discussions did lead to consideration of the way in which the national air contribution is organised within the overall coalition air component, notwithstanding the acknowledged requirement for the principle of centralised control, decentralised execution. I was struck by comments concerning the merits of the practice employed in support of SF in the western desert; it has been suggested that UK assets should, if at all possible, be used in support of UK ground forces, with attendant benefits for the moral component, and regular training opportunities to develop better integrated procedures. The area merits further consideration.
- Attack Helicopters. It is essential that we draw on both the positive and negative uses of AH. AH is an important manoeuvre element in its own right and whether employed en masse or as a smaller packet, it will often require an enemy to be fixed in order to set the conditions to strike it effectively. Gen Whitley illuminated the failure of 2 major Apache attacks and highlighted the successful integration of Cobra across the Coalition.

SECURITY AND TRANSITION TO PHASE 4

3. Security in the South. The situation in the UK AOR is dramatically different from that further north and in particular in Baghdad for understandable reasons. 1 (UK) Armd Div fought an exemplary tactical battle, displaying first-class decision making and courage at all levels. Indeed, I am now entirely confident that the decision-point to push into Basra could not have been better

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timed. They have effectively transitioned to Phase 4 activities creating a permissive environment, winning consent, reducing any antagonistic presence and engaging the Iraqis at every level, encouraging them to take an active lead in reconstruction. Most significantly they have made excellent progress on the development of an active police force and a subordinate militia. I was delighted that both Lt Gen Abizaid and Lt Gen McKiernan acknowledged and praised this situation and 1 (UK) Armd Div's part in it. The ethnic and political environment in southern Iraq has facilitated our role in this satisfactory state of affairs. These almost exclusively Shia provinces have been persecuted for almost 20 years, driven to living in miserable conditions, repressed by the regime, let-down by the US in the past and contain an almost exclusively Shia population. However, the consent that our Armed Forces have won will not hold out forever if we cannot deliver that which we have promised (more later on reconstruction). Gen McKiernan is happy with our rotation plan, but is still keen for us to take on the 5th province of Wasit and asked us to keep this in the back of our mind. I remarked that it would depend on how the force generation work progressed.

4. Security in Baghdad. Despite the temporal difference in the taking of Baghdad a security vacuum still exists, particularly at night. Looting, revenge killing and subversive activities are rife; why? There is a much higher proportion of Baathist members and a more pro-Saddam, significantly Sunni population, unevenly distributed wealth and hence vulnerabilities and exploitation, combined with an all-pervasive gun culture. Most significantly, in my view, and tacitly recognised by both Gens Abizaid and McKiernan, 3ID's approach remains unnecessarily heavy handed; they are tired and are clearly not focussed on Phase 4 activities. There appears no engagement of the local population and a lack of understanding of the 'hearts and minds' dimension. The population's tolerance (rather than consent) of the US presence in Baghdad seems fragile. As roulement with a fresh US force, un-blooded and possibly nervous, approaches, as well as the heat of the summer, a continued failure to deliver coalition promises of reconstruction may forfeit strategic success. Should a bloody and protracted insurgency establish itself in Baghdad, then a ripple effect is likely to occur. Gen Abizaid recognised that US forces should change their profile in Baghdad and there are plans in place for 101 (AB) Div. who are perceived to be winning hearts and minds in Mosul, to conduct familiarisation training with 3ID's replacement¹; regardless, I fear it just is not in their culture. Gen McKiernan did concede that

¹ (US) Armd Div.

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there was a power vacuum in Baghdad developing and that ORHA would not or, or could not, take a lead.

5. Iranian Influence. I was questioned by Gens Abizaid and McKiernan on whether we had any concerns regarding Iranian influences, a topic I had discussed with GOC 1 (UK) Armd Div. Gen McKiernan expressed the view that Iran wanted to establish long-term influence in Iraq. I acknowledged that this was a certainty but it might actually improve security in the region, and there was no clear evidence of them stirring things up. This begs the question of how to handle the Badr Corps, and integrating them into the new Iraqi Army may make them part of the solution and not the problem.

6. MEK. The MEK were in the process of conceding during my visit and were in negotiations with one of the US Div Comds. Interestingly, Gen McKiernan commented that they would accept any terms less the use of the word surrender. He stated that there would be a process of filtering out those on the World Terrorist List.

7. Law and Order. 1 (UK) Armd Div have made a good start in reforming the police and are actively involved in combined patrolling, allowing them to take a more active lead. The RMP are conducting some very constructive police training during this reformation phase. However, there remain neither judicial experts nor external support from outside our own military to develop a viable and practical judicial system, and there appears to be no release of financial support to pay the public sector, although we may be able to sustain the police for about 3 months with some of the limited cash available to 1 (UK) Armd Div. In Baghdad, despite similar efforts and progress by the US military in terms of police reformation there is a less effective police force, largely as a result of the lack of security and their style of patrolling. We need to get a viable system of law and order up and running at a much quicker pace - this will require resourcing (see my comments on reconstruction).

PHASE 4 AND RECONSTRUCTION

8. Despite recovering some of the essential public utilities to pre-war standards, it is startlingly apparent that we are not delivering that which was deemed to be promised and is expected. Although it is only about 30+ days since combat operations ceased, public perception and expectation is critical in maintaining security. 1 (UK) Armd Div have formulated a sound plan involving all the lines of

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operation and effect that are required to create a viable state. However, they have reached the limit of their technical capabilities and desperately need subject matter experts – judicial experts, civil engineers, power workers, water workers, public health specialists including additional doctors and nurses, comms experts including InfoOps TV/Radio providers, interpreters, medical supplies, etc. They have had an embedded DFID representative since initial deployment who has made all the right requests for some time, but no action follows: there is considerable disappointment with DFID. This situation is compounded by comprehensive stripping of the public sector infrastructure, an inability to pay public sector employees, a lack of NGO support and planning, and a complete lack of direction and effective action from ORHA.

9. ORHA. My time with Gen Tim Cross illuminated the extent of the problem in ORHA. They are poorly organised, lack a unified intent or strategic plan, are disjointed, appear unduly obsessed with their media image, and have limited connectivity with the military. Not surprisingly there is much infighting and many have already left disillusioned. There appears to be an enormous pull-back to Washington, where all contractual and financial control reportedly remains vested. In short, process and not delivery/effect is the driver. Gen Tim Cross is battling in an admirable way against a torrent of unnecessary process. Many see Bremer as the great hope, but I suspect a dramatic change in attitude in Washington is required. Gen McKiernan is clear that ORHA have been charged with paying public sector wages, yet there appears no mechanism to access the cash despite \$750million dollars sitting in Kuwait, which was never even in the original budget for reconstruction. (I was told that their cash is being sent back to the US for forgery checking). That said, we should not underestimate the complexity of the problem, and we have only been in Baghdad for 30 days. The ORHA Representative in the south working with 1 (UK) Armd Div. Ambassador Olsen from Denmark, is, in the view of the GOC, a man we can do business with and is already making an impact. But he will be severely hampered by the bureaucratic process of ORHA and Washington. We may need some serious UK/Danish impetus to ensure he gets the support he needs.

COALITION BUILDING

10. Gen McKiernan was unaware of the progress of coalition building, so I outlined the fall-out from the initial ICCM held on 30 Apr 03. He remarked that he was still very keen for an additional non-US division. Gen Abizaid voiced his

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continued desire to see the ARRC engaged after V Corps, who are due to come home in about 45 days.

THE WAY FORWARD

11. Reconstruction. We must release the financial, personnel and infrastructure resources to effect a quicker delivery of reconstruction. If not we will lose the consent we have so successfully achieved. Oil is one of the keys to kick-starting the public sector and we need to get it flowing in order to generate money, employment, investment and energy. Power, electricity and water supply are in need of urgent attention.

12. Security. If we start to deliver in weeks rather than months then we should be able to hold onto the consent in the south and develop a coherent and effective path to a self-governing Iraq. But this will only be possible if Baghdad remains secure and stable. Baghdad is key to the Centre of Gravity, where we may be close to losing Iraqi tolerance. As with the south, they also require faster investment for reconstruction, but this will be ineffective without greater security. The US military may yet deliver, particularly with the roulement of 3ID with 1 (US) Armd Div. However, this critical moment may require a bold adjustment and we should at least look at direct UK military involvement in order to win 'hearts and minds' and create a more secure environment. Militarily, I believe we could achieve this and I am aware that John Sawers' immediate sitrep 'What's Going Wrong' has started some focus on the key questions:

- We need to test his assumptions that the current US approach is wrong and that it will not improve sufficiently to maintain security.
- We need to ensure that we can guarantee security in the south were we to engage in the north.
- We need to be confident that we can improve the situation in Baghdad.

I do not believe we can influence the situation in Baghdad without engagement. Nor do I believe that committal of HQ ARRC alone will address what is essentially a tactical problem, albeit one with strategic overtones. If we make the decision to become tactically engaged in Baghdad then this may well provide much greater strategic focus for the rest of government to support, more strongly, efforts on reconstruction. We must also ensure that we have the support of our coalition partners. The bottom line is that if we choose not to influence Baghdad we must be confident of the US ability to improve before tolerance is lost and insurgency sets

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in. If we choose to influence it we must be confident of improving the situation and not become over-engaged in both the south and the north.

SUMMARY

13. This was a timely visit that allowed me to engage in the key issues at almost every level. Our forces have, without question, achieved much, their courage in conflict, stoic resolve and ability to transit through conflict termination into Phase 4 activities has been remarkable. We must not throw away these substantial achievements by processes that are failing to deliver, and we must ensure a secure environment throughout the theatre – not least in Baghdad – to enable successful reconstruction. A bold correction may be required.

(Original Signed on Chors)

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