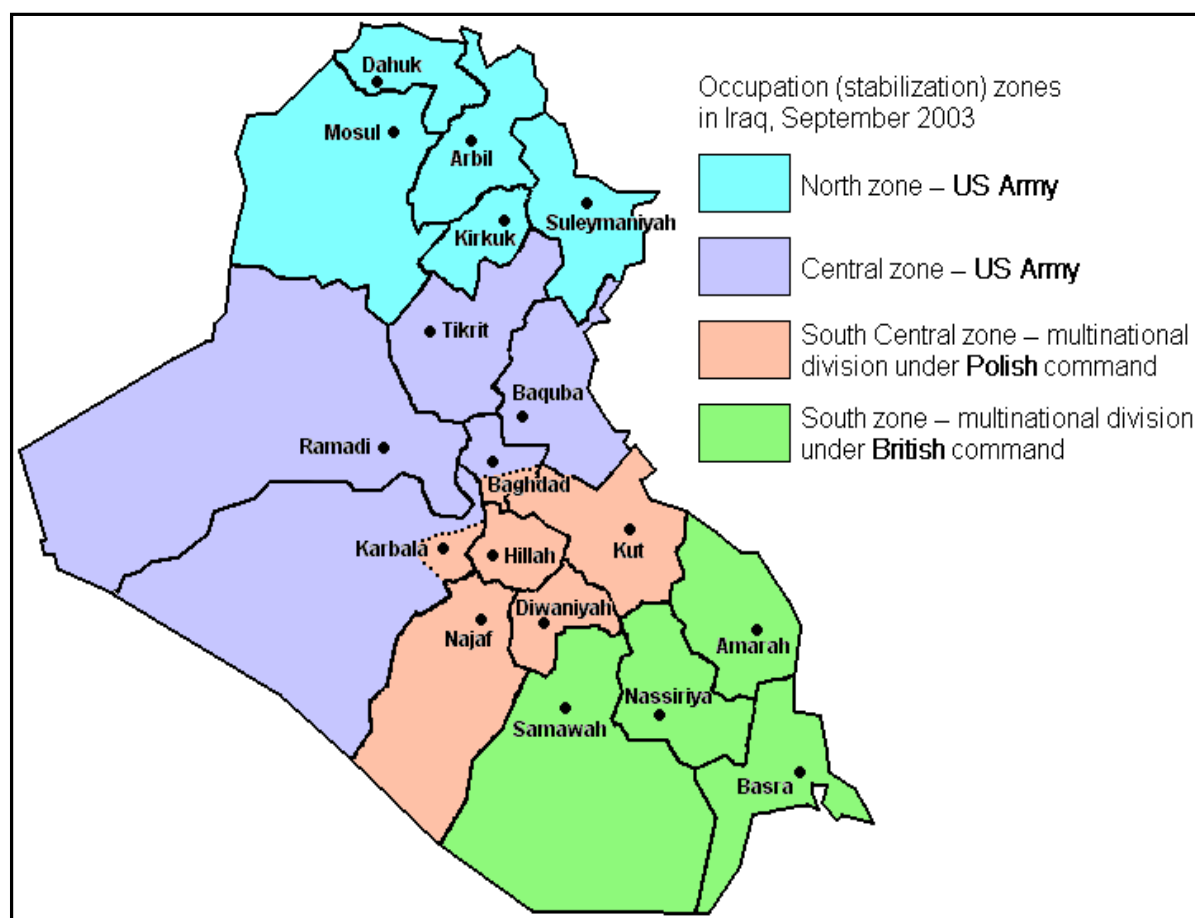


CHAPTER 6: OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

1. Operation Telic IV

- 1.175** It is not necessary or appropriate for this Inquiry, in accordance with its terms of reference, to comment on the lead up to and presence of British forces in Iraq in 2003 and the following years but a short introduction to Operation Telic IV provides some context in which the events discussed in this report took place. The Iraq Inquiry, established in 2009, has a wider remit than this Inquiry to consider more generally the UK's involvement in Iraq for the period 2001 until 2009.
- 1.176** Operation Telic ("Op Telic") was the name given to the United Kingdom's military operations in Iraq, which lasted from 19 March 2003 to the withdrawal of the last remaining British forces on 22 May 2011.
- 1.177** Op Telic comprised thirteen tours of duty, each lasting approximately six months, and each numbered sequentially. Op Telic IV, with which the Inquiry is concerned, lasted from 25 April 2004 to 1 November 2004.
- 1.178** During Op Telic, UK troops were deployed to the South Zone, an area of Iraq covering the four southern provinces Al Muthanna, Maysan, Al Basra and Dhi Qar. This area came under the British command of the Multi-National Division (South East) ("MND(SE)"), whose headquarters were at Basra Palace in Basra province.



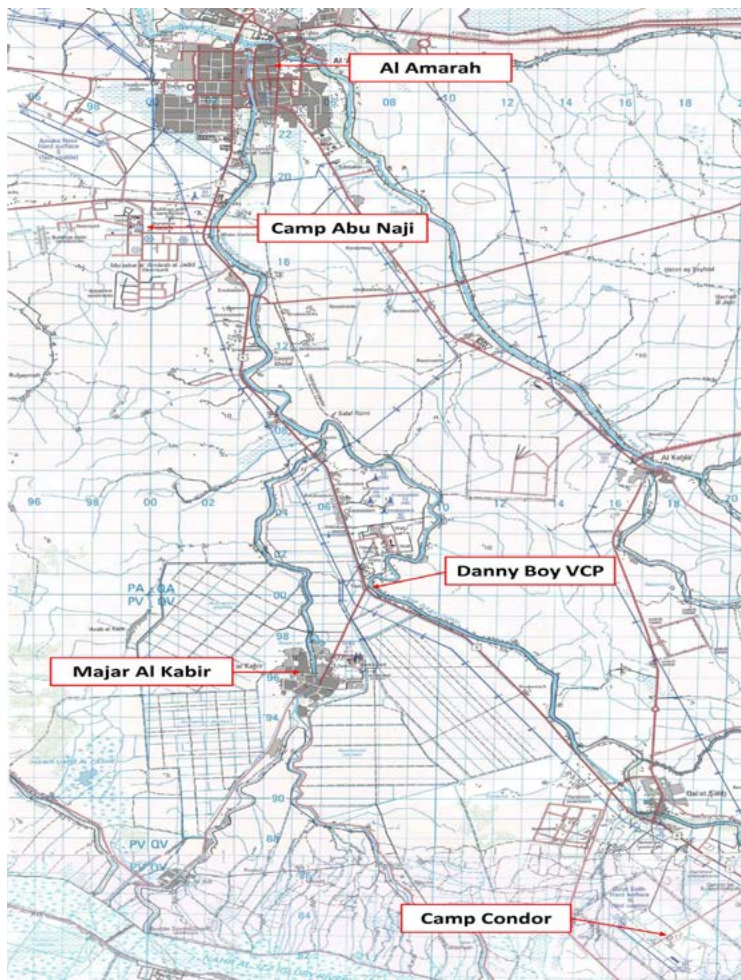
- 1.179** In May 2004 direct responsibility for Maysan and Basra provinces came under the control of 1 Mechanized Brigade (“1 Mech Bde”), commanded by Brigadier Andrew Kennett, with headquarters in Basra. 1 Mech Bde comprised approximately 6,500 troops consisting of roughly 4,500 soldiers and 2,000 military and civilian personnel.³⁶ Brigadier Kennett explained in his witness statement to the Inquiry that the area of operations for 1 Mech Bde was *“approximately the size of Northern Ireland, and was home to maybe 5 million Iraqis”*.³⁷
- 1.180** Brigadier Kennett went on to say that *“troops were primarily distributed across these provinces in Battle Groups which consisted of individual Battalions supported by personnel from attached units.”*³⁸ One of these Battle Groups comprised 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales’ Royal Regiment (“1PWRR”), with attachments from 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (“1A&SH”).³⁹ 1PWRR was responsible for operations in Maysan Province, which included Camp Abu Naji, Camp Condor, the nearby towns of Al Amarah and Al Majar al’Kabir along with a substantial section of Route 6. Camp Abu Naji was the main British army base in the area located five kilometres south of Al Amarah, whilst Camp Condor was a smaller base located approximately thirty-five kilometres to the south of Camp Abu Naji. The two Camps were linked by Route 6, the main highway from Al Amarah in the north to Basra in the south. Al Majar al’Kabir was located to the west of Route 6 approximately half way between Camp Abu Naji and Camp Condor. The town lies less than three miles from where British Army forces were attacked on 14 May 2004; the events with which this Inquiry is concerned. A map illustrating these locations is included below. 1PWRR, which at its maximum consisted of approximately 1,500 troops, was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Maer, and was based at Camp Abu Naji.
- 1.181** 1A&SH comprised a number of Companies, one of which was B Company, under the command of Major Adam Griffiths. B Company was further separated into four Platoons: 5, 6, 7 and 8, each consisting of between 14-25 men.
- 1.182** Platoons 6 and 7 were commanded by Lieutenant James Passmore and Second Lieutenant James Dormer, respectively, and were based at Camp Condor, where their role involved training and mentoring the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (“ICDC”). The intention was that the ICDC would take responsibility for the local area once the Coalition forces withdrew.
- 1.183** An overview of the chain of command for Op Telic IV is attached at Appendix 4.

³⁶ Brigadier Kennett (ASI024015) [5]

³⁷ Brigadier Kennett (ASI024017) [9]

³⁸ Brigadier Kennett (ASI024016) [7]

³⁹ Major Griffiths (ASI018470) [4]



2. The security situation

- 1.184** The security situation in Maysan province while at times volatile had been fairly stable prior to April 2004. On a daily basis areas of the Maysan Province would be placed Out Of Bounds (“OOB”) to Coalition forces due to the threat of attack or an actual attack being carried out on them. These OOB areas were often of short duration except that placed around the town of Al Majar al’Kabir which had become a virtual no go area following the killing of six British Royal Military Police (“RMP”) soldiers in June 2003.
- 1.185** It was in Al Majar al’Kabir almost a year previously, on Tuesday 24 June 2003, that six members of the RMP had been murdered by an Iraqi mob. The six RMP, known as “Red Caps”, on account of their scarlet coloured berets, had been at a police station in Al Majar al’Kabir as part of their role to train local police officers. On the morning of 24 June 2003 soldiers from 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment (“Paras”) had engaged a hostile crowd in the town. As the Paras withdrew, the crowd advanced on the police station. By midday the six Red Caps were dead, beaten and shot inside the police station.
- 1.186** A known member of the local militia was suspected of involvement in the killings. Several operations were conducted by Coalition forces with the intention of capturing him. He was known by the code name “Bravo One”.
- 1.187** It was the expectation of continuing stability which determined pre-deployment training and planning for Brigadier Andrew Kennett. He made reference to this in his written Inquiry statement, as follows:

*"...our most likely anticipated tasks related to peacekeeping and rebuilding and some equipment was selected with this in mind...We were told that the combat phase of the operation was over and we were going there to assist with the eventual handover of power and functions of governance to the emerging Iraqi civilian authorities."*⁴⁰

1.188 Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Maer similarly described the planning thus:

*"On deployment to Maysan it was expected that the primary role would be one of nation building, involving the training of the nascent Iraqi armed forces following the disbanding of Saddam Hussein's forces and assisting the civil authorities. This expectation was also reflected in the equipment issued to the Battlegroup. For example we were provided with stripped-down Land Rovers and Saxon armoured vehicles which were very lightly armoured. We did not have any tanks and started with only one grouping of Warriors."*⁴¹

1.189 By the time 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment ("1PWRR") and 1st Battalion, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders ("1A&SH") arrived in April 2004 it became clear that the security situation in the local area was worse than expected. As Lieutenant Colonel Maer explained:

*"The reality on the ground, however, was nothing like expected. The local community in Maysan was heavily armed, fiercely independent and operated on a tribal basis. The fall of Saddam's regime had left a power vacuum which several groups were competing to fill...By the time of my arrival, the situation had deteriorated a great deal. The Police could not move around Al-Amarah and the pro-Western Provincial Councillors were afraid. Many of the non-governmental organisations had left the province following Mahdi army attacks. The CF [Coalition forces] had essentially lost the streets of Al-Amarah and were facing regular violent attacks elsewhere."*⁴²

1.190 Major Adam Griffiths also emphasised the risks to Coalition forces, as follows:

*"From the start of my tour, my Rover Group (the mobile support unit that I travelled with whenever outside of CAN) often came under fire from insurgents as we travelled through the region...On the tour, I found that pot-shots and mortar attacks from insurgents became a normal part of life and it was something that my men and I got used to."*⁴³

1.191 Upon arrival 1PWRR took responsibility for security in the local area, patrolling highways and the nearby town of Al Amarah in an attempt to maintain control. As Lieutenant Colonel Maer explained:

*"There came a time when a decision was taken to rebalance the situation. The result of this decision was Operation Waterloo, which happened shortly before the Danny Boy incident (from 7-12 May 2004), during which the Battlegroup re-took Al-Amarah and set about helping the local Police establish their supremacy in the city."*⁴⁴

1.192 As unfortunate and unforeseen outcome of the success of Operation Waterloo was to drive the militia elements from Al Amarah south to Al Majar al'Kabir.

⁴⁰ Brigadier Kennett (ASI024016) [6]

⁴¹ Lieutenant Colonel Maer (ASI023589) [16]

⁴² Lieutenant Colonel Maer (ASI023590) [17]-[18]

⁴³ Major Griffiths (ASI018472-73) [9] [11]

⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Maer (ASI023590) [18]

1.193 Throughout the tour, armed attacks on Coalition forces were frequent, with two strong peaks in April-June and August 2004. A post-operational report by 1PWRR at the time reports over 850 contacts, 250 rocket or mortar attacks, and close to 40 casualties.⁴⁵

3. The environment

1.194 As well as the intensity of the attacks against Coalition forces there were a range of issues with equipment and lack of resources. Ammunition was not always available, whilst the radios used on patrol were often not capable of communicating with the nearest base. The heat of the desert also proved problematic, illustrated by 1st Battalion, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders ("1A&SH") Storeman, Corporal Paul Drury, who explained that gloves had to be worn whilst carrying out work as it was not possible to touch metal in such high temperatures.⁴⁶

1.195 The Post-Operational Report⁴⁷ for Operation Telic IV, in the section entitled "*Part One – Commander's Overview*" succinctly captures the lasting impression of the tour:

"Op Telic 4 made sustained demands on all concerned. It tested soldiers, systems, processes, equipment and agencies at a tempo and intensity over protracted periods not experienced by the Army for quite some time. The greatest pressures came from the intensity of the violence and the summer heat...The most telling lesson is that the tempo, intensity and violence of the Operation defied all predictions."

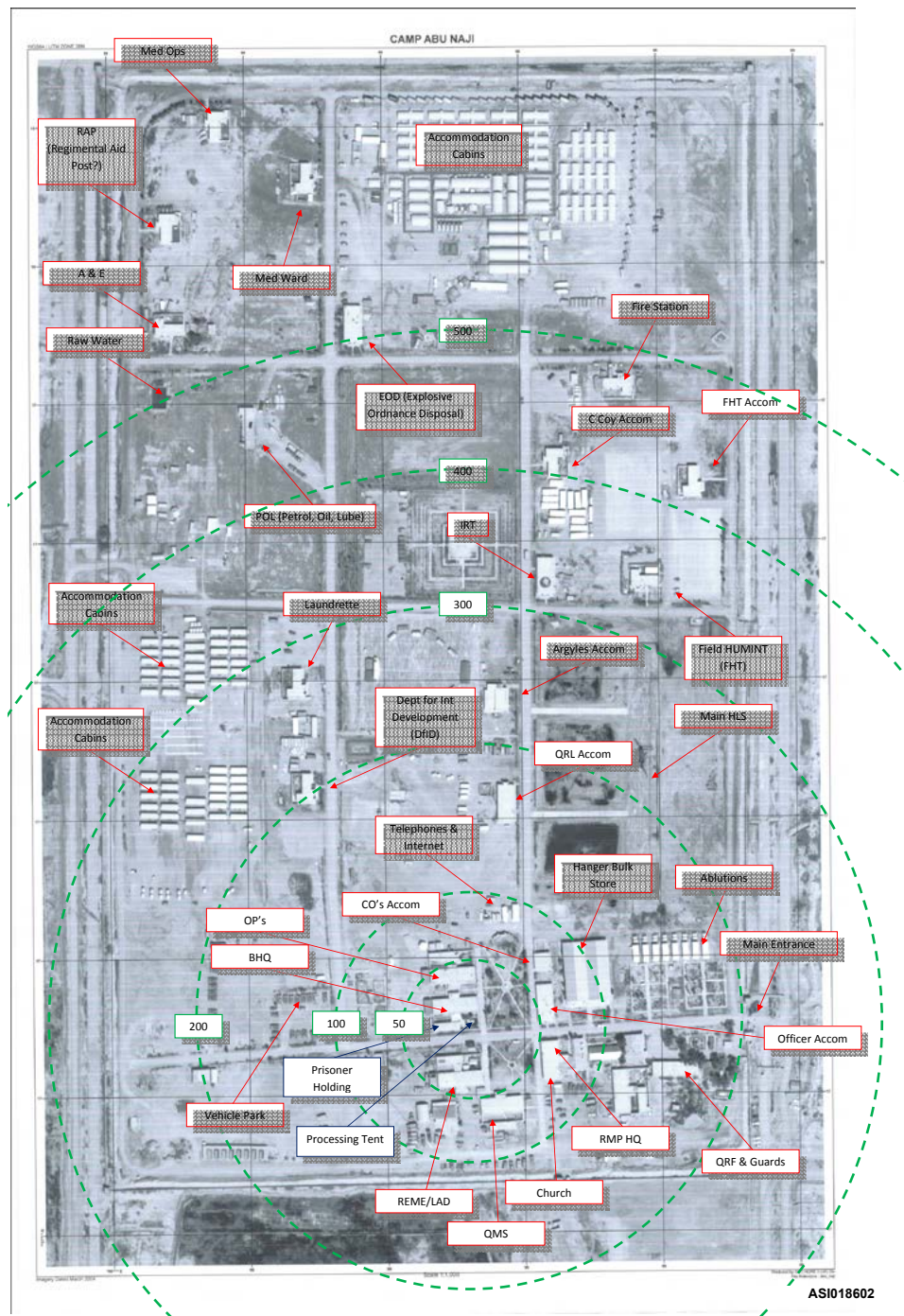
Camp Abu Naji

1.196 Camp Abu Naji (CAN) was the largest British Army base in Maysan province, and was used as the headquarters for 1st Battalion, Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment ("1PWRR"). The figure below shows the layout of CAN.

⁴⁵ (MOD047177)

⁴⁶ Corporal Drury [99/31/19-20]

⁴⁷ (MOD042025)



The Divisional Temporary Detention Facility at Shaibah

1.197 During Operation Telic IV, the United Kingdom maintained a Divisional Temporary Detention Facility ("DTDF") at the Shaibah Logistics Base, just outside Basra, to detain Iraqis who were considered to be a threat to the security of Coalition forces and other Iraqis. The DTDF opened in December 2003 and had the capacity to hold 180 internees. At this time, detention facilities run by the United Kingdom were inspected by the International Committee of the Red Cross ("ICRC"). During Op Telic IV, the DTDF was initially run by 1st Royal Highland Fusiliers ("1RHF") under the command of Major David Richmond who was succeeded by Major Anthony De Reya of Command Company, 40 Commando, in mid June 2004.