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8 September 2016

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Dear [REDACTED],

Further to my letter of 2 August, I have now completed the public interest test on the information contained within the information you requested, which was as follows:

"The report that I wrote analysing post conflict stabilisation of Iraq, 'Operations in Iraq: An Analysis From a Land Perspective' (Land Command, 31 August 2010), is cited in Chapter 14 of the Chilcot report. I attach the cover of the document.

Might be possible now be declassified? I don't believe that there is anything in it that would aid our actual and potential enemies. And the candour of the report and the support and encouragement I was given by the then senior leadership of the Army stands testament to its willingness to learn hard lessons. Of course many of the relevant lessons were then applied in Afghanistan. I would be willing to say so in public, when it was made publically available."

You may wish to be aware that the Ministry of Defence had made the decision to release the document you requested in appropriately redacted form within three months of the Iraq Inquiry publishing its report. It was, therefore, intended to release the document you requested by 7 October in any event.

The information you have requested can be found attached, but some of the information falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemptions provided for at sections 40 (Personal Data) and sections 23 (Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters), and qualified exemptions provided for at sections 26 (Defence) and 27 (International Relations) of the FOIA and has been redacted.

The absolute exemptions do not require a public interest test in making a decision to withhold the information. Under section 40 I have withheld any information that identifies individuals who are not considered in the public domain such as names and faces of junior British and foreign military personnel.

As section 26 (Defence) and section 27 (International Relations) are qualified exemptions, the Department is required to decide where the balance of the public interest lies in releasing or withholding the information. The public interest test required me to consider the arguments for and against release of the information concerned. The arguments for include the promotion of accountability and transparency of the Army as well as public awareness of Government agencies and the Army that operated in Iraq.

The arguments against include the compromise of future military operations, the safety of our personnel and the effect the release of information may have on our relations with allies, which

could also have an impact on future operations and security of our country. Having considered the arguments both for and against release of the information concerned I have concluded that the arguments against release outweigh those for release as it is likely to be prejudicial to, or cause damage to, our Armed Forces, our personnel and to our relationships with key allies.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

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Yours sincerely,


Disclosure & Litigation Leader

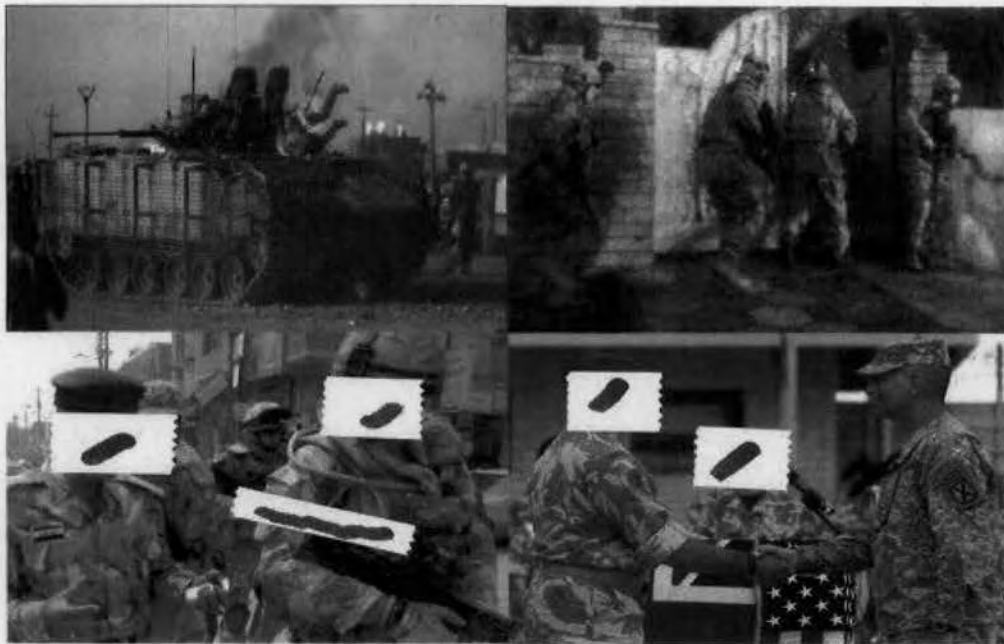
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OPERATIONS IN IRAQ
JANUARY 2005 – MAY 2009
(OP TELIC 5 – 13)

AN ANALYSIS FROM THE LAND PERSPECTIVE



29 Nov 10

Prepared under the direction of
The Chief of the General Staff

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This publication is issued under the overall direction of the Assistant Chief of the General Staff on behalf of the Chief of General Staff.

Distribution

As directed by Commander Land Warfare Development Group, who is the sponsor of this publication.

Front Cover. The front cover shows (left to right, top to bottom): The 'Jameat Incident', a strike operation during the 'War against the JAM', a MiTT working with the IA after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the handover ceremony between HQ MNDSE (HQ AMPHIBFOR) and the US led HQ MNDC

OPERATION TELIC JAN 05 – JUN 09 GENERAL STAFF ANALYSIS

FOREWORD

By Major General Richard Barrons CBE, Assistant Chief of the General Staff

The Army has already published two reports analysing Op TELIC from a land perspective¹. These covered the initial intervention and stability operations until the first Iraqi elections in January 2005. This report identifies the Land Component tactical lessons of Op TELIC from January 2005 to June 2009, in order to inform the conduct of current tactical land operations in Afghanistan, future operations and the work to develop Army structures and refine capability requirements in the Land Environment.

During the period of this report the situation in Iraq was constantly changing. There are relatively few members of the British armed forces who have a genuine understanding of the full ebb and flow of the land campaign during this period. The six month tour length of most of our people means that their experience has given them snapshots rather than a panoramic overview of Op TELIC. So the study contains a narrative history of the course of the Coalition campaign and of events in Multinational Division South East. The “reasons why” events took the course they did are analysed in a commentary on land operations. This is followed by eleven chapters that analyse particular themes.

The analysis is based upon the Land Warfare Centre’s archive of post tour reports and interviews, as well as discussions with many who served in Iraq during the period. It has also sought input from the US Army and our multinational partners in MNDSE. Key findings were discussed at the Iraq Lessons conference held at the Land Warfare Centre in January 2010. The lessons and insights have been validated by a reference group of serving and retired general officers with extensive experience of the campaign. The report has also been calibrated against the testimony of all the military witnesses who gave evidence to the Iraq Inquiry up to 29 July 2010. These include the majority of commanders of MNDSE and UK deputy commanders of MNE-I.

The centre of gravity of the report is the land environment tactical level. The report excludes low level tactics, techniques and procedures. It concentrates on land operations from battlegroup to corps level, including the interfaces between Land and the other components. It seeks to identify lessons relevant to the UK from US operations in Iraq. It does not analyse or comment on operational and strategic issues. As ever, the strategic, operational and tactical levels often overlapped resulting in a political dimension to tactical operations. This was exemplified not only by the attacks by Al Qaeda and the US surge, but also by the two attacks mounted on the notorious Jameat police station as well

¹ This period was covered by the original two studies: “*Operations in Iraq – An Analysis from a Land Perspective*” Army Code 71816 dated Feb 2005 and “*Stability Operations in Iraq – An Analysis from a Land Perspective*” Army Code 71844 dated Jul 2006.

as Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. For this reason the UK and US strategic contexts and their implications for land operations are explained.

Some of the lessons and insights may only be relevant to the unique circumstances of Op TELIC. Most have direct applicability to our operations in Afghanistan. Many of these have been learned, in whole or in part and others are subject to action under Op ENTIRETY². A significant number may have longer term implications, not only for stabilisation operations, but for the land component across the spectrum of conflict. This particularly applies to the fighting against the militias, where tactical combat was often as intense as that experienced elsewhere.

Some of the analysis may be controversial. Some may make uncomfortable reading. As professional soldiers, we owe it to ourselves and our people to be honest about what went well on operations and what could have been done better. As Kipling wrote after the Boer War; *"we have had no end of a lesson, it will do us no end of good"*³.

It is also the case that all our operations in Iraq were subject to great friction and uncertainty. The disintegration of Iraq society and governance after the war, the difficulties in implementing the comprehensive approach all contributed, as did the intense frustration of many Iraqis that the Coalition was taking too long to improve their lot. And the summer heat was an oppressive force of nature that can only be fully appreciated by those who soldiered through it – especially armoured vehicle crews. That so many of our people, from the Army, the other two Services, and civilian staff, achieved as much as they did in such difficult circumstances and in a war that was increasingly unpopular at home, is tribute to their training, leadership, ethos and dogged ability to defeat adversity.

² Op ENTIRETY is the execution of Campaign Footing to meet CinC's intent to ensure that LF is resourced, structured and prepared - conceptually, morally and physically - for success in Afghanistan and then other subsequent hybrid operations. Responsibility for delivering LF onto a Campaign Footing sits with Commander Field Army (CFA).

³ Rudyard Kipling 'The Lesson', first published in 'The Times', 29 Jul 1901.

PREFACE

1. This report analyses the land environment tactical lessons from the Iraq campaign over the period Jan 05 – Jun 09. The analysis is of the tactical level from Corps level down. Where Military Strategic or Operational level issues that have impacted on the conduct of tactical level operations have been identified they have been highlighted as fact, but any exploration of the rationale behind them left to an appropriate higher level study. This report is to inform:
 - a. The conduct of current and future Land operations.
 - b. Wider Army development, including Future Army Structures (Next Steps).
 - c. Equipment capability requirements in the Land Environment.
2. **Structure.** The analysis comprises:
 - a. **Executive Summary.**
 - b. **Narrative History.** This describes both Coalition and UK land operations during the period. It includes a number of tactical vignettes but no insights or lessons.
 - c. **Commentary.** This illuminates the ebb and flow of the land campaign at the tactical level. It assesses UK influence over Coalition land operations and the consequences of the campaign for the reputation of UK Land forces.
 - d. **Chapter 1 (Understanding)** looks at our doctrinal understanding of the conflict and the Iraqi environment.
 - e. **Chapter 2 (Inform)** focuses on ISTAR, including capabilities and provision of intelligence to tactical commanders.
 - f. **Chapter 3 (Command and Control)** examines the tactical effect of our national C2 arrangements, and the C2 implications of working in a multi-national and multi-agency environment. CIS and tactical C2 are also covered.
 - g. **Chapter 4 (Operate and Protect)** examines the tactical conduct of the Land campaign, from formation operations through to battlegroup operations. Protection from IEDs and indirect fire is analysed as are lessons that can be learnt from our enemies.
 - h. **Chapter 5 (The Tactical Contribution to the Comprehensive Approach)** examines our attempts to achieve an integrated whole of government approach.
 - i. **Chapter 6 (Security Sector Reform)** looks at the Coalition and UK approaches to military and police capacity building.

- j. **Chapter 7 (Information and Media Operations)** explores our ability to conduct what is now known as Influence Activity.
- k. **Chapter 8 (Equipment and Logistics)** examines the utility of our equipment, the UOR process, CSS doctrine, C2, training and force protection. This includes equipment care, asset tracking and the use of contractors.
- l. **Chapter 9 (People and Medical)** covers the manning of the operation by both regular and reserve personnel, medical capabilities, G1 preparation, the home front and deployed welfare.
- m. **Chapter 10 (Prepare)** describes the challenges of preparing individuals, units and formations for Op TELIC.
- n. **Chapter 11 (Flexibility and Adaptability of the UK Land Component)** analyses the extent to which the UK Land component succeeded in adapting to the requirements of Op TELIC.

3. **Audience.** *Operations in Iraq: An Analysis from the Land Perspective* is aimed primarily at British Army unit, Formation and Command Headquarters commanders, and staffs. It has utility for the Royal Marines and the RAF Regiment as well as joint staffs and civilians operating in the Land environment.

4. **Vignettes.** Tactical vignettes are included, both to highlight aspects of operations in Iraq as well as testament to the courage, fortitude and professionalism of those deployed in harms way.

5. **Writing Team.** This report was produced by an ad hoc team led by Brig Ben Barry OBE. The other members changed through the project. They included N [REDACTED] 9/12L, Lt Col [REDACTED] DSO HCR, [REDACTED] RHA, [REDACTED] R SIGNALS, [REDACTED] MERCIAN and [REDACTED] SCOTS. It was supported at Warminster by DGLW and the LWC's Lessons Exploitation Centre and Afghan COIN Centre. Especial thanks are due to [REDACTED]
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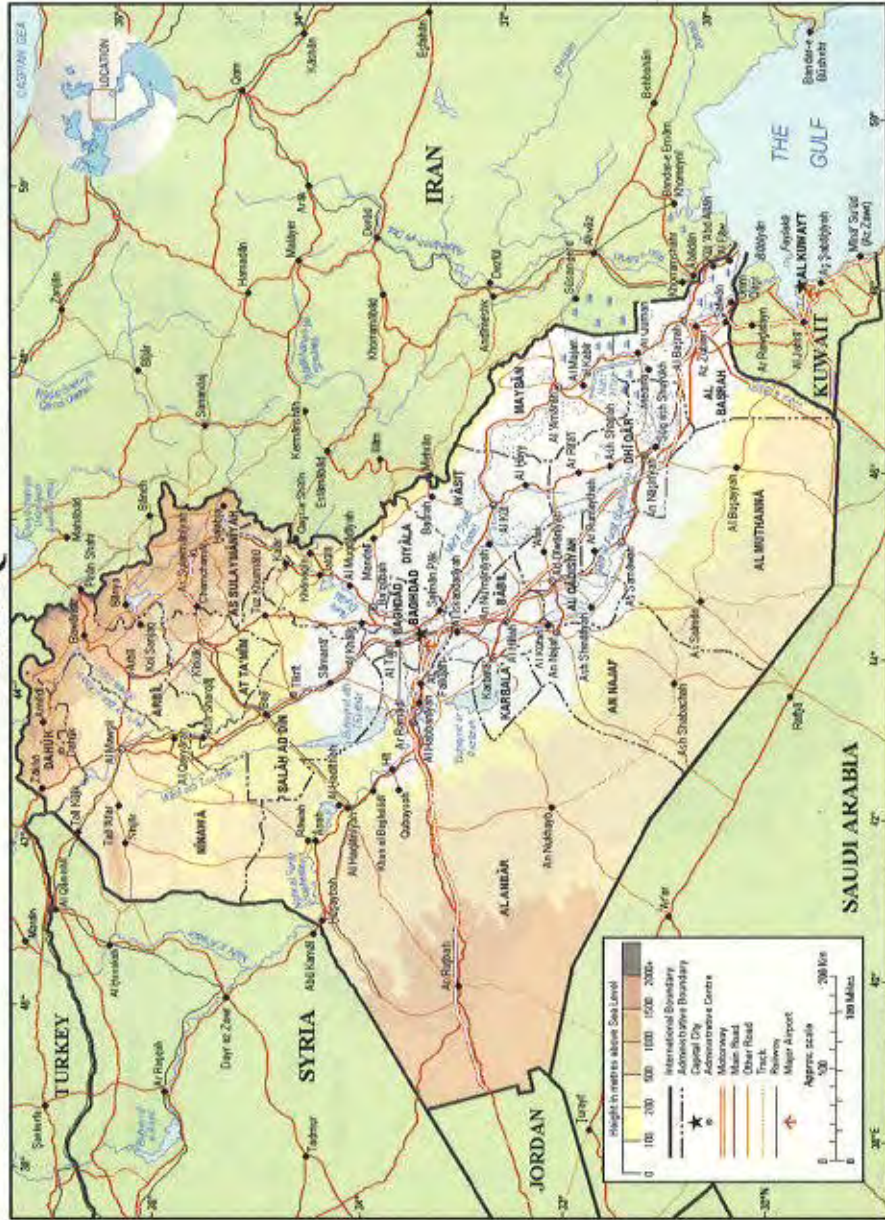
OP TELIC CAMPAIGN TIMELINE 2005-2009

2005	
Mar	13 SofS Defence announces UK military contribution will reduce by c800 over course of May roulement.
May	01 12 Mech Bde replaces 4 Armd Bde. OP TELIC 6
	05 UK General Election.
	06 John Reid takes over as Secretary of State for Defence.
Jun	-- HQ AMPHIBFOR takes over as MNDSE.
Jul	07 London Bombings.
Sep	19 'Jameat Incident'
Oct	12 Responsibility for training the Iraqi Police transferred from FCO to MOD.
Nov	01 7 Armd Bde replaces 4 Armd Bde. OP TELIC 7
Dec	08 HQ 1 (UK) Armd Div takes over as HQ MNDSE.
	15 Iraqi General Election.
2006	
Feb	22 The Shi'a Golden Mosque in Samarra is destroyed by AQI terrorists.
Mar	13 SofS Defence announces plans to reduce force levels in Iraq to c7,200.
	16 Iraqi Parliament inaugurated.
Apr	31 20 Armd replaces 7 Armd Bde . OP TELIC 8
May	06 Lynx shot down in Basra killing all five onboard.
	20 Maliki becomes Iraqi Prime Minister and forms a government.
Jun	02 PM Maliki announces state of emergency in Basra.
Jul	-- HQ 3 UK Div takes over as HQ MNDSE
	13 Al Muthanna Province transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control.
Aug	30 UK extracts from Camp Abu Naji in Maysan Province.
Sep	19 Iraqi Government vetoes Op SALAMANCA and Op SINBAD launched instead.
	21 Dhi Qar Province transferred to Provincial Iraqi control.
Nov	12 Four UK military personnel killed by an IED attack on their boat on the Shatt Al-Arab.
	15 19 Lt Bde replaces 20 Armd Bde. OP TELIC 9
Dec	20 An-Najaf Province transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control.
	25 At Iraqi Government request, UK troops launch op to disband Basra Serious Crimes Unit based at the Jameat police station. Provincial Council stops contact with UK forces in protest.
	30 Saddam Hussein executed.
2007	
Jan	01 Op ZENITH begins.
	-- 'Shawforce' takes over as HQ MNDSE.
	10 US President Bush announces 'Surge' strategy.
Feb	20 10 (IA) Div transfers from Coalition to Iraqi command.
	21 Prime Minister announces plans to reduce UK forces to c5,500 following handover of Basra Palace.
Mar	20 Old State Building transferred to the Iraqi Army.
Apr	05 Four soldiers killed in IED attack west of Basra.
	08 Shatt Al Arab Hotel (Basra Operations Centre) handed over to the Iraqi Army.

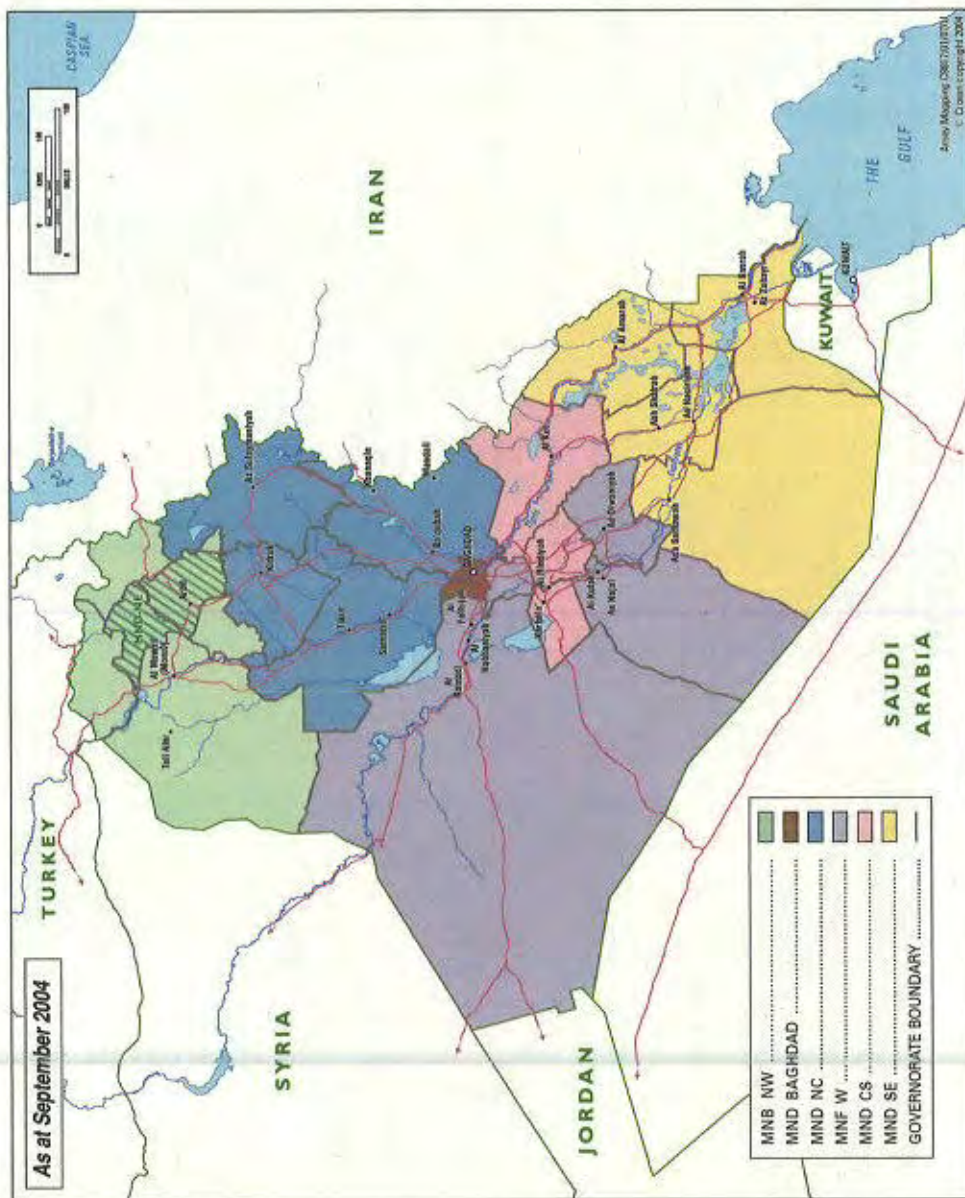
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	18	Maysan Province handed over to Provincial Iraqi Control.
	24	Shaibah Base handed over to the Iraqi Army.
Jun	01	1 Mech Bde replaces 19 Lt Bde. OP TELIC 10
Jul	16	Iraqi order to form 14 (IA) Div, responsible for Basra Province. 14 (IA) Div now focus of UK efforts.
	19	Three UK Service personnel killed in an IDF attack on the COB.
Aug	--	HQ 1 UK Armd Div takes over as HQ MNDSE
	25	British troops leave the Provincial Joint Coordination centre.
	29	Muqtada al-Sadr freezes JAM activity for 6 months (subsequently extended).
Sep	05	Basra Palace handed over to Iraqi Army.
Oct	08	PM Brown announces UK force reductions anticipating a reduction from 5,000 to c2,500 by Spring 2008.
Nov	30	4 Mech Bde replaces 1 Mech Bde. OP TELIC 11
Dec	04	All political parties in Basra sign an agreement to respect the rule of law.
	16	Basra Province transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control. UK force levels reduce to c4,500.
2008		
Feb	--	HQ 3 UK Div takes over as MNDSE
	22	Muqtada al-Sadr announces that JAM ceasefire will be maintained.
Mar	23	At Iraqi National Security meeting PM Maliki announces Op Charge of the Knights.
	25	PM Maliki launches Op Charge of the Knights.
Apr	01	SoFS Defence updates Parliament on Op Charge of the Knights and announces pause in UK force reductions.
May	10	Iraqi Government and JAM sign 10 point ceasefire agreement.
	13	Op Charge of the Knights conducted outside of Basra for the first time.
	21	Iraqi Security Forces start conducting operations in Sadr City.
	31	7 Armd Bde replaces 4 Mech Bde. OP TELIC 12
Aug	--	HQ 3 UK Div takes over as MNDSE
Nov	25	Residual Coalition responsibilities for Muthanna, Dhi Qar and Maysan provinces transferred to MND Centre.
	30	20 Armd Bde replace 7 Armd Bde. OP TELIC 13
Dec	18	PM confirms UK forces would complete mentoring 14(IA) Div by 31 May 09 and withdraw by 31 Jul 09.
	30	Iraq/UK bilateral MOU signed.
2009		
Jan	31	Iraqi Provincial Elections.
Mar	31	UK-led MNDSE and US-led MND Centre merge to form MND South under US command.
Apr	30	Formal completion of UK military mission in southern Iraq.

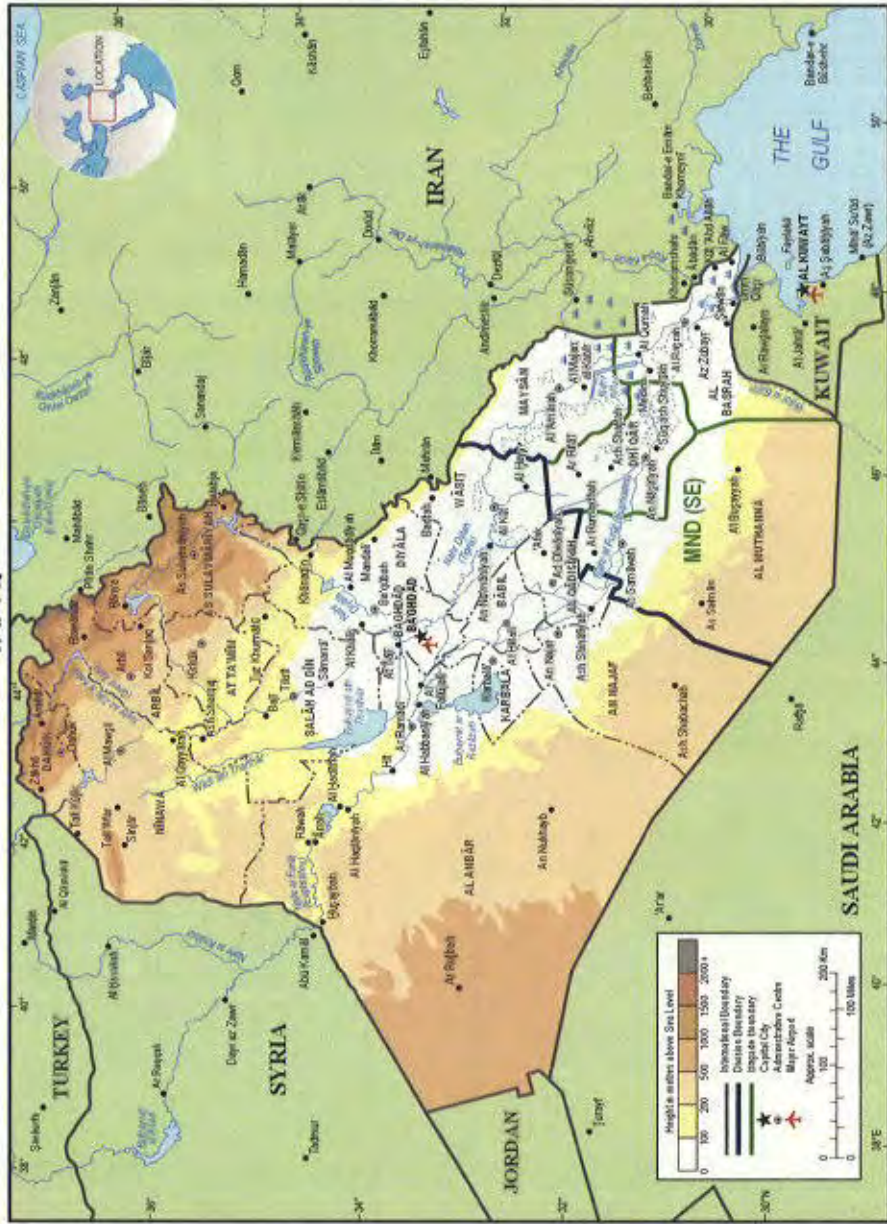
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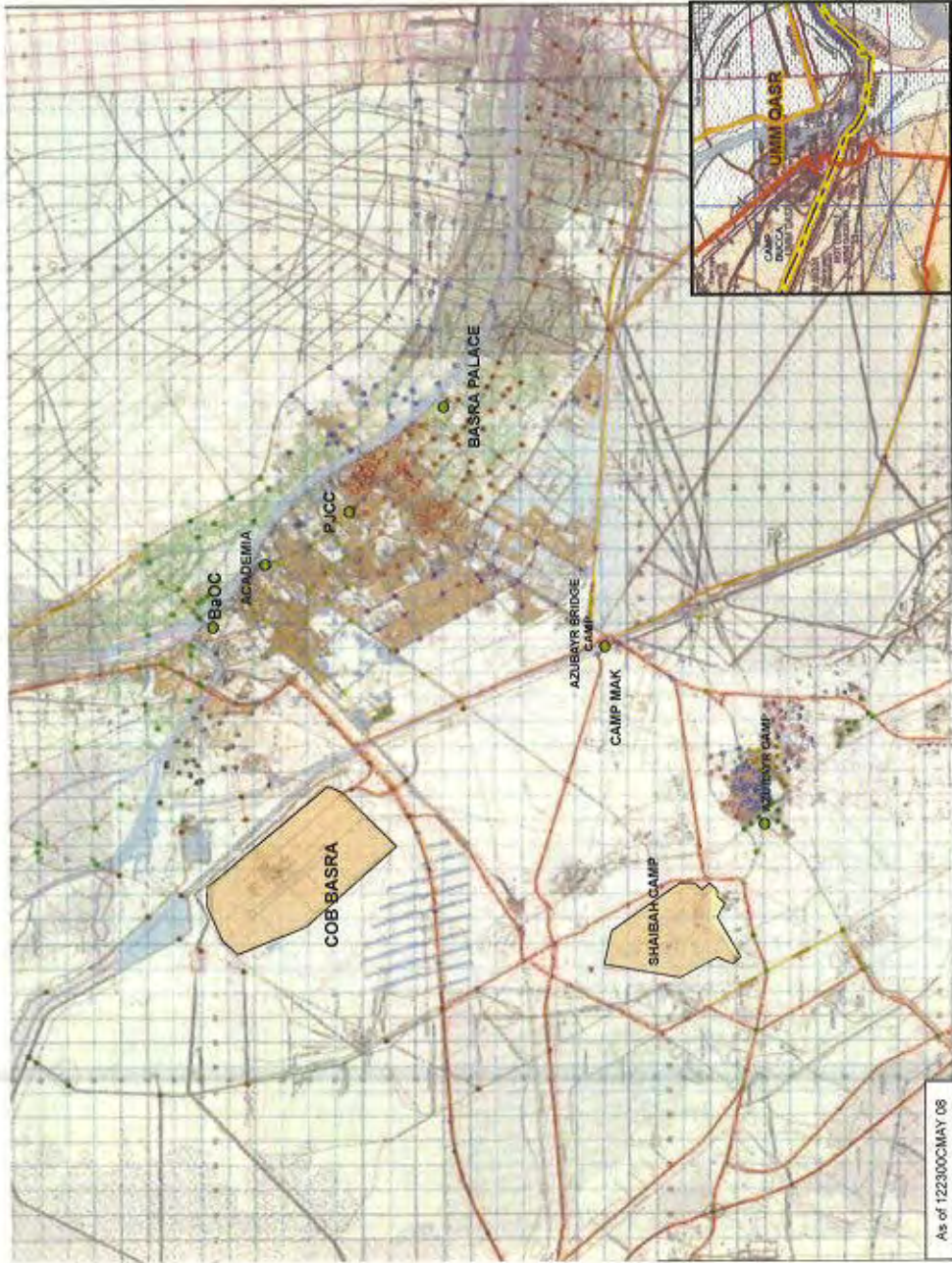
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IRAQ



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The way an Army learns from its experience is a true measure of its professionalism"
ADP Land Operations May 2005.

1. The Army that entered Iraq in 2003 had a 25 year record of successes from Northern Ireland (NI), Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, the Falkland Islands, Op DESERT STORM, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Macedonia and the initial phase of the International Stabilisation and Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan. In all these cases our opponents were usually of lower quality than us, were mostly unwilling to stand and fight and were overmatched by our all-arms and joint warfighting capabilities. All these operations were supported by Parliament, public and the media.
2. War in a broken country against enemies who rejected Western values and were prepared to stand, fight and die was always going to be challenging. The early failure of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the UK's inability to have a positive impact on the Iraqi citizens in MNDSE, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction and the rising toll of casualties rapidly eroded public support in the UK. HMG did not appear to have produced a fully integrated interagency strategy for southern Iraq until Jan 09. Defence never adapted to the Iraq campaign in the way it is now doing for Afghanistan. From mid 2006, the concurrent medium scale operation in Afghanistan competed with Iraq for resources, media coverage and intellectual horsepower. When the US decided to surge in Jan 07, UK and US strategies, operational approach and tactics diverged until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS over a year later.
3. The UK land component was faced with far greater challenges than it had experienced since the Korean War. Most of our people, units, and formations performed well, often outstandingly so. But we were not as effective as we could have been. This summary offers pointers to improving the land component's effectiveness for Afghanistan and beyond.

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE CONFLICT

4. **"What Kind of War Were We In?"** Although events in Iraq often defied simple characterisation, UK and US experience reinforces the importance of answering the question posed by Clausewitz. Throughout the campaign, the operational and tactical environments were extremely complex. For most of this period, US and Iraqi Government efforts were concentrated on the Sunni/AQI insurgencies. MNF-I regarded the Shia as a different and less serious problem, to be dealt with once the Sunni insurgency had been successfully countered. And the links between Shia political parties, government members and militias with death squads further inhibited major action against the Shia. So MNDSE's role was often regarded as 'economy of force'. It was not Main Effort. This only changed in 2008.
5. **"What Kind of War Was MNDSE In?"** In 2004-05 many considered the situation in MNDSE to have more in common with PSO than anything else. It was in 2006 that MNDSE formally characterised the operation as COIN, but until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS there were insufficient UK troops or Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to execute a COIN approach in MNDSE,

including securing the population. Throughout this building the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) was a significant requirement as was media and information operations. And the Iraqi authorities became increasingly assertive and less malleable as time went on. This meant that tactical commanders from GOC MNDSE downwards had to deal with a much more complex situation than on British operations in the previous century. It tested our understanding to the limit and sometimes beyond it.

6. **Transition Fails and the US Surges.** At the beginning of this period the Coalition strategy was Transition; handing security over to the Iraqis as soon as possible. This neither built up ISF capability sufficiently, nor neutralised the Sunni/AQI insurgency. The exception were Al Qaim and Tal Afar where classic COIN 'clear hold build' operations with sufficient US and Iraqi forces succeeded, and Ramadi where a similar approach and the successful US embrace of tribes that were willing to fight AQI created a potential campaign tipping point – although this was not widely recognised at the time. In Jan 07 Transition was replaced by a US strategy of surging additional troops to protect the population, to create sufficient security and the space for reconciliation and political progress. Reinforcing US brigades were used to counter the Sunni/AQI insurgency, deploying to Sunni areas in and around Baghdad and Sunni/Shi'a interfaces. Hardline Shia strongholds such as Sadr City were not at this stage contested. This succeeded in reversing the deteriorating security situation and, taking advantage of the Anbar Awakening, made significant inroads against the Sunni and Al-Quada in Iraq (AQI) insurgencies.

7. **Increasing Difficulties in MNDSE.** Expectations over progress after the successful elections of Jan 05 were thwarted by local politics, growing influence of Shi'a militias, including over the fragile ISF. And the requirement to counter the new EFP technology fielded by Shi'a militants constrained our ability to conduct SSR, as did the UK decision not to provide MiTTs. The UK maintained the transition policy in MNDSE which worked in Dhi Qar and Al Muthana (probably because of a relatively stable political balance in those provinces) but was problematic in Maysan. Op SALAMANCA, a proposed offensive operation to counter militias in Basra was vetoed by the Iraqi government and replaced by the less ambitious Op SINBAD, which sought to re-establish security, promote regeneration and develop ISF capability. It had some success, but did not change the Basra political dynamic. By now MNDSE was fighting a war with the Basra JAM and heavy fighting took place around our bases and convoys. We responded with intelligence led strike operations. This 'war against the JAM' saw fighting as intense as that anywhere else in Iraq and a high number of UK casualties.

8. **Op ZENITH and the Basra 'Accommodation'.** In early 07 we assessed that the conflict was one of Shi'a internal competition for power and influence, rather than an insurgency against the Iraqi state. And British forces were losing legitimacy with the Baswaris. So Op ZENITH withdrew UK forces from Basra, to force the Iraqi authorities to recognise the militia problem and deal with it. This was supported by MNF-I and the new Basra security commander Gen Mohan. He assessed that the UK presence in the city was distorting normal politics and prompting nationalist Baswaris to fight us as occupiers and to gain political credibility. He wanted British forces to move out of Basra city to reduce this, thus undercutting support for the JAM. At the time Prime Minister Maliki was unwilling and unable to challenge Shi'a extremists politically. MNF-I priorities were the AQI/Sunni insurgency US forces were not contesting JAM held areas in Baghdad, MNF-I

intending to address Shi'a extremism only after the Sunni/AGI insurgencies were neutralised. An 'accommodation' was negotiated between MNDSE and potentially reconcilable elements of the Basra JAM. The UK ceased attacking the JAM, withdrew from Basra Palace, the remaining UK base in the city, and JAM attacks greatly reduced. It was intended that this would encourage more responsible JAM elements to move towards legitimate politics and against Iranian influence. But the ISF were not yet capable of confronting the militias. The lack of ISTAR capabilities and UK MiTTs embedded in the ISF meant that MNDSE lost the situational awareness required for overwatch as required by MNC-I, although this was not apparent at the time.

9. **Maliki Redefines Basra Militias as Insurgents.** A joint UK/ISF plan for a deliberate operation to clear Basra was overtaken by the surprise decision of PM Maliki to clear the JAM from Basra at 48 hours notice. After an inevitably shaky start, Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS became an effective Iraqi surge into Basra with US and UK support. By concentrating sufficient ground troops, AH and armed UAVs, visibly putting the Iraqi Army in the lead and exploiting an Iranian-brokered JAM ceasefire, it restored security months earlier than MNDSE and Gen Mohan had planned. The US surge had created the security and political conditions to allow PM Maliki to take on the Shi'a extremists and their militias. If there had been no surge, the campaign would almost certainly have failed, as would have the UK approach in Basra. By ordering Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, Maliki confronted the JAM and redefined the militia and Iranian supported 'special groups' as insurgents. The lack of UK situational awareness at the start of the operation required deployment of MNC-I's TOC and additional US assets. This and a relative lack of understanding of our operations in Baghdad resulted in reputational damage, with the US, the Iraqis and the media.

10. **The UK Endgame.** The success of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS required MNDSE to field MiTTs to mentor the ISF, further develop their capability and conduct ISR and strike operations against irreconcilable JAM IED and IDF teams. The improved security situation meant that the main effort could gradually shift to energising and supporting delivery of the comprehensive approach with the UK PRT, Consul General, US REO and Basra Development Commission. This set the conditions for relief in place by the US and a successful withdrawal in good G4 order – Op BROCKDALE.

11. **Lessons for the Future.** These events reflect the changing nature of our opponents, the Coalition campaign and Shi'a politics within Iraq. They illustrate the complexity of modern operations, provide another example of the 'three block war', but in a highly challenging dynamic multinational and interagency setting. A lesson for future coalition operations is that **having a UK land tactical force operate to different strategy, operational design or tactical approach to the rest of the coalition land component creates risk of tactical incoherence. Whilst this *might* be manageable, the enemy, Coalition, other actors or unforeseen events *may* expose these contradictions, resulting in effects that *could* produce strategic, operational, tactical or presentational shocks**, such as resulted from Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. Other lessons include:

- a. As we found in NI and the Balkans, there can be considerable overlap between insurgents, organised criminals and political and religious extremists and death squads. And crime and extortion often fund enemy activity.

- b. The nature of the conflict and the utility of force must be regularly re-assessed at every level from the tactical to the strategic.
- c. All levels of the force must achieve a shared understanding. For example, the term 'transition' seems to have been differently understood in Basra and Baghdad

12. **Iraqi Political Factors.** Tactical success in Iraq depended upon the political climate and context. There were a number of operations where the Iraqi authorities had given prior consent, only for the outcome of the operation to be retrospectively repudiated by the same authorities. For example the destruction of the Jameat police station on Christmas Day 2006 and a US operation in 2007 to interdict Shi'a death squads operating from Sadr City that was vetoed by Maliki. A probable reason for this is that the operations were so close to the envelope of Iraqi governmental sensitivities, that by succeeding they threatened that government's political support. Another factor may be our lack of understanding. It is not clear that all our plans began with the Iraqi viewpoint and considered outcomes and the future from their perspective not ours. It is likely that we tended to do better when we worked with the forces in Iraqi society, not against them, and that we were more likely to fail or be rejected by the Iraqis when we imposed solutions on them.

UNDERSTANDING

13. **Language and Culture.** The language and cultural understanding capabilities deployed on Op TELIC by the Army were never adequate.
14. **Continuity.** Given the intensity of tactical operations, battlegroup tour intervals of six months appeared to be the right balance for troops engaged in high intensity operations. But the US Army on 12-15 month tours achieved greater campaign continuity than we did. We failed to achieve the continuity we had during the NI campaign. We handicapped ourselves by allowing brigade commanders to change over in mid tour (5 different brigade commanders in Basra over 18 months in 2004/05) and allowing mid tour rotation of COs, OCs and key staff officers, including divisional COS. Requests for basing of continuity personnel on longer accompanied tours in Kuwait were denied. The Army seems at times to have prioritised the manning of peacetime UK and multinational posts over operational posts. It is not clear that we used evidence of proven credibility with US forces (or the opposite) as a factor in selection of personnel for Baghdad. This apparent 'business as usual' approach to manning undermined our effectiveness and our credibility with the Iraqis and with the US.
15. **Doctrine.** It appears that UK forces on Op TELIC thought that they had a better doctrinal understanding of the conflict than the US Army. By the end of the campaign this was not so. Although some UK senior officers had a grasp of COIN, the Army no longer had a widespread and deep professional understanding of it. The vast majority of our middle ranking and junior officers had received little or no education or training in COIN between 1997 and 2008, it having been largely displaced from the Staff College syllabus by peace support operations. Much of people's previous experience of the Balkans or the latter stage of the NI campaign was not as relevant as we

thought at the time and may have misled as much as it informed. Although the Army had adequate and relevant COIN doctrine published in 2001, it had not been widely read. COIN was not taught to RN and RAF officers in this period, and there was no joint COIN doctrine. Although the US Army came from an even weaker corporate understanding, it learned on the job faster than we did, and rapidly wrote new doctrine, which was quickly published, taught and applied. US COIN experts, both academic and military, formed a view that many of us did not understand our COIN heritage. The Army's new COIN doctrine was not published until after we left Iraq.

INFORM - ISTAR

16. Cultural differences from UK and difficulties of gathering intelligence in advance of hostilities meant that intelligence was always going to be harder to achieve than in NI, Balkans or Sierra Leone. But we should have grown our understanding and ISTAR capabilities faster and deeper. Our experience from colonial campaigns and NI showed that for COIN the land component needed to field an expanded and decentralised tactical intelligence organisation down to company level, and use it to drive operations. In 2003 this approach was used by both covert and framework troops in Bosnia and Kosovo. MNDSE's tactical G2 capability developed at a much slower speed than we had built the NI intelligence architecture in the early 1970s. Even by TELIC 13 some key capabilities were at lower levels than they had reached in NI by the mid 1970s. For example an intelligence database was fielded too late and was never fully populated.

17. Initially there was difficulty in adapting standard intelligence processes into a more integrated targeting approach. This was despite this being the core of TCG⁴ operations in NI and intelligence-led operations in the Balkans.

[REDACTED] These had effect, but were often dangerously [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Capabilities improved when airborne ISTAR increased, but this was concurrent with a reduction of the [REDACTED] capability in Iraq for redeployment in Afghanistan. A static covert surveillance capability was provided by specially trained brigade surveillance companies. Although these found urban operations difficult, they contributed to rural and border operations.

18. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS showed that we had inadequate understanding of Basra following Provincial Iraqi Control, owing to lack of UK embeds in the ISF and lack of ISTAR. Future similar transitions will require UK forces in overwatch to have more ISTAR rather than less. Op TELIC also reinforced the importance of detention for both force protection and intelligence, and its associated legal and presentational risks.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Exploitation, be it material or personnel, was not as coherent or as well resourced as it needed to be.

19. Operations in NI and the Balkans and police practice in the UK had shown the value of airborne ISTAR not only for surveillance, but also overtly providing 'top cover' for troops on the

⁴ Tasking and Co-ordination Groups were used by RUC Special Branch, with military support to manage covert operations in Northern Ireland.

ground by deterring attacks. Fielding Hermes 450 and Desert Hawk, helped, but it was only during Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS that MNDSE had sufficient airborne ISTAR capability. For example, there was never enough ISTAR to meet the requirement for C-IED road watch.

20. Even in the final year of Op TELIC all commanders still considered intelligence and ISTAR capabilities inadequate, and in some areas to be behind those capabilities fielded over the same time span in the first decade of the Northern Ireland campaign. There is overwhelming evidence of a comprehensive failure to generate an adequate tactical intelligence capability. This appears to have resulted from failure to institutionalise the NI intelligence capability, significant weaknesses in almost every area of intelligence direction, collection, analysis, dissemination as well as the support the land component received from the Int Corps and the ISTAR capability staffs.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

21. **General.** The high level C2 of Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) acting as a 'theatre-strategic HQ' (US term) with MNC-I as corps HQ and MNSTC-I responsible for military and police capability building worked well. It showed the value of separating the high level political/military HQ from the HQ executing the land campaign.

22. **Coalition Command Relationships.** For the majority of the campaign the UK effort in Southern Iraq was not treated either by the UK or US as an integrated part of a unified effort. To MNC-I it was an economy of force operation. Up to May 08, MNDSE was never the Corps Main Effort. It appears that commanders and staff in Basra often saw their primary command relationship as being with the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) rather than MNC-I. This seems to have developed by mutual consent. So MNDSE did not always effectively engage MNC-I and tended to seek assistance not from MNC-I, but from the UK. Coalition assets, including air, were therefore not exploited to the full.

23. **Mutual Understanding.** PM Maliki's surprise decision to launch Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the resulting deployment of the MNC-I Tactical Operations Centre to Basra was a strategic, operational, tactical and reputational shock. It showed that there had been little mutual understanding between the MNC-I and MNDSE staffs. In the short term, frank talking by Commander 4 Armoured Brigade as acting GOC, rapid fielding of UK Military Transition Teams (MiTT) and US fielding their Communications Information Services (CIS) and Blue Force Tracker managed the consequences. Subsequently MNDSE went out of its way to fully engage MNC-I.

24. **Campaign Management.** The land campaign being executed by MNC-I does not appear to have been as well understood in PJHQ and MOD as it should have been. The lesson is that to maximise campaign coherence and multi-national unity of effort, there should be a single campaign plan, owned by the multi-national in-theatre headquarters in which all tactical plans are nested. British military influence should be focussed at formulation and execution of the campaign plan and establishing clear situational awareness at the theatre level. So our NCC is best placed at the theatre headquarters, to influence the campaign plan and establish unambiguous situational awareness. This would be the best place to de-conflict any British land tactical issues with the coalition plan, rather than leaving it to the UK land tactical commander to do.

25. **Unity of Effort.** UK interagency unity of effort from grand strategic to tactical level was sub-optimal for much of this period, thus limiting the land component's effectiveness. Full tactical inter-agency unity of effort seems only to have been achieved in 2008, after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

26. **US/UK Interoperability.** Although policy and Army doctrine envisaged a high probability of a UK formation being subordinated to a higher US formation, the evidence of Iraq is that we had underestimated the challenges this would pose, especially for organisation, training and CIS interoperability. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the way we recovered shows that we need to better understand how a UK formation should integrate into US C2. This has implications for CIS capability, connectivity, MS appointing, doctrine and individual and collective training. HQ Amphibious Force (AMPHIBFOR) found their two United States Marine Corps (USMC) exchange officers invaluable in allowing them to better engage MNC-I and employ US troops allocated to them. All this points to a strong case to for establishing US/UK exchange posts in both nations' brigade, divisional and corps HQs.

Tactical C2

27. **CIS.** Despite considerable effort devoted to static CIS in bases, agility and speed of response was limited by contractual inflexibility. An all-informed brigade command net was only achieved by brigades equipped with Bowman. We lacked secure ground-air communications and there was considerable electronic fratricide between UK ECM and UK, US and Iraqi communications. There seemed to be no shared understanding of information management or staff duties in the electronic age, reducing the value of deployed IT and the efficiency of staff at every level. This exacerbated the lack of continuity.

28. **Battlegroup HQs.** Battlegroup HQs were required to plan and fight at the same time and co-ordinate not only all arms operations, but also synchronise air and ISTAR assets that previously would have been employed at a much higher level. Brigade HQs exercised many functions previously confined to the divisional level. From TELIC I2 they reconfigured to exploit improving ISTAR and to shorten the sensor-shooter link. There appears to be a need to revisit the size and structure of these HQs, particularly to integrate '21st century combat support'; ISTAR, influence, Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Security Sector Reform (SSR).

29. **Role of Divisional HQ.** US and UK divisional HQs integrated Iraqi forces, Coalition civilian agencies and Iraqi local authorities in order to give tactical direction and co-ordination to brigades, as well as reinforcing them with division level assets and effect including the division's organic combat aviation brigades. MNDSE's ability to do this was from the outset less than that of US divisions and reduced over time as the Italian brigade withdrew and the size of UK forces reduced. Both MNDSE and MNDCS had important roles in integrating multinational forces. Divisional HQs were the focus for the tactical execution of the comprehensive approach at provincial level.

30. **Generation of UK Division HQs.** The US Army only deployed formed established Divisional HQs. They seem to have been very effective, as was the Marine Expeditionary Force

(MEF) HQ in Anbar. We were not as effective at generating cohesive and effective Divisional HQs as we should have been. HQ MNDSE was found both by formed and ad-hoc HQs. The first three of these generated in 2004-05 had too many poor quality UK augmentees, apparently selected on the basis of their penalty statements and were sustained only by some very effective multinational officers. This lesson was learned for the generation of the 'Shawforce' HQ in 2007. The final rotations of HQs 1 and 3 Div saw both HQs leaving large numbers of staff in barracks to manage and prepare their brigades. Only HQ AMPHIBFOR deployed for more than 6 months. Op TELIC suggests that for future enduring operations, the default setting for Divisional HQs should be 12 month tours. From the start of mission specific training they should not be distracted by residual responsibilities outside theatre. Ad-hoc HQs should be seen as the HQs of last resort. If used they should be manned by top quality people and given sufficient time to properly prepare.

31. **Integrated Divisional/Brigade HQ.** The integrated HQ in Basra was based on similar practice to that we employed in Banja Luka during SFOR. It seems to have worked, but by retaining the title of a Divisional HQ, it gave a false impression to many US personnel that it came with a full complement of the divisional combat support capabilities that US divisions had. Should a similar construct be used elsewhere there is a strong case for a different title.

32. **Logistic HQ.** The national logistic chain was commanded by the National Support Element (NSE) and reported direct to the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ). The operational requirements of the various coalition partners were planned and executed in the various 1 or 2* in-theatre formation headquarters. The Joint Force Support Command was created in an attempt to standardise the C2 arrangements in a joint manner, however, inter service friction remained evident between the Army and RAF logistic chains as they were working to differing headquarters (Basra and Al Udeid) and on different Standard Operating Procedures.

OPERATE AND PROTECT

Formation Operations

33. **Force Levels.** Throughout 2005-06 Coalition force levels across Iraq were inadequate. But in 2007 the combination of Sunni insurgents changing sides, the US surge and increasing ISF capability meant that force levels were better able to provide security in Sunni areas and in the Shi'a/Sunni interfaces. In MNDSE we did not achieve adequate force ratios in Maysan and Basra until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. Building on this success Iraqi forces with US support were then able generate the forces necessary to clear previously uncontested JAM strongholds, including Sadr City.

34. **Formation Tactics.** Analysis of successful formation offensive operations in Iraq, including the Surge, suggests that success depended on concentrating force, joint fires, especially from AH, ACI30 and UAVs, influence activities, tactical reconstruction and ground manoeuvre, including tanks and armoured/protected infantry. The more the operation involved Iraqi forces, giving an 'Iraqi face' to build empathy with the civil population, the better. These are pointers to future formation offensive operations amongst the people, both in COIN and other conflict, including

warfighting in urban areas. US experience shows the value of corps and divisions being able to designate main effort and switch resources to support it around battlespace quickly. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS also suggests that UK officers needed a better understanding of the Corps level of operations.

35. **Population Control.** The US and Iraqi experience showed the value of physical barriers in urban areas and permanent checkpoints. They also showed the value of biometrics to provide rapid ID of civilians for patrols, checkpoints and arrest operations.


36. 

UK Tactical Operations

37. Rules of Engagement (ROE) were adequate. We fought without much collateral damage or many bystander fatalities. Militias came off worse from firefights and our snipers were highly successful, but most UK casualties were from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and indirect fire (IDF). Battlegroup level operations included framework tasks and fighting convoys through enemy controlled areas. The evidence is that operations at brigade level and below were well planned, led and conducted and tactically successful, but until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS the low density of forces meant that these successes were not converted into enduring security improvements.

38. **Combined Arms Manoeuvre.** Successful operations depended on our all arms and joint warfighting capabilities, albeit under tight ROE, and with an additional emphasis on ISTAR and force protection to minimise own casualties. This included not only warfighting equipment, but also thorough training in warfighting tactics and confident and experienced commanders and HQs. For example, the Strike Operations mounted in the 'war against the JAM' in 2006/07 were effectively battlegroup offensive operations. Without the confidence and experience arising from a foundation of demanding combined arms warfighting training they would have carried much greater risk.

39. **Fires.** At times considerable use was made of the full range of joint fires from mortars to AC-130s. But using artillery regiments 'out of role' as battlegroups or for SSR made this more difficult. AC-130, AH and armed UAVs were seen as especially responsive and flexible.

40. **Strike Operations.** A capability was evolved for battlegroup urban precision strike/detention operations, including Enhanced House Assault, . This played an important role in sustaining morale and in detaining suspects for our protection, which gave us some leverage over the JAM. But raiding in this type of environment carries with it a danger of our forces being seen by the uncommitted as just another warring faction, so supporting information operations are required.

41. **Armoured Vehicles.** Warrior and Challenger were the armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) of choice to go in harms way. The intimate tactical co-operation between Warrior and dismounts

provided by armoured infantry was invaluable. But there were never enough Warriors, a capability gap eventually filled by fielding of Bulldog and Mastiff. After Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, improving security resulted in Mastiff, Bulldog and Warrior being used less and embedded MiTTs travelling in Iraqi Army vehicles.

The lesson is that full spectrum COIN requires a full spectrum of protected mobility capabilities for battlegroups, from armour and armoured infantry, through heavy, medium and light armoured vehicles, allowing commanders the flexibility to adjust firepower, protection, mobility, capacity and profile to match the threat and changing nature of operations. This applies equally to Combat Support and Combat Service Support troops required to fight with battlegroups.

42. **Border Operations.** Although we often attempted to interdict cross border activity, there is no evidence that this made a significant difference until 2008, when the Iraqi Army deployed in strength to the border and the US began supporting and mentoring the Department of Border Enforcement. This may reflect the lack of published doctrine to guide the military contribution to border security.

43. **Lessons from the Enemy.** AQI's fundamentalist political and social agenda and extreme brutality made them easier to defeat than insurgents elsewhere who behaved more moderately and had more popular policies. JAM attempts to defeat our convoys and raids showed the value of a manoeuvrist approach to defence in urban areas and covering obstacles by fire.

Protection

44. **Counter Improvised Explosive Device.** Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) suffered initially from being seen as the province of specialists in the Royal Engineers, Royal Signals and Royal Logistic Corps. It considerably improved once it became a command-led all arms, cross lines of development approach, based on rapid information exchange across the force, usually through a threat forum assessing the lessons of enemy attacks, initiating counter action and passing direction and information back down the chain of command. The EFP threat was initially countered by adjusting Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) and rigorous control of road movement. It was subsequently countered by up armoured Warrior, new Electronic Counter Measures (ECM), introducing Bulldog and Mastiff and adjusting ROE to allow use of force against those emplacing devices.

45. **Counter Indirect Fire.** A similar holistic approach was applied to Counter Indirect Fire (C-IDF), with the addition of sense and warning capability using radars and an intercept capability using Phalanx guns. The combination of TTPs, the ROE change allowing attack of IDF teams setting up, and early warning saved lives. We used counter-battery fire, but this was neutralised by enemy use of timers, and was counter-productive. The US used armed UAVs, AH and AC-130 to greater effect to deter and disrupt IDF fire on the Green Zone from Sadr City. Although there is nothing new about counter-battery operations from guns and aircraft, our sensitivity to casualties means that the full

spectrum of CIDF capabilities will be required across the spectrum of combat.

46. **Value of Offensive Action.** Until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS force ratios were insufficient to disrupt enemy IED and IDF teams by dominating the ground. It was essential to complement defensive C-IED and C-IDF measures by intelligence led strike operations to disrupt enemy networks.

47. **Environmental Factors.** Heat caused casualties and had been an operational constraint in 2003 and 2004, but better air conditioning for accommodation and some vehicles and better training meant that it was not a general constraint thereafter; apart from the crews of vehicles without air conditioning.

48. **Risk.** Many commanders felt that casualty aversion drove us from the sky over Basra in daylight and from exploiting our riverine capability. Conversely our IED clearance policy may have increased the risk to those in cordons. Authority to waive mandatory UK force protection measures was held by PJHQ. Sometimes it was delegated to the GOC. This was a more centralised approach than in previous campaigns, which frustrated unit and sub-unit commanders who felt they were best placed to judge the trade-off between risk and mission success.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION OPERATIONS

49. The absence of a coherent UK and coalition strategic narrative and the increasing unpopularity of the war created a very challenging environment for media operations. This became even more difficult when UK and US strategy diverged after the US decision to surge in Jan 07.

50. **Performance.** In Basra, MNDSE and deployed brigades and battlegroups made great efforts to use Info Ops to achieve influence, often in conjunction with Key Leader Engagement. For example, this was a major component of Op SINBAD. But with the exception of Op TELIC 13, formation commanders considered that our Influence Activities in MNDSE continually punched below the required weight and were slower, less agile and much less effective than the opposition's. Such effect as was achieved was usually transient. But Op TELIC 13 is the exception to this. The improved security resulting from Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the apparently unique presence of a professional marketing specialist (TA Sgf) in HQ MNDSE meant that the information operation for the first time appeared adequate. This is the only reported instance of the Basra Info Ops staff having any professional advertising/marketing people.

51. **Specialists.** Overall our Info Ops were less successful than they had been in Bosnia a decade earlier. Despite the cultural, linguistic and political difficulties we limited our own effectiveness by failing to deploy enough professional Info Ops specialists into theatre. This points to the necessity of improving our tactical Info Ops capability by leveraging the advertising and marketing industries and the people who work in them.

52. **Lessons for the Future.** Op TELIC shows that influence activities need to be fully integrated into all aspects of Pre-Deployment Training (PDT). Personnel assigned to conduct that activity must be embedded in the formation headquarters throughout the PDT period. It needs to be

taken seriously as a core G3 function with a significant change of mindset and command push to attract its share of the brightest and best people to cover this area. 'Information effect' must be everyone's business and it needs to be brought together by suitably trained and experienced staff. Correctly employed Info Ops can therefore be seen as '21st Century Combat Support' with considerable potential in linking with Cross-Government.

TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

53. **General.** From the outset, the parlous state of Southern Iraq's infrastructure, the expectations of the population for a rapid improvement in their conditions and failure of UK led reconstruction to meet these expectations all caused rapidly growing disaffection with the Coalition. The lack of effective civilian organisation, expertise or financial assistance forced additional responsibilities onto the shoulders of military officers, often operating well beyond their training and experience.

54. **Money as a Weapon System.** For most of the Op TELIC our commanders considered the US Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP) with its simple procedures and speed of response greatly superior to the limited sums of UK money available to them to promote tactical consent, not least because of slower and less responsive UK procedures. It was only with the creation of a UK Commander's Fund on TELIC 12 that brigades and battlegroups were able to use UK money quickly enough to improve tactical consent.

55. **Integration.** Some reconstruction was achieved and MNDSE learned to make good use of the US CERP money, for example during Op SINBAD. But it was only after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS improved the security situation, civilian leadership improved and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) moved back to Basra that MNDSE, the UK Consul General, the PRT and the US Regional Embassy Office (REO) were able to harmonise their efforts. Even so, *"there was not a formally agreed integrated operational plan for Basra set in a strategic framework agreed across Whitehall"*⁵. No one person was formally in charge in theatre. Success was too dependent on personal relationships, which at best promoted leadership and collaborative working. These were weakened when the HQ MNDSE, Consul General US REO, and the PRT ceased to be collocated. But they were strengthened by using the 'Gang of Four' (GOC, Head PRT, Consul General and Head of US REO) as formal co-ordinating mechanisms, complemented by joint working groups and (where relevant) joint delivery of joint projects. But we limited the effectiveness of the military contribution, by employing far too many amateurs and none of the 'brightest and best' in CIMIC or reconstruction appointments. This was in contrast to the more professional way the US Army and USMC fielded their Civil Affairs capability.

56. **Lessons for the Future.** Many commentators, including US observers, consider that from mid 2008, the tactical execution of the comprehensive approach in Basra was as effective as that being achieved in the other MND areas, if not better. This shows the value of jointly agreed assessments, plans and joint military/civilian delivery teams. Full effectiveness of the comprehensive approach at the tactical level can only be realised if there is a comprehensive approach and over-arching operational plan at the national strategic and operational levels, that sets

⁵ Maj Gen Salmon RM.

the framework for individual departmental planning. If this cannot be achieved, separate civilian and military operational plans should be developed collaboratively, starting with common assessments and joint planning from the outset. This needs to be translated into an enduring plan that does not change with every commander. This joint approach can be enabled by co-location of HQs and staffs and mutual embedding of staffs.

TACTICAL SSR AND MILITARY CAPACITY BUILDING

57. For most of the campaign, our approach to developing the Iraqi Army (form, train and equip) was not as effective as the US approach (form, train, equip, mentor, partner, and recognise that 'your fight is our fight'). Although many UK commanders designated SSR as the main effort, in practice it often was not and there was often great divergence in approach between different units and formations. Commanders at the tactical level often failed to build an empathetic relationship with the Iraqis. The contrasting US and UK experiences suggest that indigenous security capacity can be built more effectively through active support than through passively promoting self-reliance.

58. **MiTTs.** Although we rapidly copied the US MiTT capability during Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, the effectiveness of our MiTTs varied. Lessons from our most successful MiTTs and the more thorough approach of the USMC suggest that for an enduring campaign, 'amateur' or ad hoc MiTTs are less effective than teams generated by a more professional approach. It reinforces the need for such teams to be manned by credible war fighters who have done combined arms and joint warfighting training, but the USMC approach indicates the value of improved selection and training and increased tour length. Frictions between MNSTC-I and US divisions providing MiTTs show the need for common doctrine and TTPs.

59. **Full Spectrum SSR.** Subsequent Iraqi operations in MNDSE and elsewhere in Iraq exposed weaknesses in higher level Iraqi C2 and logistics. This suggests that 'full spectrum' SSR of an army requires government level C2 and deployable logistic capabilities to be generated in parallel with combat capability, [REDACTED]

60. **Police Training.** Many commanders considered that our difficulties in developing the capability of the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) suggest that UK efforts to build the capacity of civilian police forces are inhibited by the great contrast between the [REDACTED] UK approach to the office of constable and policing by consent, and the law enforcement cultures of Muslim and Third World countries and the lack of HMG levers to generate UK police officers for expeditionary operations. Paramilitary police such as Carabinieri appeared to be more effective.

61. **Lessons for Future Police Training.** In future stabilisation operations, coalition partners with a paramilitary police capability can be invited to contribute, but this capability cannot be guaranteed. A UK contribution to building the capacity of civilian police might be discretionary in campaign terms, but where the UK has leadership of a land tactical AO, it is essential in that AO. In such a case, in the absence of an effective UK approach to expeditionary civilian police capacity building, the UK armed forces will have to take the lead, using appropriately trained and selected military personnel, MOD Police and civilian and paramilitary police trainers.

62. **Tactical Implications of Reconciliation.** The turning of reconcilable opponents into friendly forces enlisted by the US shifted the balance of forces in Anbar in 2006 and Baghdad in 2007. This bottom up tactical initiative was complemented by the activities of the MNF-I Strategic Engagement Cell. This effort had greatest effect when it integrated the strategic work from Baghdad with similar activity from corps to battlegroup level. Although this approach was not applied in MNDSE, it is of great relevance to future conflict against both irregular and regular opponents. For future operations UK Forces need to have a similar capability to enlist enemies who wish to change sides and the resources and freedoms (policy, legal, financial) to conduct similar operations.

EQUIPMENT

63. Warrior and Challenger were decisive in combat, as was our dismounted close combat capability. Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) enhancements to body armour, small arms, Bulldog and Mastiff all had significant effect. But we were too slow to field tactical UAVs. Some UORs were the result of "pull" from theatre, others the result of 'push' from equipment staff in the MOD. The UOR process did not produce enough equipment to meet the training requirements. So some troops first encountered new equipments in theatre and commanders assessed that casualties resulted, particularly in the period immediately after a brigade relief in place. Capability integration became better managed, not least because of improving relationships between DE&S and Land, but even on TELIC 13 some equipment was being delivered to theatre with inadequate integration plans.

64. **Identifying New Requirements.** It appears that for much of this period the mechanism for formulating new capability requirements was sub-optimal. Where there was a strong coherent sponsor in the Army or MOD there was more chance of requirements being quickly identified and UORs succeeding. Difficulties experienced at the start of this period were overcome to a certain extent by fielding Equipment Capability staff to PJHQ and Basra. But it was not clear who owned the medium term vision for the capability requirements of the theatre and longer term thinking on equipment requirements was inhibited by the lack of campaign continuity.

LOGISTICS

65. **General.** By 2005, the logistic support for the theatre was mature. Logistic installations, personnel, vehicles and convoys were as much exposed to the threat as the rest of the force. It was often necessary to dedicate manoeuvre troops for convoy escort, and running logistic convoys through high threat areas became major battlegroup operations. There were never enough SH to reduce the need for the majority of road movement, although air drop was successfully used for border operations. For most of the period, the only physical protection for logistic vehicles was armour improvised in theatre. Communications for logistic convoys was inadequate, in some cases overcome by transporting Fitted for Radio (FFR) Landrovers on the back of logistic vehicles. Logistic vehicles were usually last to be fitted with ECM.

66. **Contractors.** Extensive use of contractors reduced the military headcount, but commanders

considered that a number of contracts did not have the required flexibility built in from the outset. Supervision of contractors was inadequate, principally due to lack of training. We were reluctant to use private security companies to assist with armed guarding.

67. **Operation BROCKDALE.** CDS' direction that we should be seen to withdraw 'in good order' and avoid the problems that bedevilled previous drawdowns elsewhere was achieved, due to early and thorough planning, forward deployment of specialist teams and considerable support from the US, as well as the threat having greatly reduced.

PEOPLE AND MEDICAL

68. The medical, welfare and G1 arrangements in theatre were mature. Decompression appears to have worked, but certain TA and reserve personnel failed to receive it.

69. Standards of battle discipline sometimes slipped resulting in both casualties and formation HQs having to police implementation. Commanders assessed that Operational Security (OPSEC) across the force was inadequate. Too many weapons and too much kit was stolen from the COB and inconsistent rules on alcohol were a friction. In bases we could appear scruffy, eroding our credibility with the US and others.

70. Op HOME RAT⁶ set the standard for an information operation for families. The demands on rear parties were considerable, sometimes almost overmatching their capability.

PREPARATION OF THE LAND COMPONENT

71. **General.** As well as sustaining two medium scale operations, the Army was reorganising to implement Future Army Structures and Whole Fleet Management, as well as fielding Bowman. Defence change programmes continued, including merging the logistics and procurement organisations. The Army was undermanned, providing most of its own training support and centrally managing a limited pool of special to theatre and UOR equipment. A number of units were employed out of role and new HQs were created for Afghanistan. Successfully generating forces for Iraq in this period was a significant challenge. That the Army succeeded in sustaining two campaigns was a major achievement. In the context of Op ENTIRETY, the question is not 'what went wrong?' but 'how could we do better for Afghanistan?' Force generation lessons include:

- a. Warfighting and the Adaptive Foundation training gave units the skills and confidence to fight. But neither PDT nor specialist individual training gave sufficient skills to properly integrate and deliver CIMIC, SSR, Influence Activities and ISTAR.
- b. The ability of brigades, units and key individuals to understand the situation was greatly constrained by a lack of secure communications to most Army barracks.

⁶ Op Home Rat (the desert rat is the 7 Brigade's badge) brought together separate unit welfare provisions into one, centralized welfare system for the brigade and their families and incorporated a website on ArmyNet and was implemented for Op TELIC 7.

- c. At the start of the period, PDT was less well planned and resourced than required. But there was considerable improvement by 2008 and mentors from theatre proved invaluable throughout.
- d. Many commanders considered mandatory training requirements were inflexible and not co-ordinated properly, resulting in reduced tactical training.
- e. PDT was inhibited by sub-optimal individual training for some specialists and drivers. An example is Mastiff where not only did training direction come from three different arms directors, but we self-limited our ability to drive on public roads by an over-zealous and inflexible interpretation of national and EU regulations.
- f. Commanders universally considered our SO3s to be under trained.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF THE UK LAND COMPONENT

72. **General.** There was much tactical adaptation and learning by troops in contact and we successfully retrained units into new roles. However, US forces were able to adapt more quickly than us in many areas and some of our adaptation seemed slower than in the World Wars, the NI campaign or in meeting the unforeseen challenges of Bosnia. Not all potential adaptations were under the Army's control, such as equipment, campaign management and media strategy. But there were areas where the Army could pull its own levers. Some were pulled to greater or lesser effect, others not. Even allowing for the unpopularity of the war and Defence and Government not being on the campaign footing that has now been adopted for Afghanistan, we could have been more flexible and agile and adopted a campaign footing for Iraq.

73. **Lessons for the Future.** Comparisons with successful British Army adaptation in the last century and the 1st Army and USMC adaptation in Iraq indicates that the flexibility and adaptability of the UK land component to meet the unforeseen challenges of future operations also requires improvements in the following areas:

- a. Being prepared to bend the Army out of shape across the lines of development to maximise the chances of campaign success. This includes applying the current Op ENTIRETY approach to unify whole Army adaptation to future campaigns and having an Army 'engine of change'.
- b. Minimising internal and external obstructions to the land component's ability to learn as a whole. A shared understanding of how successful organisations and armies learn and adapt would be a core part of this. As would confident and frank dialogue between senior leadership, middle management and the front line.
- c. Ensuring that relatively new capabilities required for 21st Century operations (CIMIC, SSR, Influence Activities and ISTAR to name but some) all have an Army sponsor with

adequate authority and influence. And that these capabilities are professionalised with effective training, where necessary a recognised career path and receive their share of the 'brightest and best'.

- d. Encouraging engagement and debate on current and recent operations in our professional journals. And publishing RESTRICTED lessons material on the Army intranet, including the archive of post operation reports and interviews.
- e. Improving both the breadth and depth of officer education and making it more relevant to themes emerging from current operations.
- f. Ensuring that doctrine is up to date and widely understood.
- g. Ensuring that land capability and our tactical approach allows the execution of mission command and the manoeuvrist approach, if necessary by rebalancing from top down, in favour of bottom up.
- h. Improving the current lessons system by capturing land environment lessons at the corps and theatre level, including the experience of senior British officers employed in higher HQs.
- i. Fielding secure CIS between deployed units and those preparing to relieve them.

REPUTATION OF THE UK LAND COMPONENT

74. There has been negative public comment about our military performance in MNDSE. Although much of this has been ill-informed and often driven by political agendas, there is no question that our institutional self-confidence was dented. Opinion is divided between those who see the events of 2007/8, particularly the "accommodation" and Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS as military failures, and those who regard them as the best that could be achieved in an extremely unfavourable and challenging strategic and operational environment. On balance, this report favours the latter interpretation.

75. **The Future.** It also appears that many in the Army and Defence do not understand the narrative and ebb and flow of the Iraq campaign in general and in Southern Iraq in particular. For example, many officers appear ignorant of the logic behind Op ZENITH, the withdrawal from Basra and the successes of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the subsequent endgame in Basra. And the US difficulties in dealing with Shi'a militias in Baghdad, an essential part of the narrative regarding the UK 'accommodation' in Basra, are relatively unknown. This may be a result of inadequate internal communications. But we need to be able to explain to others what happened, why it happened, the tactical successes and the limitations of the utility of our force, as well as the strategic and operational level factors and constraints that influenced MNDSE's operations. This is so that a balanced and informed understanding of our role in the campaign can be made. We also need to enable our people to fight their corner against uninformed and unjustified criticism. **But it is**

only by demonstrating that we have learned the lessons of Op TELIC that are of wider relevance to Afghanistan and beyond, as well as competence, fighting spirit and enduring success on future operations that can fully lay this ghost to rest.



Fig1. Basra urban patrol with Bulldog, Op TELIC 9.

NARRATIVE HISTORY

OPERATION TELIC - EVENTS BEFORE JAN 05

Overview

76. Many of the lessons of Op TELIC are best understood within the context of the wider campaign. This narrative provides an account of the land campaign across Iraq before drilling down into the detail of operations within MNDSE. The military campaign had four stages:

- a. Apr 03 – Jul 04. Little central guidance with MNDs granted considerable devolved autonomy to attack insurgents, whilst conducting stabilisation operations.
- b. Aug 04 – end 06. MNF-I directing operations with the Main Effort on ‘Transition’; namely the building of ISF capability in order to hand the war over to them.
- c. Jan 07 – Mar 08. Surge. MNC-I reinforced by US troops. Change of approach to protecting the people in order to buy time and space for reconciliation and political progress. Initially US forces in the lead but ISF leadership increased as confidence and capability grew. Concludes with Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.
- d. Apr 08 – Jun 09. Consolidation and focus on dealing with Shi’a elements. ISF increasingly in charge. Ends with UK extraction in Jun 09 (Op BROCKDALE).

Coalition Operations

77. Op TELIC was the UK contribution to the US-led Op IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). UK land operations in Iraq from Jan 03 to Jan 05 have been described in the two previous Army lessons studies⁷. Their chronologies and analysis will not be repeated here. But it is necessary to provide the context for the subsequent land campaign in Iraq.

78. OIF was outstandingly successful in destroying Saddam’s regular forces and Republican Guard. Post-conflict operations were planned to first stabilise, then develop a secure and stable country, and finally to complete the transition from coalition control to a peaceful, self-governing Iraq. But events thereafter showed that most of the planning assumptions for the subsequent stabilisation operation were wrong. Iraq’s civilian infrastructure was in a far worse state than expected. The Iraqi Army and police melted away during the invasion and their residual ability to sustain order was significantly reduced by the measures taken by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which also reduced the capability of surviving organs of the Iraqi governance. The Coalition force, designed for and successful in the combat phase of the campaign, proved to be too small for post-conflict stabilisation.

⁷ “Operations in Iraq – An Analysis from a Land Perspective” Army Code 71816 dated Feb 2005 and “Stability Operations in Iraq – An Analysis from a Land Perspective” Army Code 71844 dated Jul 2006.

79. Early Iraqi support for the Coalition presence evaporated and criminal, ethnic and sectarian groups resorted to violence to secure their survival and to advance their various interests. In the political and security vacuum of the weeks and months which followed the invasion, armed groups emerged to oppose the Coalition and to secure their own position and interests; Former Regime Loyalists (FRL) seeking to return the Sunni Ba'ath Party to power, and militant Shi'a groups, of which Moqtada al Sadr's Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) and the Iranian-backed Badr Corps were the most prominent. The invasion overturned the balance of political power in Iraq, removing Saddam's control of the country through the Sunni minority and placing the majority Shi'a in political and economic dominance. An insurgency quickly took root in the Sunni community reinforced by Foreign Fighters (FF) who started to move into Iraq to join al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Both mounted attacks against Coalition forces, drawing on the huge quantities of weapons and ammunition strewn around the country, and forcing the UN to withdraw.

80. In the absence of an Iraqi government capable of implementing a national development and security plan, and limited security forces with which to contain and control the security situation, a number of powerful insurgent and militia groups emerged. Each had its own objectives and not all were intent on overthrowing the nascent Iraqi government. Some were linked directly with Iraqi ministries or with provincial councils. Whether they fought from within the Government of Iraq (GOI) or against it and the Coalition forces, they all sought first and foremost to secure and maintain their position of influence.

81. Of particular concern in central, west and northern Iraq was the way the Sunni/AQI insurgency quickly gained strength. This was recognised by Commander CENTCOM as "*a classical guerrilla type campaign*" and countering it became MNF-I's main effort, albeit often executed by 'sweeps' as there were insufficient forces to secure the whole country. For much of this period, conduct of these operations was largely devolved to the multinational divisions. But there was increasing realisation that an overly kinetic approach often had counter-productive effects.

82. Campaign effectiveness was reduced by sub-optimal C2. It was clear that the rapid withdrawal of CENTCOM's land component HQ and its replacement by CJTF-7 put an ever expanding tactical HQ into a theatre-strategic role that it struggled to perform. Relations between Lt Gen Sanchez and Paul Bremer, the head of the CPA, were extremely difficult. The CPA itself was focussed on Baghdad, had [REDACTED] staff and added little value to efforts of its staff deployed in Southern Iraq. C2 improved in mid 04, with the replacement of CJTF 7 by three HQs; MNF-I commanded by Gen Casey, MNC-I responsible for land operations and MNSTC-I responsible for Iraqi military and police capacity building.

83. Gen Casey ordered MNF-I's first joint campaign plan (JCP) to be written over the summer of 2004 and it was published that August. Thereafter, at six-month intervals, the direction the plan gave and progress the campaign had made against it were reviewed and adjusted by the MNF-I Combined Assessment and Strategy Board (CASB).⁸ From the start, the JCP followed four broad lines of

⁸ The CASB was co-chaired by CG MNF-I and the US Ambassador and included the Corps Commander and the principal general officer staff officers and their State Department counterparts in the US Embassy.

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operation: security, governance, economic development and essential services. But at the end of 2004 the Coalition campaign review concluded that "*the insurgency was intensifying*".

MNDSE Operations

84. In Southern Iraq MNDSE had its own area of operation (AO) made up of al Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar and al Muthanna provinces. Throughout 2003/4 it was never the Coalition main effort. The Sunni/AQ insurgency hardly featured in MNDSE's area. The southern Shi'a initially welcomed Coalition forces but restoring governance was handicapped by the CPA's removal of Iraqi middle class administrators across Iraqi society by the policy of de-Ba'athification. The combination of the parlous state of Southern Iraq's infrastructure, the expectations of the population for a rapid improvement in their living conditions, and a significant failure to meet these expectations resulted in bewilderment and apathy, leading to rapidly growing disaffection with the Coalition. People increasingly resorted to violence and joining Shi'a militias. Iraqi Security Force (ISF) capability could not be grown fast enough. The limited CPA and UK funds available for reconstruction made little difference to the population and the combination of looting, lawlessness, tattered infrastructure, and electrical power shortages exacerbated discontent, as did allegations of prisoner abuse, both at Abu Ghraib and in Basra.

85. The CPA in the south was neither staffed adequately nor capable of resourcing the required degree of reconstruction, so MNDSE was drawn inexorably into all the major aspects of the campaign. The lack of an effective civilian organisation and no civilian leadership, expertise or financial assistance forced additional responsibilities onto the shoulders of military officers who found themselves involved with projects and tasks that crossed all four lines of operation, and often operating well beyond their training and experience. British units were required to conduct operations that covered security, governance, economy and essential services and tasks included the re-establishment of freedom of movement and the rule of law. The range of activities required soldiers to conduct traditional security operations as well as acting as diplomats, local administration advisors, infrastructure consultants and economic development advisors, all through an interpreter. The intensity of violence met was often more characteristic of warfighting than previous experience of Northern Ireland or the Balkans, but the need to maintain and build the consent of the local population remained a central theme.

86. MNDSE conducted Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Counter Terrorism (CT) operations against FRLs and FFs. It was also faced with two successive Shi'a uprisings. The first in Apr 04 was brought under control relatively quickly in Basra, but endured in Maysan where the UK battlegroup experienced intense fighting. The second Shi'a uprising in the summer saw significant fighting between Shi'a militias and Coalition forces across the country and in MNDSE in Basra, Maysan, Nasiriyah and Al Amarah. These uprisings were thwarted, as much through political as military means. The security situation in MNDSE gradually improved and the first Iraqi elections were held at the turn of the year, with a significant contribution by the ISF giving some cause for guarded optimism. It was intended that SSR should be the main effort for MNDSE in the first half of 2005.

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87. Raising new Iraqi Security forces had been an enormous challenge. Between 70,000 and 90,000 police were recruited and a start was made on recruiting a new Iraqi Army and National Guard. When both forces were faced with the Shi'a rebellions and the subsequent prospect of joining the US operation in Fallujah, many soldiers or police refused to take part, or even sided with the insurgents or militias.

88. Throughout this period US forces suffered 1100 fatalities, but enjoyed considerable support from the US public and media. They were on 12 month tours (extended to 15 for some forces during the Shi'a uprisings) and implemented 'stop loss', the involuntary extension of active duty service, which included freezing command appointments. UK forces remained on six month tours.

89. By the Jan 05 elections the UK had sustained 86 fatalities. These, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction, the lack of Coalition success, and a number of well publicised apparent Army failures such as Sgt Roberts's lack of body armour, all meant that the Iraq war was becoming increasingly unpopular with UK media and public.

COALITION OPERATIONS - 2005

Overview

90. Almost two years after the start of OIF, much of the country remained in an almost complete security vacuum and organised crime was endemic. This legitimised insurgents and militias. The Coalition was faced by a growing Sunni/AQI insurgency. For example, in Apr 05 there was a significant increase in use by insurgents of large suicide car bombs to target Coalition forces and the Iraqi government. And Shi'a militias, although militarily defeated by the Coalition in 2004, were growing in size and influence, as well as infiltrating the new ISF.

Elections

91. This formed an inauspicious background to establishing democratic government in a country unused to it. Throughout this period there was a major effort to establish governance. In Jan 05 the Iraqis elected a transition government. Forming a government afterwards proved slow and problematic. It was not until the end of April that the appointment of PM Jaafari was confirmed. The Dec 05 elections saw a significant turnout of 76% to elect a new parliament and government. Both of these elections were largely boycotted by Sunnis.

92. The success of both of these elections and the role that the ISF and Iraqi civil society played in them gave many Coalition commanders, including UK officers, a sense of guarded optimism that the corner had been turned. But delays in forming the new Iraqi government under Prime Minister Jaafari, which eventually took office in May 05, allowed militias and insurgents to gain more support and fill a considerable vacuum in governance and local delivery of security and basic services. The new government was a weak coalition that was incapable of preventing the diffusion of political power into ministerial fiefdoms, aligned with parties and their militias.

Campaign Perspective

93. The experience of 2004 had shown that there were three alternative operational approaches for the Coalition:

- a. Focussed offensive operations against the insurgency.
- b. A classic COIN approach.
- c. A transition approach, which saw security responsibility for Iraq handed over to its government and executed with rebuilt Iraqi security forces.

94. The experience of clearing Fallujah in 2004 had shown that tactical success would result in considerable collateral damage and civilian casualties, which would hand a propaganda victory to the insurgents. There were insufficient Coalition and Iraqi troops for the second option. So the transition strategy was adopted, requiring as Lt Gen Vines, CG MNC-I put it; *“rapid progress in training and preparing Iraqis to assume responsibility for security in every province.”* The Coalition’s strategy focussed on developing the ISF in order to hand the war over to the Iraqis.

95. MNSTC-I embarked on a \$5.7 billion plan to train 270,000 Iraqi Security Forces by summer 06. Conversion of the Iraqi National Guard to become part of the IA started on 5 Jan 05. But the US itself recognised that too rapid an expansion risked producing quantity with inadequate quality. By Sep 05 only one Iraqi battalion was assessed as fully capable of planning and conducting COIN operations. The US divisions were ordered to partner with Iraqi Army formations. This involved assigning Military Transition Teams and using combined US/Iraqi missions as vehicles to develop the IA capability and confidence.

96. MNF-I considered that Coalition troops were seen by many Iraqis as occupiers and thus part of the problem. So at the operational and tactical level formations and units were withdrawn from bases in Iraqi towns and cities and centralised in a few large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) on the edge of urban areas. The closure of smaller urban FOBs reduced the frequency of US patrolling.

97. 

98. A different approach was taken in Anbar Province. Here the USMC Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) was deployed in a more dispersed fashion, partly because the Province was too large to

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allow large FOBs to be effective, but partly through a desire to patrol the AO as vigorously as possible. Even so they lacked sufficient troops to hold all of their urban areas.

99. The operation in Tal Afar in Nineveh province by [REDACTED], between Aug 05 and May 06 has been identified by many commentators as an early example of successfully using the 'clear-hold-build' approach to stabilise an insurgent controlled area.

100. [REDACTED] believed that "*one of the responsibilities of professional officers is to prepare yourself and your organization for combat through the study of history, because it's very difficult before a war to understand completely the demands of that war.*" The ACR's pre-deployment training emphasized cultural awareness and Arabic language skills. One out of every 10 soldiers received a three-week course in conversational Arabic, so that each small unit would have someone capable of basic exchanges with Iraqis. [REDACTED] distributed a lengthy reading list to his officers that included studies of Arab and Iraqi history and most of the classic texts on counterinsurgency. He also quietly relieved one battalion commander who didn't seem to understand that such changes were necessary.

101. By mid-2005, Tal Afar had become a significant insurgent problem and a major staging area into Iraq for foreign fighters but [REDACTED] did not move into the city straight away. Instead, he took time to learn about the social and political situation in the area, and to isolate the city before taking control of it. His operations on the Syrian border disrupted insurgent movements into and out of Tal Afar, and a preliminary clear and hold operation in a nearby town helped [REDACTED] to refine his plan, gain the confidence of MNC-I, and secure the additional forces and equipment needed to build a berm (sand embankment) around the entire city. By the time 3 ACR launched its clearance operation, much of the city's population had moved into a specially built camp outside the berm, and many insurgents were detained as they tried to leave the city. [REDACTED] operation to clear Tal Afar was a carefully controlled, sequenced operation, not a rapid advance which might have been expected. Having cleared the city, 3 ACR then built twenty-nine patrol bases to dominate all the main routes, recruited 1400 police and started civil development projects.

Tal Afar

**Lieutenant General Brims
DCG MNF-I (04-05)**

I was heavily involved as DCG MNF-I in the planning of the operation in Tal Afar in 2005. The Iraqi Government were constantly demanding that "we sweep through Tal Afar" and clear AQI out of the city and relieve the Shia population. We resisted this and 3ACR conducted a very well planned operation which took into account the very mixed population of Tal Afar (Arab Sunni, Arab Shia, Turcomen, Kurd, and Turk). The plan was planned and conducted by US forces but we persuaded the Iraqi Government to lead on the presentation of the operation and the negotiation with the City Council. A deal was struck between the Government and City Council: this was all arranged by the Coalition. The US Ambassador forced the pace in making the Iraqi Government take responsibility. So this was a successful operation in itself but it also was a start of Iraqis taking ownership of their country and in a proper way.

102. But in contrast in Diyala Province as US troops concentrated on FOBs the security situation deteriorated with Sunni insurgent activity increasing and many of the largely Shi'ite ISF openly collaborating with Shi'a militias.


EVENTS IN MNDSE IN 2005


Overview

103. The final versions of CDS's Directive to CJO (Edition 7) and SBMR-I (Edition 3) for Op TELIC were issued on 8 Apr 05⁹ based on a Cabinet Office paper¹⁰. On 19 Jul, the Attorney General announced the details of Service personnel facing prosecution for the death of Baha Mousa, an Iraqi civilian who died while being held by UK forces in Sep 03. Towards the end of the year, DFID undertook a review of the Country Assistance Plan, which led to an increase in focus on influencing other donors, for example pressing the UN and World Bank to increase their presence on the ground and supporting Iraqi leadership of the reconstruction process.

104. Commanders in Basra had identified almost from the start of the campaign a requirement to build security sector capacity so that the Iraqis could provide their own security so as to be able to withdraw. MNDSE and PJHQ developed the concept of 'Transition', to better approach the transfer of security responsibility from the Coalition to the ISF. MNDSE was therefore required to support the ISF and Iraqi civil authorities, neutralise anti- Iraqi forces and support the development of a robust, self reliant and credible Iraqi security capability, in order to allow the Iraqi government to defeat the insurgency.

105. After the successful elections of Jan 05 SSR, which had taken second place to security during the election period, once again became the priority. For the first half of 2005, the level of violence against Coalition Forces was markedly less than experienced in 2004. This, and 4 Armd Bde's emphasis on safe driving and weapon handling, resulted in it returning without suffering a single fatality during the tour. But a significant increase in the IED threat during the second half of 2005 not only caused UK casualties, but also constrained the effort that MNDSE could devote to SSR.

106. Overall TELIC 6 saw a relatively stable period; nascent democratic institutions had taken the opportunity to establish themselves, the level of violence was viewed as broadly acceptable, and the militia appetite for continued violence appeared to have been dulled by the bitter and, for them, costly engagements of summer 2004. While there was clear evidence of a continuing JAM threat in Maysan, it gave no indications of a widespread return to violence. Insurgents no longer appeared willing to engage Coalition Forces directly. But commanders were concerned that there seemed to be little actionable intelligence available and much of what was generated came from : 



⁹ CDS 13/05 and 14/05 dated 8 Apr 05.

¹⁰ "Iraq: Strategy for 2005" dated 11 Feb 05.

107. The civil administration and people were enjoying the new-found freedom and benefits of democracy, but the structures and level of experience were not yet sufficiently mature to capitalise on this. But Iraqi confidence was growing and with it a belief that reliance on MNF was no longer either required or paying dividends. This left MNF's position in the balance, with consent and our ability to achieve leverage gradually waning.

108. The ISF were making real progress, notably the IA, but they were not yet able to operate independently, even though they increasingly believed that they could. They were achieving some operational success, but sectarian issues remained, with the majority of effort focused against Sunnis. Progress was real but superficial; corruption remained debilitating and structures lacked depth. Concurrently, as Iraqi institutional reliance on MNF reduced, so did our influence. This was compounded by the relative lack of MNF intelligence penetration of society. MNF were limited in their ability to interpret events accurately; internal power struggles and influences were largely opaque to MNF. It was clear that the situation that would facilitate disengagement and then withdrawal had to be one acceptable to Iraqis for it to be sustainable. The challenge was to understand the dynamic that would create this situation.

Comprehensive Approach

109. MNDSE had a considerable appetite to conduct CIMIC projects and the GOC found interaction with the FCO and DFID satisfactory; *"I felt very much that there was a triumvirate in the south on the British side, which consisted of the consul general, me and the senior DFID representative. We met regularly, we were good friends, we seldom, if ever, did anything without telling each other about it first. We did not need what became known as a PRT because we had all the mechanisms. We exchanged staff between us, so I had military officers in the consul general's office in Basra, and DFID had people working with me. And I believe that at that stage we were as joined-up as we have ever been, and I was very satisfied with the way that business was done, with the one caveat that I did not believe that it was a fair thing to do to have given the Foreign Office responsibility for developing policing because it was outside their experience and competence."*¹¹

110. But MNDSE were frustrated that as a result of the financial rules imposed from Whitehall, relatively inexpensive yet important CIMIC tasks were not funded properly, a major drawback given the value placed on 'buying consent'.

Security Sector Reform

111. Training of the IA proceeded as well as might be expected. The previous FCO led effort to build the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) capability in Southern Iraq had been sub-optimal. MNDSE took over much of the operation. This drew on a significant contribution from Italian Carabinieri, the Czech MP Company and US International Police Liaison Officers (IPLO).

112. 

¹¹ Lt Gen Riley GOC MNDSE (Dec 04 – Apr 05) evidence to Iraq Inquiry.

[REDACTED]

113. MNDSE's dissatisfaction with the resources it was receiving eventually became an issue within the MNSTC-I staff. Lt Gen Petraeus, commanding MNSTC-I, ordered a comprehensive review to be conducted by his staff of the police, army and Iraqi National Guard equipment and resource provision. The upshot of the review was that it concluded that MNDSE had actually been given more, proportionally, than anywhere else.¹³

Operations

114. The insurgent was no longer willing to engage with the MNF in direct fire engagements. The JAM, who represented the greatest threat to MNF in SE Iraq, had matured and developed more technically advanced methods of attack that sought to negate MNF's advantages.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This meant that between Sep and Nov 05 in Basra province there was insufficient security and freedom of movement to allow the SSR programme to continue.

115. Significant effort was expended to defeat or neutralise this threat in order to allow the conditions to return whereby SSR could be carried out effectively. In the absence of an immediate technological answer, units had to fall back on old TTPs based on Northern Ireland: *"Initially, the IEDs being used were relatively low tech (although they still had the potential to kill). As the technology developed and the threat significantly increased, we worked very hard to develop the [counter IED] plan and new TTPs to counter the threat, which was itself constantly developing. You need to rely on long-accepted Counter Insurgency drills, which will offer the best protection until technological defences are developed"*.¹⁴

116. Changes in tactics and force protection measures in turn affected how SSR could be conducted and this required considerable thought to be given to the balance to be struck between logistic output and force protection. For a time this placed increasing demands on support helicopters in order to move troops around until new equipment could be fielded.¹⁵

The Jameat Incident and its Aftermath

117. On 19 Sep 05 the IPS arrested two soldiers engaged in a [REDACTED] surveillance operation and handed them over to a militia. This prompted an intense search for the two men, high level negotiations between Coalition Forces and the Basrawi authorities, and a forceful and ultimately successful operation to release them. This included raiding the Jameat Police Station in Basra where the two had been held, using Challenger tanks and Warrior armoured fighting vehicles and

¹² 050512-D CH SSR.

¹³ 050517-CG CPATT MNF-I.

¹⁴ 060127 - COS 12 MECH BDE.

¹⁵ POR - 12 Mechanised Brigade.

countering fierce rioting. Images of a burning soldier escaping from a Warrior appeared widely in the UK media.

118. The incident raised serious doubts over the integrity of the IPS and concerns about militia infiltration. On the Iraqi side, the Basra Provincial Governor broke off relations with MNDSE and disengaged from any involvement with military commanders: "*Basra broke off relations with us and any effort we put into the IPS there was wasted; we just weren't even getting through the door.*"¹⁶ The UK response was to concentrate effort on the Transition plan, so MNDSE increased its SSR effort in Al Muthana and Maysan provinces to get the ISF ready for Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). This inevitably placed strain on MNF/ISF relations.



Fig 2. The Jameat Incident: ([REDACTED] STAFFORDS, bails out of his burning Warrior).

119. A series of intelligence-led detention operations in Sep and Oct 05 forced JAM onto the back foot. The tempo of British operations and their successes had a debilitating effect on the insurgents. The intelligence which was available was, as always seemed to be the case, far from complete and luck often played its part in successful operations.¹⁷ However, to the insurgent this was an unnerving time and indications were that JAM did not believe it had the freedom to operate. In the game of cat and mouse, the incomplete picture British forces had of the insurgency was more than compensated for because the insurgents believed that their freedom of action had been significantly constrained.

120. The Iraqi National Referendum took place on 15 Oct 05 without incident. A jointly run Iraqi-Coalition security operation was seen to be a success in all four provinces in MNDSE despite having been hindered in Basra during the planning phases by the Provincial Council's policy of non co-operation and disengagement which started in mid-September.

Outlook

121. At the end of 2005 the view from MNDSE was that the situation in Southern Iraq remained in a state of flux; the civil administration and people were enjoying freedoms and democracy but nothing was sufficiently well-developed or established to make any significant progress. Nonetheless, confidence within the IA continued to grow and with it a belief that reliance on Coalition Forces was no longer required.¹⁸ This left the British position in the balance, with consent and its ability to achieve leverage gradually waning.¹⁹ While the ISF continued to make progress,

¹⁶ 060719-GOC MNDSE.


¹⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁸ 060215-GOC MNDSE.

¹⁹ POR-12 Mechanised Brigade.

notably the IA, they were not yet able to operate independently of Coalition Forces, even though they seemed to believe that they were. Their principal issues were sectarianism and debilitating corruption among officials, a problem compounded by difficulties in gaining any real intelligence from the population. As a result, internal power struggles and malign criminal and political influences were largely hidden to from Coalition sight.²⁰

122. 

123. Some misunderstandings and tensions inevitably followed as attempts were made to highlight the strengths of the so-called British way to American allies.  is noted that: *"American officers [were] barraged with ungenerous, over-simplified, and often glib comparisons between their supposedly ineffectual methods in Vietnam and the allegedly superior British approach employed in Malaya. Similar comparisons between the British army's handling of Basra and the U.S. military's alleged mishandling of the far more challenging Sunni triangle [made] American officers understandably resistant to what they [saw] as 'more British tripe.'"*²²

COALITION OPERATIONS 2006-07

Descent into Civil War and the Surge


124. The Jaafari government had not made any effective contribution to the security of Iraq. It collapsed when Ayatollah Sistani withdrew his support. A new Iraqi Government was eventually formed under the leadership of Prime Minister Maliki in May 06. After almost three years of a deteriorating security situation this was a significant political achievement. But Maliki's government included parties closely linked to Shi'a militias and Iran.

125. Much of the country remained in the grip of violence, the exceptions being Kurdistan and the Green Zone. Organised crime was endemic and militias of all types proliferated from simple neighbourhood self-defence groups to large well organised groups such as the Badr Brigade and the JAM. Shi'a militias had extensively infiltrated the ISF and Shi'a controlled ministries. Both were complicit in the kidnapping, torture and murder of Sunnis. Sectarian violence was common.

126. The US and Coalition strategy remained the return of security responsibility to Iraqi forces as soon as possible. Transition and achieving PIC were the Main Effort. But progress stalled and sectarian violence significantly increased after AQI's bombing of the Samarra mosque in Feb 06.

²⁰ *Idem.*

²¹ 050502-DEPUTY (C5) SPA MNF-I.

²²  *The Iraq War*, p. 11.

127. In retrospect this can be seen to be a decisive point in the campaign that triggered a Shi'a/Sunni civil war of murder and sectarian cleansing. The level of violence increased dramatically. Shi'a death squads stepped up their efforts against Sunni communities, supported by rogue elements of the ISF, particularly the police, and by Shi'a controlled ministries denying their services to Sunnis. AQI in return staged mass casualty attacks using suicide bombers primarily against Iraqi government and Shi'a civilian targets. This in turn triggered mass kidnapping, torture and murder of Sunnis by Shi'a death squads mostly from the JAM, which itself reinforced the credibility of the mature Sunni/AQI insurgency that was itself reinforced by foreign jihadists.

128. All this combined to produce a self reinforcing cycle of atrocity and counter atrocity which triggered significant population movements within Iraq and a flow of refugees to surrounding states. In Baghdad Shi'as and Sunnis retreated into controlled districts directed by militias of their own ethnicity, using existing or improvised obstacles to deny access to death squads and car bombs. Some areas that had previously been stabilised by Coalition forces fell under militia control.

129. The Coalition and ISF struggled to counter this upsurge in violence. At Prime Minister Maliki's insistence, an Iraqi-led operation was planned and quickly put into action to try to re-establish security in Baghdad. Ops TOGETHER FORWARD and TOGETHER FORWARD II saw the deployment of 7000 extra US troops. The Iraqi Government pledged 4000 troops but only 1000 were deployed. There was a small reduction in violence in August, but neither operation succeeded and sectarian killings continued to rise. There was sustained interference in the conduct of operations from senior Shi'a politicians and clear evidence of complicity in Shi'a ethnic cleansing amongst the ISF. Although US troops successfully cleared parts of Baghdad, there was insufficient Iraqi capability to hold them.

130. For the rest of the year sectarian intimidation and killings spiralled out of control in Baghdad and central Iraq. They took the US-led strategy of transition (handing over to Iraqi control at the earliest opportunity and withdrawal) to the point of defeat.

Meanwhile in Western Iraq

131. AQI sought to impose a severe Islamic way of life. This was by Iraqi standards extremely brutal and harsh and the enforced marriage of local women to AQI leaders was extremely unpopular. As early as 2005 Sunni tribes near the Syrian border had started to resent the influx of AQI into their area, and the resultant competition in their lucrative smuggling operations, and decided to resist. Sensing the potential threat, AQI opened its own campaign of murder and coercion against them, and the tribes turned to the Coalition for help. Offers of providing Sunni recruits to the ISF, on condition that they stay in Anbar were rejected by both the Coalition and Iraqi Army as the policy was that the Army should be a non-sectarian national institution. By Sep 05 the tribes had been overwhelmed.

132. In 2006 Sunni tribal leaders had had enough of AQI's fundamentalist and extremely brutal regime. Many formed a Salvation Council, raising their own militias to fight AQI. This was rapidly exploited by US forces who negotiated tactical alliances between themselves and the Sunni militias to combat AQI. These were formalised by US commanders using CERP funding to take these

militias onto the US payroll. Retaliation by AQI, killing tribal leaders and their supporters, was not enough to deflect this movement.

Ramadi – The Tipping Point in Anbar

133. The clearance of Tal Affar by 3 ACR had demonstrated that a COIN operation based on 'clear, hold and build' could work in Iraq, provided a sufficient density of forces was achieved. Application of the same approach in Ramadi, together with tactical reconciliation with Sunni tribes was a decisive point in the campaign where the balance in Anbar province changed in favour of the Coalition.

134. By summer 2005 Ramadi had become the centre of Sunni/AQI resistance to the Coalition and a centre for criminals and outlaws. Much of the city had been abandoned to the insurgents with the police barricaded into a single remaining police station under a state of siege. Coalition activity in Ramadi consisted largely of sustaining that station and raids from outside the town.

135. In mid 2005 the 2/28 Brigade of 5 US Army National Guard Battalions, a regular US airborne battalion and a USMC battalion began to tackle Ramadi systematically. It constructed six new combined police stations and company outposts in the city. These became the bases from which successful 'cordon and knock' operations to unearth arms caches were conducted. Although there was heavy fighting requiring the use of tanks and Bradley's, this were complemented by key leader engagement and information operations. The brigade adopted the philosophy of 'first do no harm' and on the basis of feedback from local sheikhs attempted to minimise friction with the locals – for example in dropping random searches of vehicles and houses. It also stopped using artillery for terrain denial and counter-battery fire.

136. Successful conduct of elections in Dec 05 coincided with successful efforts to recruit Sunnis for the IPS. But AQI struck back with an effective suicide bombing and assassination campaign. So despite this progress, when 2/28 rotated out the insurgents remained in charge of most of the city. Attacks in the town averaged over thirty per day. Less than one hundred police out of a total of 4,000 were present and few left the safety of their stations. 2/28 was also responsible for security of a large area outside of Anbar could not bring and more forces to bear on the city.

137. In Jun 06 the 1st 'Ready First' Brigade, 1st Armored Division took over Ramadi. The 1/1 had already served for four months in Tal Affar, where it had seen how tactical success could be achieved. It also had the advantage of the MEF HQ reducing the size of its AO to allow it to concentrate on Ramadi city and allocating the brigade two more manoeuvre battalions. The 1/1 disregarded the theatre strategy of withdrawing to large forward operating bases. They deliberately continued the 2/28's approach by pushing their forces out into the city to build company combat outposts in the worst insurgent areas. These restricted insurgent movement and 1/1 was prepared to stay and fight.

138. Concurrently they engaged with those tribal leaders who remained, offering protection and economic development in exchange for police recruits to clear the city. Over 4,000 recruits were

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provided to police the city during the following six months. They also established a leadership academy to develop local forces' ability to conduct COIN operations.

139. The 'Ready First' used an information operations campaign to discredit AQI in the eyes of the people. The friendly tribes were often much better at identifying AQI insurgents than US troops. This led to raids which further demoralized AQI. The Iraqi Army and US forces took control of the city's large hospital, freeing access to medical care. Micro and macro-economic development projects started in co-operative areas, providing much needed local jobs and alternative, legitimate sources of income. Sensing diminishing support and legitimacy among the population, AQI attempted to retaliate against co-operating tribes through a murder and intimidation campaign. The brigade provided the tribes with air and artillery support and troops to defend against insurgent attacks when required. This demonstration of unity solidified the tribal rebellion, which expanded exponentially.

140. In Ramadi fighting was often heavy with insurgent groupings of platoon size attacking US outposts, but 1/1 consciously sought to minimise use of air strikes, artillery and tank main armament inside the city. [REDACTED] described the approach; "*With new outposts established in an ever-tightening circle around the inner city, we wrested control from the insurgents. As areas became manageable, we handed them over to newly trained Iraqi police (whom we kept a watchful eye on) and used the relieved US forces elsewhere to continue tightening the noose*". US troops gradually gained the upper hand over the insurgents. Soldiers and local security forces lived and worked together in joint security stations throughout the city. Tactical census patrols (described in Chapter 2) improved intelligence. The tribal councils selected mayors and local leaders to rebuild the human infrastructure of the city. By Feb 07, violence decreased by nearly 70%. By summer 2007 attacks practically ceased in Ramadi.

The Anbar Awakening

141. The Ramadi operation was central to the 'Anbar Awakening', the backlash against AQI by the Sunni population of Anbar. In mid-2006 this centred on Sheikh Sattar abu Risha of the Dulaimi federation. Although himself a relatively minor sheikh, Sattar provided a focus for tribal opposition to AQI; MNF's enthusiasm prevailed over continuing GOI reluctance, and Sattar's tribesmen were co-opted in large numbers into the Iraqi Police (IP). A blind eye was turned to his extra-legal streams of revenue generation. Sattar's success in resisting, surviving and making money proved exemplary; more sheikhs brought more men, and by the end of 2007 the forces ranged against AQI had doubled in size.

142. The results were striking. In Sep 06 [REDACTED] a USMC intelligence officer, assessed that "*AQI is the dominant organisation of influence in Al Anbar, surpassing the nationalist insurgents, the Iraqi Government and MNF in its ability to control the day-to-day life of the average Sunni.*"²³ A year later the situation had been transformed. In Dec 07, the Commanding General of MNF West was able to report 10 straight months of decreasing incidents and a fall in attacks of some 90%, and to claim credibly that "*we have kicked Al Qa'ida out of Anbar.*" IP numbers had more than doubled,

²³ *A Thin Blue Line in the Sand* by Carter Malkosia published by Democracy, a journal of ideas dated summer 2007.

from 10,600 to 25,800, with thousands more candidates keen to join. AQI strength had fallen from some 12,000 in mid 2007 to 3,500 in early 2008.

143. Sattar's eventual assassination by AQI caused a temporary hiatus, but the overall momentum of the AA was maintained by his brother, who inclined it further towards mainstream politics. One of the AA's first successes was to re-establish the Anbar Provincial Council (PC), and since then it progressively strengthened its links with mainstream politics and the GOI. In the PC elections of Feb 09, the AA's candidates won the most votes and the most seats, and were the power-brokers for the election of the Governor. *"The Awakening is an economic and political entity now, and our strategy is financial and economic"*, said its leader Abu Risha, although there are still occasional veiled threats to *"transfer our entity from a political to a military one"* to counter opponents; although essentially the AA now had an effective working relationship with the GOI. In fact, some of its main difficulties were with senior Sunni elements of that Government, who saw it as a serious political competitor.

144. This tipping point in Anbar was dependent on concentration of US forces into an Iraqi city, so running contrary to the Transition strategy. Its success came too late to influence the change in US strategy described below, but the 'Ready First' in Ramadi were the first brigade to be visited by General Petraeus when he assumed command of MNF-I.

Transition's Failure and the Decision to Surge

145. Throughout 2006 CG TRADOC, Lt Gen Petraeus, led the US Army/USMC effort to revise COIN doctrine. This resulted in the publication of FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* which subsequently informed US operations and tactics in 2007 - 09.

146. By mid-2006, it was clear that the Coalition's focus on supporting the elected GOI and defeating the Sunni insurgents and AQI was adding to the problem rather than solving it. Supporting the Shi'a-led government only fuelled continued violence from and disengagement by the Sunni minority. In turn, the Shi'a government was unable to provide basic services, to lead the counterinsurgency effort and to take any serious steps to reconcile the country politically. Several destabilising forces emerged to disrupt and frustrate Iraq's stabilisation and development: the insurgencies; communal power struggles; weak and divided institutions; destabilising aims and fears of the participants, and regional interference which verged on being a foreign-fuelled proxy war. Without a strong, impartial and effective government, the militant ethno-sectarian factions used violence and subversion to oppress and intimidate sections of the population. It was a *'zero-sum game'* where factions fought to secure their political and economic power; a struggle for the division of power and resources among and within ethnic and sectarian communities. In response, the Iraqi population returned to its foundations of tribe, sect or ethnic group and society, polarised under the Ba'athist regime, fractured along ethnic and sectarian lines.

147. During the summer of 2006, a small group of serving and retired military officers, and civilian strategists concluded that the US policy of Transition in Iraq was flawed. Force reductions, while politically attractive in terms of reducing the casualty rate, were adding to the problem, not solving it. The principal protagonists were Gen (Ret'd) Keane, ██████████ a former West Point

history professor who worked at the American Enterprise Institute, and the then Maj Gen Ray Odierno, who had been selected to take command of MNC-I in early Dec 06. Keane used his position as an influential, credible retired officer to challenge the accepted view of US policy with its leading proponents in the Department of Defense. He argued with them persuasively enough to prompt an internal analysis of the concept of a surge, and this, in turn, gave him the opportunity to influence President Bush personally.²⁴

148. This coincided with an internal MNF-I assessment that concluded, “*we are failing to achieve our objectives in economic development, governance, communicating and the security lines of operation*”.²⁵ The prerequisite to success, the MNF-I report identified, “*will be protecting the Iraqi population from the violence spurred on by AQI and extremist organizations such as JAM.*” The key to making political progress was to reduce sectarian violence. This meant having to “*retain the cleared areas to guarantee a sustained security,*” which in turn meant there was “*a need for and a mission for a surge of forces.*”²⁶

149. In early Dec 06, Keane and ██████ presented their case at the Pentagon and then to the President. They argued that the campaign in Iraq, which was vital to US security, was at a critical point. The approach to eliminate the insurgency by political reconciliation and accommodation had failed and widespread sectarian violence threatened the whole campaign. Focussing on Baghdad, which they identified as the decisive point, they argued that, through a quick, decisive change in US policy, security and stability could be restored. The essence of their proposal was:

- a. We must balance our focus on training Iraqi soldiers with a determined effort to secure the Iraqi population and contain the rising violence. Securing the population has never been the primary mission of the U.S. military effort in Iraq, and now it must become the first priority.
- b. We must send more American combat forces into Iraq and especially into Baghdad to support this operation to support clear-and-hold operations sufficient to improve security and set conditions for economic development, political development, reconciliation, and the development of ISFs to provide permanent security.
- c. American forces, partnered with Iraqi units, will clear high-violence Sunni and mixed Sunni-Shi'a neighbourhoods, primarily on the west side of the city.
- d. After those neighbourhoods are cleared, US soldiers and Marines, again partnered with Iraqis, will remain behind to maintain security, reconstitute police forces, and integrate police and Iraqi Army efforts to maintain the population's security.
- e. As security is established, reconstruction aid will help to re-establish normal life, bolster employment, and, working through Iraqi officials, strengthen Iraqi local government.

²⁴ See Ricks, *The Gamble*, pp. 74-104; Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends*, pp. 30-36.

²⁵ MNF-I Campaign Progress Review, December 2006.

²⁶ *Idem*.

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- f. Securing the population strengthens the ability of Iraq's central government to exercise its sovereign powers.²⁷

150. This advice was not supported by either the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the commander CENTCOM, but five days later President Bush announced his new intentions: "I'm inclined to believe that we do need to increase our troops," he said. "And I talked about this to Secretary of Defence Gates, and he is going to spend some time talking to the folks in the building, come back with a recommendation to me about how to proceed forward on this idea."²⁸ In Jan 07, the White House published its new strategy for Iraq, 'The New Way Forward'.²⁹

The Joint Campaign Plan is Adjusted

151. With new COIN doctrine published and planning for the Surge underway, Lt Gen Petraeus was appointed to command MNC-I in Feb 07. During his Senate confirmation hearing, Petraeus affirmed that "making security of the population, particularly in Baghdad, and in partnership with Iraqi forces, [was to be] the focus of the military effort."³⁰

152. Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker quickly developed a campaign plan intended to create enough political space for the Iraqi government to make progress towards the long term political goals which insurgent violence had prevented. To achieve this would require security to be established locally, what MNF-I defined as "sufficient protection against hostile acts to enable effective civic and civil life"³¹, and by encouraging local political accommodations and economic development.

153. In Mar 07, Petraeus issued initial guidance to his staff in Baghdad based on the findings of a review he commissioned when he arrived. The Joint Strategic Assessment Team (JSAT), a multi-disciplinary team of experts, identified the fundamental changes to the threat and the operational situation since the last major review in 2006 and provided three major findings:

- a. Success would not be possible without accommodation and reconciliation among the competing sects, factions and parties, which meant that the political line of operation had to be the main effort.
- b. Conflicting factors had resulted in slower progress than previously expected: the increasing application of Iraqi sovereignty, which increasingly hampered US political

²⁷ Kagan, *Choosing Victory*, p. 1.

²⁸ Peter Baker, "U.S. Not Winning War in Iraq, Bush Says for 1st Time", *Washington Post*, 20 December 2006. Kaplan and Keane explained their plans in Frederick W. Kagan and Jack Keane "The Right Type of 'Surge'; Any Troop Increase Must Be Large and Lasting", *Washington Post*, 27 December 2006.

²⁹ The White House, *Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq*, Office of the Press Secretary, 10 January 2007, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-3.html.

³⁰ "General Petraeus's Opening Statement", Transcript, *New York Times*, 23 January 2007; Gen. David H. Petraeus, "The Way Ahead in Iraq," *Military Review*, March-April 2007, p. 3.

³¹ MNF-I Joint Campaign Plan, November 2007.

freedom in Iraq; reducing support for the Coalition presence; and slow development of Iraqi ministerial capacity, largely as a result of sectarianism and corruption.

c. It identified the key tasks the campaign needed to implement: protect the Iraqi population from criminal and extremist organizations; break the cycle of sectarian violence; establish representative and responsive government; ensure effective application of the Rule of Law; and create sustained economic development.

154. Following the Mar 07 review, Petraeus concluded that the original thrust of the campaign plan remained broadly relevant but short to mid-term objectives had become disconnected and this was likely to prevent long-term plans from being achieved. The JSAT and staff from MNF-I and the US Embassy then re-wrote the JCP to provide a plan which linked the creation of short-term, localized security across Iraq, through sustained Iraq-led security in the mid-term, to longer-term Iraqi national development.

155. Petraeus' first campaign plan was not a revolutionary change but it introduced new themes:

a. First, in line with FM 3-24, was the central importance of the political Line Of Operation (LOO). Military operations were to focus on protecting the population, which became the campaign's centre of gravity, shifting under Petraeus's direction from maintaining support within the Coalition to the securing the broad support of the Iraqi people for the GOI. All other LOOs were to be focussed toward the goal of established legitimate national and regional governance.

b. Second, the JCP placed renewed emphasis on regional diplomatic initiatives designed to secure an international and regional environment in which Iraq could flourish.

c. Third, it introduced major cross-cutting initiatives to engage with disenfranchised but reconcilable actors – principally Sunni – to move them away from violence and to reintegrate them into Iraqi political, economic and social development.

d. Finally, actions had to take place in partnership with the GOI and the *“transition of security responsibility had to take place at a responsible rate based on conditions and the GOI's capacity.”*³²

These themes were reflected in a revised mission, developed personally by Petraeus in discussion with President Bush; *“The coalition, in partnership with the government of Iraq, employs integrated political, security, economic and diplomatic means, to help the people of Iraq achieve sustainable security by the summer of 2009.”*³³

156. The plan was a crucial step forward in terms of the considerable collaborative civilian and military effort made in Baghdad to develop it. The planning process, although ostensibly military,

³² MNF-I Joint Campaign Plan, 26 November 2007, Preface.

³³ For a more detailed description of the campaign plan see Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends*, pp. 176-177.

and not readily embraced by the State Department staff, drew a wide range of ideas together, and the planning process started to shape the behaviour of all the agencies involved.³⁴

Execution

157. Just as Petraeus drew in experts to form the JSAT, so he and Odierno brought in proven counterinsurgency thinkers and practitioners, such as ██████████ a retired Australian Lt Col, the British civilian ██████████ and ██████████ who had set up the US Army's Counterinsurgency Centre at Fort Leavenworth in 2006. Their collective influence was evident.

158. As the Surge brigades arrived in Iraq, their command groups went through a five-day package at the COIN Centre in Taji, where ██████████, later supported by ██████████ a Sandhurst academic, led seminars and gave presentations on counterinsurgency doctrine and best practice from across Iraq. Petraeus gave the closing address to each course and the divisional commander and MNC-I principal planning and operational staff presented their concept of operations and laid out their expectations in terms of approach.

159. In Jun 07, Petraeus published guidance to MNF-I to focus attention on how to secure the population: *"As you read, think through, talk about, and ultimately operationalize these points, always remember that in this environment, 'business as usual' will not be good enough. Complacency will kill us; we must visibly improve security. A sense of urgency and good situational awareness will also be critical. Troopers on the spot, and their immediate instinctive reactions, will win or lose the perception battle at the local level. Everything we do supports and enables this battle of perceptions, locally here in Iraq and also in the global audience."*³⁵

160. He then listed his ten requirements for the conduct of operations. The positive, decisive approach of Petraeus required MNF-I to adopt changing mindsets, taking the offensive against the insurgents to secure the population, and returning to tried and tested counterinsurgency principles. They are summarized below:

- a. Secure the people where they sleep. Population security is our primary mission. And achieving population security



Fig 3. US and Iraqi troops patrol Baghdad.

³⁴ ██████████ discussion with ██████████ Rome, 3 December 2008. ██████████ was the State Department's principal planner in the ██████████

³⁵ Multi-National Force-Iraq Counterinsurgency Guidance, 19 June 2007.

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promises to be an extremely long-term endeavour – a marathon, not a sprint – so focusing on this mission now is essential. This protection must be kept up until the area can be effectively garrisoned and controlled by Iraqi police.

b. Give the people justice and honor. Second only to security, bringing justice to the people and restoring their honor is the key task.

c. Integrate civilian/military efforts — this is an inter-agency, combined arms fight. Close working relationships, mutual respect, and personal interaction between Brigade Combat Team (BCT)/Regimental Combat Team (RCT) commanders and PRT Team Leaders are critical to achieving “*interagency combined arms*”.

d. Get out and walk — move mounted, work dismounted. Stop by, don’t drive by. Patrol on foot to gain and maintain contact with the population and the enemy.

e. We are in a fight for intelligence — all the time. Intelligence is not a “*product*” given to commanders by higher headquarters, but rather something we gather ourselves, through our own operations. Most actionable intelligence will [be] locally produced. Work with what you have.

f. Every unit must advise their ISF partners. Joint Security Stations and Combat Outposts have put coalition and Iraqi forces shoulder-to-shoulder throughout the battlespace. Regardless of mission, any coalition unit operating alongside ISF is performing a mentoring, training, and example-setting role.

g. Include ISF in your operations at the lowest possible level. Units should build a genuine, field-based partnership with local ISF units: move, live, work, and fight together.

h. Look beyond the IED — get the network that placed it. Over time, units that adopt a pro-active approach to IEDs will degrade enemy networks and push back the IED threat in their area. This will ultimately save more lives than a purely reactive approach.

i. Be first with the truth. Tell the truth, stay in your lane, and get the message out fast. Be forthright and never allow an enemy lie to stand unchallenged.

j. Make the people choose. People in Iraq exercise choice collectively, not just individually; win over local leaders to encourage the community to shift to the side of the new Iraq.³⁶

The Baghdad Security Plan – Operation FARDH AL QANOON

161. In Jun 07, the ISF supported by the 30,000 US reinforcements made available by the Surge,

³⁶ *Idem*.

launched the Baghdad Security Plan to secure the population and to take control of Baghdad. Its objectives were to secure Baghdad and to clear what were referred to as insurgent 'belts' surrounding the city. These were suburbs and outlying towns which were being used by Sunni insurgents and AQI as base areas, particularly for the projection of suicide car bombs into Baghdad.

162. Lt Gen Odierno's plan pre-dated the announcement of the Surge by a month, but it was designed explicitly to make use of the surge troops to secure the population.³⁷ By Nov 07, the operation's results were apparent and that albeit fragile security, which had been so lacking in Iraq since the invasion of 2003, had returned to Baghdad. The Times reported: *"There has been striking success in the past few months in the attempt to improve security, defeat al-Qaeda sympathisers and create the political conditions in which a settlement between the Shi'a and the Sunni communities can be reached. This has not been an accident but the consequence of a strategy overseen by General David Petraeus in the past several months. While summarised by the single word 'surge' his efforts have not just been about putting more troops on the ground but also employing them in a more sophisticated manner"*.³⁸

163. ██████████, one of Petraeus' COIN advisors, considered that the operation was qualitatively different from any operation in Iraq over the previous four years.³⁹ While a number of factors contributed to the much improved security situation – the Sunni 'Awakening', the increased US troop numbers, a much increased ISF presence and capability, and Moqtada al Sadr's cessation of hostilities – for the US military, having a doctrine was an important factor.⁴⁰

164. MNC-I's plan embodied FM 3-24 but adapted Clear-Hold-Build into a concept of operations of Clear-Control-Retain. ██████████ (Odierno's planner) explained that the corps planners believed that using a commonly understood terminology was important: *"Clear/Control/Retain was an attempt to put US 'doctrinal' terms against the problem. At the MNC-I level we all pretty much understood what Clear/Hold/Build meant but they were not terms that were found in our doctrine – something a Soldier could look at in a manual and understand. Clear, Control and Retain are all specific doctrinal terms with specific meanings. Of course, these do not include things like reconciliation, reconstruction, economic development, etc. – those were added later. In many ways it was not much different than Clear/Hold/Build, at least not in the effect we were attempting to accomplish."*⁴¹

165. The plan focused on securing the people where they lived; operations would be intelligence and Iraqi Government-led; areas were to be cleared of insurgents and then held and secured by Iraqi

³⁷ Brian Bennett, "The General", *Time Magazine*, 30 November 2008. See also Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge In Iraq, 2006-2008*, London: Allen Lane, 2009, p. 105.

³⁸ "The Petraeus Curve: Serious success in Iraq is not being recognised as it should be", *The Times*, 3 November 2007.

³⁹ David Kilcullen, *Understanding Current Operations in Iraq*, posted at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/06/understanding-current-operatio/> 26 June 2007.

⁴⁰ Peter Mansoor, "How The Surge Worked", *Washington Post*, 10 August 2008. Mansoor, like Petraeus, is at pains to make clear that the Surge was not the only reason why security improved in Baghdad and more generally across Iraq. See Gen. David H. Petraeus, *21st Century Leadership: Lessons from the U.S. Military*, Remarks delivered at the Institute of Politics, Harvard University, 21 April 2009; www.iop.harvard.edu/Multimedia-Center/All-Videos/21st-Century-Leadership-Lessons-from-the-U.S.-Military.

⁴¹ ██████████ email to author, 28 October 2008.

and Coalition forces at the same time as political and economic development programmes got underway. Iraqi and Coalition forces were to establish “*localized contacts, collect excess weapons, and use human intelligence to detain large numbers of suspected militants.*”⁴² Unlike previous operations, security forces were to remain in the areas they had secured and to work to reduce the threat of violence and intimidation which sat over so much of Iraq since 2003.

166. The success of the Anbar Awakening sparked an understandable desire to repeat the model in the other Sunni provinces. It led to a US-led programme which recruited, trained and equipped some 103,000 Iraqis, over 80% Sunni, many of whom were former insurgents. Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) manned checkpoints and conducted static guards and ‘neighbourhood watch’ type tasks, with similar success to that achieved in Anbar.

Tactical Execution

167. The tactical execution of the Surge in Baghdad is illustrated in the Vignette describing the representative experiences of US Battlegroup 1-4 Cav. Considerable use was made of obstacles to canalise civilian movement in and out of neighbourhoods, thus allowing better control of the population and protection against death squads and suicide bombers. Use was made of natural obstacles including canals. But US forces erected many long walls of concrete Jersey barriers to create ‘*gated communities*’. The increase in force levels meant that for the first time in the city areas that were cleared, US and Iraqi forces subsequently held those areas. This gained the trust of the population, resulting in improved flow of intelligence from civilians and the CLCs. Bing West described the operation as follows: “*Inside Baghdad there was a steady rhythm. Everyone could see it coming. Every few weeks the concrete caterpillars advanced across the city, walling people in – or out. You could walk between many openings in the Jersey barriers, but cars were blocked or*



*canalised. While traffic jams increased, car bombings dropped. Every few weeks bulldozers and cranes constructed another joint security station or combat outpost. US and Iraqi forces moved in. At first nothing seemed to change. Then little by little, the residents and the soldiers got to know one another. Cell phone numbers were exchanged. Tips started to come in. Worried about betrayal, insurgents and high profile criminals moved out. The one hundred odd combat outposts and joint security stations in Baghdad blanketed the city, with the major exceptions of Sadr City, Kadhimiyah and Shula. These were the strongholds of the JAM.”*⁴³

Fig 4. 82nd Airborne troopers site a Jersey Barrier in eastern Baghdad.

⁴² Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iraq's Sectarian and Ethnic Violence and Its Evolving Insurgency: Developments through Spring 2007*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 April 2007, p. 66.

⁴³ Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, New York 2009.

Sequencing

168. The force level had increased significantly. Not only were five additional US brigades in action, but the capability of the Iraqi Army had improved considerably. Every former Sunni insurgent who changed sides represented not only a gain for the coalition, but also a loss for the enemy. Even so, MNC-I could not be strong everywhere and in the first half of 2007 Maliki was reluctant to allow US forces to tackle Shi'a militias. So the deployment of US troops in Baghdad focussed on Sunni neighbourhoods and their interfaces with Shi'a areas. There were neither the Coalition force levels, nor the Iraqi Government will to attack the JAM. So the main body of the JAM in exclusively Shi'a areas such as Sadr City were largely left alone.

1-4 Cavalry (1-4 CAV) in Baghdad

In Mar 07, a US Army cavalry squadron (the equivalent of a British battlegroup) deployed as part of the Surge into Doura, a Sunni neighbourhood in Rashid, at that time the most violent part of Baghdad. In its first thirty days in Doura, 1-4 CAV of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, was subjected to more than fifty-two attacks, over 70% of which were IED attacks. Sunni insurgents had unrestricted freedom of movement to place IEDs almost wherever they wanted.

1-4 CAV's mission was to conduct "*combat, stability, and support operations in coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces to defeat Al Qaeda and irreconcilable extremists, neutralize insurgent and militia groups, and gain the support of the people in order to reduce violence, protect the population in [it AO], and secure the eastern flank of [the neighbouring task force].*"

[REDACTED] faced two categories of insurgent, AQI and disgruntled Iraqis. AQI hid among the population and intimidated it, trying to separate Coalition Forces from the public by fostering the belief that Doura's desperate economic and social conditions were in some way the fault of the Coalition. It coerced support on the pretext that without AQI, JAM would come into the district to kill innocent Sunnis. As it did elsewhere in Iraq, AQI recruited the young and uneducated and used money from criminal activity to turn insurgency into employment for young men with no prospects.

The GOI perpetuated this by not providing any essential services, no legal system, and doing nothing to counter the perception among Sunnis that it was subject to Persian influence on all its policy decisions. With no governance extending from the GOI, [REDACTED] was the *de facto* government.

To start with, he had virtually no intelligence to work with. However, by 30 Jun 07, and reflecting the effort [REDACTED] put into building the intelligence picture from the ground up in a very Kitson-like approach, it had thirty-six sources. [REDACTED] soon realized that the enemy was hiding in plain view and that his unit could not "*detain or kill [his] way to victory.*" It was, instead, about the people. He readjusted his plan so that he could re-establish authority over the population, physically isolate the population from the insurgents, and establish a robust intelligence network. His approach was to make contact with the population, protect and

control it, collect intelligence and win the support of the population. At the same time, operations would seek to “*purge the insurgents from the population.*” [REDACTED] plan also acknowledged the long-term solution through establishing and legitimizing local security efforts, and through local elections.

Making contact with and protecting the population meant, first and foremost, providing a continuous presence on the streets so he put two platoons on the streets 24 hours a day for the duration of the tour. [REDACTED] notes that this had an immediate effect: “*In the 10 days following this tactic, IED attacks dropped to four—with two of those found prior to detonation—and civilian murders dropped to only one.*” The troops began to realize that the longer they were out, the safer they were, not least because their permanent presence meant that it was difficult for the insurgents to plant IEDs undetected.

[REDACTED] fostered a very active interest in intelligence gathering, encouraging his soldiers to be curious. 1-4 CAV took photographs of everyone they met, platoon commanders visited every house, where the people were generally much more open and informative, and spoke to everyone they could. They gradually gained the confidence of the general population, and since they knew where people lived, and they conditioned the population to their visits, there was no need to mount large arrest operations. Platoons simply went to the target house and detained the suspect. Population control measures were imposed across Baghdad with a curfew imposed. Large concrete barriers were used to isolate troubled districts, with checkpoints opened to control general movement and channel insurgents.

Coupled with the intelligence effort, 1-4 CAV set about improving essential services. This included attempting to repair the dilapidated electricity supply, clearing and disposing of rubbish, running clinics and providing micro-loans to stimulate the local economy.

[REDACTED] operation brought fuel into the neighbourhood, thus avoiding insurgent-run price rackets, hired trusted and proven contractors and hired local workers. This approach followed FM 3-24 exactly: “*Counterinsurgents should use every opportunity to help the populace and meet its needs and expectations. Projects to improve economic, social, cultural, and medical needs can begin immediately. Actions speak louder than words.*”

Attacks against 1-4 CAV reached their height in Jun 07 but they quickly fell away as the final surge brigade took its place in Baghdad, the operation to build the concrete walls got underway, the small-scale, local development projects started to improve the economic situation and [REDACTED] approach started to have effect. The recruitment of Sons of Iraq to provide local security within Doura (a programme which ran throughout Sunni areas in Iraq and which brought a great many Sunni insurgents across to the GOI) from September saw a further marked reduction in violence, to the point where in November and December there were no attacks at all. In Jan 08, most remarkably, given the security situation less than nine months before, displaced Shi'a families started to return to Doura, although there was a small increase in violence as a result.

[REDACTED] summarized his battalion's achievements: “*In just over four months, using the 'close encounters' strategy, and a constant presence, we forged a strong alliance with the local population, denying the insurgents the ability to operate effectively. In fact, 1-4 CAV was not*

attacked inside our area of operations in any way over the final six months of our time there. We detained 264 insurgents and transferred over 80 percent of them to prison. Twenty of those cases were tried in the Iraqi criminal court system. Parks and soccer fields replaced burning piles of trash, hundreds of stores reopened, and happy customers filled formerly empty streets." A journalist made the comparison between Doura before 1-4 CAV and as its tour came to an end: *"A Sunni neighborhood in the Dora section of Baghdad is a showcase for our counterinsurgency successes. Once, for Americans to come here was a 'deliberate combat operation,' in the words of [REDACTED]. Then, in late September, the neighborhood turned. Now, it is 'what right looks like.'"*

Taken from 'The Validity of British Army Counter Insurgency Doctrine After the War In Iraq 2003-2009', Cranfield University PhD Thesis
[REDACTED]

169. The operational design was that first Op FARDH AL QANOON would stabilise Baghdad while AQI in the belts around Baghdad would be kept off balance by raids. Then MNC-I would mount Op PHANTOM THUNDER to control the farmland and belts around Baghdad. Finally Op PHANTOM STRIKE would re-establish stability in Diyala Province and its capital Baqubah. Subsequent operations would aim to stabilise Mosul. Then MNF-I would turn its attention to countering the Shi'a Militias in Baghdad, Basra and elsewhere. So the main effort was initially to be countering AQI.

170. The increased coalition presence along the Sunni/Shi'a interfaces would help protect the Sunni population against Shi'a death squads. But the Shi'a "Special Groups" who were attacking coalition troops, including with EFP devices, [REDACTED]. This was described by Bing West as follows: *"The Special Operations Command was responsible for most of the senior AQI and Shiite militia leaders killed or captured in Iraq. Odierno had stymied the death squads by inserting US soldiers along the sectarian fault lines, while McChrystal⁴⁴ unleashed his commandos on nightly forays. The average tenure of a JAM brigade commander was less than two months. A querulous Moqtada Sadr antagonised Maliki by withdrawing his ministers from the cabinet in February. In retaliation Maliki loosened the restraints on the Emergency Response Unit of the Interior Ministry – hardened commandos who worked closely with McChrystal's units. JAM's organisation was under nightly assault, with the leaders imprisoned in American jails, where they couldn't be released by complaisant Iraqi judges. In response many of JAM's top leaders pulled out of Baghdad and took cadres of their best fighters south to Karbala and Basra where pickings were easier. Those remaining in Baghdad generally ceased anti-Sunni raids that drew a response from commando units. JAM though kept control of the Shi'ite population in most districts. The Americans did not establish combat outposts in Shi'ite neighbourhoods with orders to protect the Shi'ite population from JAM and the Sunni population from Al Qaeda. Plus it would have been politically embarrassing, if not fatal, to admit that the Iraqi Government could control neither the Sunni insurgent movement nor the Shi'ite militias organised by its own political leaders."*⁴⁵ This was complemented by a political and military effort to counter [REDACTED]; and support for these groups.

⁴⁴ The then Lieutenant General McChrystal commanded Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) from 2003 until 2008.

⁴⁵ Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, New York 2009.

171. But until Mar 08, the Iraqi government and security forces were reluctant to confront the JAM, so battalion and brigade commanders were limited in the effect they could have against the JAM. The areas around some Shi'a mosques and shrines were treated as exclusion zones to US troops. Most mainstream JAM chose not to shoot at US troops, but EFPs continued to be emplaced.

172. Op PHANTOM THUNDER consisted of simultaneous offensives by US forces throughout central Iraq. MND-N cleared the long-festering city of Baqubah northeast of Baghdad. MND-C cleared the areas east and southeast of Baghdad, including the AQI stronghold in Arab Jabour, south of the capital. MND-C also interdicted al Qaeda's ability to transport weapons and personnel along the Tigris River. MND-W cleared al Qaeda's sanctuaries west of Baghdad, from the capital to Fallujah, and to the Lake Tharthar northwest of the capital. Meanwhile, MND-B continued Op FARDH AL-QANOON in Baghdad. The operation concluded in August. By that time, Iraqi and Coalition forces had conducted 142 battalion-level joint operations: 6,702 suspects were detained; 1,196 insurgents were killed and 419 others were wounded; 382 high-value targets were also killed or captured during PHANTOM THUNDER; additionally, 1,113 weapons caches were discovered and more than 2,000 IEDs and vehicle-borne IEDs were found and neutralized.

173. The follow-on MNC-I operation, PHANTOM STRIKE, was launched immediately as another corps-level offensive. It aimed to prevent AQI, Sunni, and Shi'a insurgent elements from reconstituting their forces in Baghdad, its belts, or elsewhere, seeking to destroy the remnants of enemy groups, eliminate any new safe havens and preventing Shi'ite militias from taking over territory once controlled by al Qaeda. Lt Gen Odierno described the Corps approach: *"This week, we launched Op PHANTOM STRIKE, a series of targeted operations designed to intensify pursuit of extremist elements across Iraq. With the elimination of safe havens and support zones due to PHANTOM THUNDER, al Qaeda and Shi'a extremists have been forced into ever-shrinking areas, and it is my intent to pursue and disrupt their operations. Over the coming weeks, we plan to conduct quick strike raids against remaining extremist sanctuaries and staging areas, carry out precision targeting operations against extremist leadership and focus missions to counter the extremists' lethal accelerants of choice, the IED and the vehicle-borne IED. We will continue to hunt down their leadership, deny them safe haven, disrupt their supply lines and significantly reduce their capability to operate in Iraq."*⁴⁶

Building Security

174. The surge reversed the process of transition. Initially it was highly controversial in the US, particularly as casualties rose when US forces deployed into contested areas and continued to rise as AQI fought back. But the approach worked. American military efforts, fighting alongside the Iraqi security forces, and using money from the CERP, started to win round the people and turned Sunni insurgents from fighting with to fighting alongside US troops. By the end of the summer, the Baghdad Security Plan was achieving significant effect and US casualties dropped dramatically. Overall by the end of 2007 Baghdad saw a 90% reduction in murders, an 80% fall in attacks on citizens, and a 70% decline in VBIEDs.

⁴⁶ Department of Defense Press Briefing dated 17 Aug 07. Published by the Institute for the Study of War.

175. Concurrently, Petraeus and Crocker sought to persuade Maliki and his government to act on behalf of the whole of Iraq, not just their Shi'a supporters. A major part of this was persuading Maliki to understand the threat that Shi'a militias, particularly the JAM, posed to the prosperity and stability of the country. The longer the JAM was left to itself, the deeper the roots it put down and the more [REDACTED] disrupted the legitimate economy. So once AQI had been defeated it would be necessary to confront Shi'a extremists and militias, politically and militarily. Although MNF-I had identified the eventual need for this, no concrete plans were made.

176. It was also necessary to influence Maliki to use the Iraqi Army impartially, using the Iraqi MOD, rather than Maliki's office, to direct operations. A decisive point was reached in Aug 07 when a JAM group in Karbala attacked mosque security guards. The Iraqi Army fought back and Maliki flew to Karbala and took charge of the security operation, including personally arresting a JAM leader. This action was widely supported by the Iraqi media. Sadr declared a largely meaningless cease fire, [REDACTED]

MNDSE 2006-07

177. With the arrival of HQ 1 (UK) Div in MNDSE at the start of TELIC 7 in Dec 05, emphasis on setting the conditions for transition to Iraqi control increased. The term 'Provincial Iraqi Control' (PIC) emerged to better reflect what the Iraqis were achieving, not what Coalition Forces had done.⁴⁷ At the campaign level, Transition and PIC were the Main Effort; these translated into SSR at the tactical level and it was with SSR that British forces remained largely involved.

178. The war had become increasingly unpopular in the UK. Ministers agreed in Jan 06 that Iraq was our top overseas security priority and it remained so throughout the year, although the announcement of UK participation in Stages 3 and 4 of ISAF expansion into Afghanistan in early 2006 increasingly placed Iraq as a lower priority to what was to become a second enduring medium scale commitment. In Mar 06, the Defence Secretary announced plans to reduce UK force levels in Iraq from 8,000 to approximately 7,200.

179. The GOC Maj Gen Cooper took steps to recast the campaign as one of counterinsurgency not peace support: *"I encouraged my subordinate commanders to think things through against the COIN principles, and so we used them always."*⁴⁸ Cooper also noted the importance of a broad approach to counterinsurgency: *"If you consider 1 (UK) Div on warfighting operations, it consists of infantry, armour, guns, aviation, artillery, engineers and logistics. Which do you consider to be the most important element? None of them; it is the sum of the parts that is important; the synergy they create. It is the same with COIN; everyone is part of it; it is the sum of military operations offensive and defensive, Iraqi leadership engagement and development, the training of the ISF in SSR,*

⁴⁷ 060719-GOC MNDSE.

⁴⁸ Maj Gen John Cooper, interview with author, Warminster, 20 June 2007.

*reconstruction operations and, just as with conventional operations, it is the synergy that comes from the sum of all of the component parts that will make the difference.*⁴⁹

180. Basra Provincial Council's disengagement with British forces continued to stall the momentum gained through earlier efforts. When 20 Armd Bde arrived in Apr 06, for TELIC 8, the situation was difficult, not just because of the deteriorating security situation. Local government officials had started to show increasing independence and less interest in working with the Coalition. ~~_____~~⁵⁰ The Sunni minority had started to leave the south in response to a campaign of sectarian intimidation and murder, and the threat to Coalition Forces from an increasingly confident enemy was rising.⁵¹

181. On 2 Jun PM Maliki announced a State of Emergency for Basra. Over the summer months, through careful work from military commanders and FCO officials, Basra's Provincial Council started to re-engage with MNDSE and a workable command and control system was established through the creation of the Permanent Joint Coordination Centre (PJCC).

182. HQ 1 (UK) Div had focussed on achieving PIC in the more stable and less populous provinces. Further progress was needed in security and governance and steady improvements during May, June and July through a 20 Armd Bde re-engagement and re-intervention model enabled PIC to take place in Al Muthanna Province on 13 Jul, the first province to achieve this status. Japan announced the withdrawal of its contingent in Al Muthanna Province on 20 Jun. Dhi Qar Province achieved PIC in Sep 06. Both provinces were relatively stable, probably because a balance amongst the various local political forces. In Maysan, Camp Abu Naji, the main battlegroup base in al-Amarah, was handed back to the IA in Aug 06. The camp was immediately looted by the local population and this action alone ensured that all subsequent withdrawals from British held bases were meticulously planned to avoid a repeat of the 'Abu Naji' fiasco.⁵² In overall terms, these developments allowed 20 Armd Bde's effort to be refocused on to the border, where it deployed a light battlegroup into the desert to interdict weapons smuggling, and on Basra, where the armoured infantry withdrawn from Maysan would be later used alongside the only British battlegroup in the city in Op SINBAD.⁵³

Operation SINBAD Strategic Context

183. The strategic context is described by Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup in his testimony to the Iraq Inquiry as CDS. It gives a very clear view of the strategic picture as viewed from London. He testified that, reporting to the Secretary of State for Defence in May 2006, he said:

"Basra is the key. The obstacles there are, one, militias and, two, governance. Neither is substantially in our hands and we need firm action by the government in Baghdad, but, as consent continues to reduce, as we have always foreseen it would, so, too, does our ability to

⁴⁹ Cooper, interview.

⁵⁰ Everard, interview.

⁵¹ POR-20 Armoured Brigade.

⁵² Lamb, interview, Baghdad, 2007.

⁵³ Everard, interview.

effect further significant improvement. The law of diminishing returns is now firmly in play and there is an increasing risk that we become part of the problem rather than of the solution."

He then further testified:

"So my sense was that we needed to shift the dynamics within Basra, that it was essentially about politics and that we had only a very limited time in which to do it..."

"Interference by Iranians was clearly a significant exacerbating factor, but the essential challenge was a political one internally within the Shia community of Basra. It was a struggle for power: political, economic, social, to some extent military, within the different communities of the Shia in Basra..."

"We needed a plan essentially to deal with the militias, and that plan was drawn up by General Shirreff....he named it Operation Salamanca. His intent was to go in, and go in hard militarily and deal with the militias, particularly the Jaysh Al Mahdi militias of the Sadrists. That was our first approach to it. The problem was that any military approach could only succeed in a political context and we didn't have the political context. As the planning for Salamanca proceeded, it became clear to me, and to many others, that it was not going to be able to have the effect that we had hoped. I think I reported, following a visit in September, that: 'Even though political agreement to launch Salamanca has been secured, we do not have agreement to tackle the hard issues, such as militias. Success in Basra will depend on strong political leadership, of which no sign is emerging.' So I was not wholly optimistic that Salamanca would put us on the road to provincial Iraqi control in Basra..."

"I said that we needed to plan our response should Salamanca not succeed. A return to the status quo ante would not be sensible, and I advised that we should look at removing our permanent presence from inside the city in order to force the Iraqis' hand politically. This, bear in mind, was September 2006, and I reported that all of my interlocutors in Iraq had agreed that this would be a sensible proposition. General Chiarelli, in particular, who was then the Commanding General of the Multi National Corps, agreed very strongly. He was hugely frustrated by the political dilution of his Baghdad security plan especially in regard to Sadr City, and he agreed strongly that we should reposition in Baghdad if Salamanca did not deliver."

"In September 2006, Prime Minister Maliki, with the support of Safa Al Safi, blocked Op Salamanca. He insisted that security in Basra was improving and he demanded the release of Jaysh Al Mahdi detainees. That was the end of Salamanca. We went ahead with a reduced plan which was renamed Op Sinbad, but that did not enable us to take on the militias as we wished to, and, at the beginning of October, General Lamb, who was then the Deputy Commanding General of Multi-National Forces in Iraq, reported, first of all, that the Baghdad security plan would not deliver security, and that Sinbad would fall short of our expectations..... We were making clear that we had limited time, and that if we did not reach some kind of political solution, we would not succeed."

The Planning and Execution of Op SINBAD and the 'War against the JAM'

184. HQ 3 (UK) Div took over from HQ 1 (UK) Div in Jul 06. In Baghdad, Op TOGETHER FORWARD had been underway for just over a month. Against this backdrop the GOC, Maj Gen Shirreff, re-assessed Basra's continuing state of insecurity and the impact it was having on progress towards PIC and development in general. Cooper had been clear that Basra was a counterinsurgency campaign and had used the principles from *Counter Insurgency Operations* in planning, but this was not a generally accepted view in PJHQ and the MOD. Shirreff noted: "*there continues to be a belief that we are carrying out some form of Peace Support Operation and that the remedies that applied to Bosnia, apply equally to Iraq. This is not the case, and the way in which hard and soft effects are balanced in a theatre like Iraq needs to be vested in one person. In Iraq, there were several uncoordinated agencies involved in the process, including the FCO, DFID and the [PRT],⁵⁴ there was no suprema; and the consequent effect was dissipated*".⁵⁵

185. The security situation limited freedom of movement for both Coalition Forces and British officials with the result that no momentum could be generated on any of the four lines of operation: "*someone couldn't go and repair the water system because he would get shot if he did.*"⁵⁶ The principal task was, therefore, to restore security and Shirreff assessed that this would require forces to be concentrated on Basra, and for economic effort to be similarly concentrated so that consent could be bought in the short term. Shirreff realized that he needed more forces, in spite of the ongoing troop withdrawals. He also required support of the OGDs, but they would not support the concept of buying in short-term economic effect because it was believed "*it would foster a dependency culture...indeed they believed it to be counter-productive.*"⁵⁷ So Shirreff resolved to do it with whatever he could get.

186. Brig Everard observed: "*The end-state remained the same [PIC for Basra], but in terms of sequencing, the approach changed. The first GOC had considered SSR to be the Main Effort, whereas the second changed that to Security. This meant that MNDSE initially concentrated on the northern three provinces to be delivered to Iraqi Control, leaving me to focus on Basra. On changeover, the Divisional focus shifted to Basra, embarking on a huge Comprehensive Approach operation for Basra City, which involved \$87 million of American money.*"⁵⁸

187. The intention was to put operations onto a more offensive footing and to use co-ordinated inter-agency efforts to address the areas of governance, essential services and economy, as well as security. The result was Op SINBAD. It had three objectives:

- a. Re-establishment of security in Basra by isolating the militants from the mainstream population.

⁵⁴ The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Iraq was civilian-led, FCO-sponsored, and included some military members from the G9 (CIMIC) Branch in HQ MNDSE.

⁵⁵ 070221-GOC MNDSE.

⁵⁶ 070309-COS MNDSE.

⁵⁷ 070309-COS MNDSE.

⁵⁸ 061213-COMD 20 BDE.

- b. Rooting out corrupt police, and offering assistance to the Basrawis through rebuilding.
- c. Micro-economic regeneration.

188.

189. The plan started life as Op SALAMANCA, a much more kinetic operation than that which eventually took place. The original concept was for a mini surge, similar to Op MOTORMAN in Northern Ireland between 31 Jul and 1 Dec 72,⁶¹ *“but the force levels did not permit that; so we had to bite off bits in chunks, by districts; going in by pulses; surging in troops with intelligence-led ‘seize’ operations, whilst simultaneously producing short-term projects (like repairing schools and clearing rubbish) and setting up medium and long term reconstruction projects as well.”*⁶²

190. The intent was that troops were to go into each police station and identify and remove those policemen and officials implicated in corruption and militia activity. In practice, powerful intimidation by the Shi’a death squads prevented that from working. MNC-I initially refused the first plan, so it was repackaged as a reconstruction operation, enabled by Iraqi and Coalition Forces. The first plan had not fully taken into account that the IPS was not a British-style constabulary, but a heavily armed paramilitary force which needed firm military control and strong leadership. Prime Minister Maliki eventually agreed to the plan provided that its military operations were divorced from the redevelopment efforts in both time and space.⁶³ Inevitably, this undermined the original intention to tackle the death squads and militants directly.

191. Iraqi and MNC-I views were folded into the modified concept. In essence, a 48-hour security ‘pulse’ would take control of an area and establish a secure environment, during which Coalition Forces were to deliver immediate impact improvements. During a 28-day ‘pause,’ a high level IA military presence would then be maintained in the area, during which effort would be focussed on improving the IPS through the International Police Advisers’ ‘Police Action Plan.’⁶⁴ Longer-term

⁵⁹ Everard, interview.

⁶⁰ POR-20 Armoured Brigade.

⁶¹ Operation MOTORMAN was conducted in 1972 by the British Army to clear the Catholic no-go areas that had been established. Over 21,000 troops were involved.

⁶² Interview 070221 – GOC MNDSE.

⁶³ POR-20 Armoured Brigade.

⁶⁴ International Police Advisers were provided by ArmorGroup, a private security company, and were to provide the specialist advice and mentoring to the Iraqi Police Service.

projects were to be delivered by Iraqi contractors, employing local people to lay electrical distribution cables, water pipelines or repair roads. At the end of the 'pause,' the IA would leave and the IPS would take over responsibility for the area.

192. Op SINBAD started on 27 Sep 06. An estimated 2,300 Iraqi army troops and 1,000 British soldiers took part in the operations with another 2,000 in reserve. Key to this was to ensure that resources were lined up and ready to be used: *"the immediate soft effects such as clearing rubbish from the streets were done quickly, often without consultation, using Iraqi contractors. We had Schools' Packs ready with things like desks, chairs, blackboards and so on, which were delivered whilst Iraqi and British Army Engineers repaired the buildings. The medium-term improvements used our (Coalition) money and, although they were often based on our ideas, these had been sold to and endorsed by the Iraqi-led Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committees; this served to empower the Iraqi authorities. You have to work through an empowered Iraqi structure and you have to remember that, at the top of everyone's list of priorities was 'Essential Services'".*⁶⁵

193. During its remaining time in Basra, 20 Armd Bde launched fifty-six deliberate strike operations, made 139 arrests and detained seventy-five key militant JAM members.⁶⁶ Strike operations proved to be vital in taking the fight to the enemy. Everard noted: *"of 68 strike operations, only one hit the wrong house. I was hugely impressed by the ability of a large, reinforced brigade HQ to co-ordinate a very complex operation where our traditional enablers were disabled by circumstance. The difficulty in building the intelligence picture and then sharing it [because of national restrictions] is a case in point."*⁶⁷

194. By now, the force level review⁶⁸ conducted at the beginning of the year by PJHQ was underway and a steady drawdown of troops had started. One view offered was that these *"were mathematically rather than tactically-based."*⁶⁹ On 13 Oct CGS commented publicly on the situation in Iraq, describing the British Army as 'part of the problem in Basra'. He also stated that the Army was involved in two wars and it was important to ensure that the combined commitment did not break the Army.

195. In Nov 06, 19 Lt Bde took over from 20 Armd Bde on what was now Op TELIC 9. It fitted straight into Op SINBAD, picking up the high tempo of the operation and arriving in time for the fifth 'pulse.' It completed a further thirteen pulses in Basra city and four more outside it before the operation ended. On 25 Dec, at PM Maliki's request, UK troops launched an operation to disband the Basra Serious Crimes Unit; however the Provincial Council stopped contact with UK forces in protest.

196. Op SINBAD did not achieve the results originally intended. It did not significantly change the political situation in Basra, nor did it increase the appetite of PM Maliki to confront Shia militias. But it did have a positive effect on the Iraqi Army. For example, on Pulse 6 the Iraqi Army deployed

⁶⁵ Interview 061213 Brig Everard.

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ Everard, interview.

⁶⁸ PJHQ carries out six-monthly Force Level Reviews to balance troops to tasks.

⁶⁹ 070309-COS MNDSE.

with a single map and three telephones, sitting in the Police Station throughout the operation whilst seven MNDSE companies were deployed on the ground. By the end of the operation they were running the Pulses and using their own troops. The militias refrained from attacking Iraqi troops. This had an effect on SSR as the IA did not want MiTTs as it put them in danger.

197. Maj Gen Shirreff's conclusions about SINBAD are particularly pertinent: *"We are not particularly good at making plans happen; to make plans happen you must first understand the problem. We didn't know much about Basra but, through SINBAD and the reces and planning we conducted we began to understand more. As we began to understand more, we began to understand the dynamics of the City itself, and then we began to be able to find solutions to its problems.*

*If you compare Basra to Belfast (where we had things like religious maps and a thorough knowledge of relationships built up through framework operations), and compare that to Basra (where we had very little indeed), you may remark that, whereas when I went out on my main recce I found a situation where we had only thirteen multiples [half platoons] available for operating amongst the 1.5 million people in Basra, there were actually 10,000 troops operating amongst the 300,000 population of Belfast."*⁷⁰



Fig 5. A Warrior provides overwatch during Op SINBAD.

198. All of this was against the background of a hard fought conflict between the JAM Shi'a Militia and MNDSE. JAM attacks with IEDs and IDF caused significant UK casualties and there were intense firefights as convoys resupplied our bases. Throughout 2007, IDF attacks on the COB increased. MNDSE took vigorous countermeasures to disrupt and interdict militia rocket teams, including intelligence led strike operations. This required 19 Bde to fight hard to retain the initiative and stay on the front foot against a highly capable enemy who were determined to inflict casualties through indirect fire and IEDs. The brigade conducted seven brigade-level strike operations and over one hundred and twenty at battlegroup level. *"There was a conscious decision to strike early, disrupt the enemy, exploit any intelligence leads and create opportunities in order to ensure that the militia could not gain the upper hand."*⁷¹ Improvements in intelligence fusion and the additional UAV resources contributed to the success of strike operations. These seriously damaged militia capability and leadership. All were focused on disrupting the militia to keep them on the back foot while the

⁷⁰ 070221-GOC MNDSE.

⁷¹ 070709-COMD 19 LT BDE.

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Iraqis moved towards PIC in Basra.⁷² This was also assisted by a change in UK ROE to allow 'hostile intent' to be targeted which was considered essential for counter IED operations. The changes to ROE were achieved in five days which demonstrated a high degree of flexibility by PJHQ.

Repositioning – Op ZENITH

199. Discussing Op SINBAD's failure to change the political situation in Basra and the decision to move out of Basra (Op ZENITH) Air Chief Marshal Stirrup stated⁷³:

"...we needed to break the political logjam. We needed to change the dynamic. Clearly, though, the fact that we had people sitting at locations in Basra City being rocketed and mortared, the fact that we were having to run resupply convoys to those locations that were being attacked and on which we were suffering casualties, and, politically, our forces were not being allowed to do the job for which we were in the city, that's not a sustainable position."

"It is a sad fact that on military operations one sustains casualties. That's the nature of the business. But those casualties must be producing something of strategic benefit if they are to be justifiable, and they certainly weren't in the case of Basra City. But the principal rationale – was actually to find a way forward politically in Basra."

"... in July 2007, Maliki appointed General Mohan as the Basra security coordinator. He took over from General Hamide and I saw Mohan personally at the beginning of July when I was visiting and he told me directly that he wanted UK forces out of Basra City. He said that, if the UK forces left Basra City, he could deal with security, but, if they didn't, nobody could. I stressed to him at the time that, if we were to leave, once we left -- and we could perhaps do so as early as August -- then security in the city would be his responsibility and we would be looking to him to deliver on that."

"...we were not in a position militarily to be able to deliver that security, for the reasons that I have just described. So from our perspective, the best way to advance the security within Basra was to do precisely what Mohan was asking us to do."

"...we were always very concerned about the perception that we would be seen to be bombed out of Basra. That was something that was always on our minds and with which we had to deal, but a far greater risk to our reputation would have been strategic failure in Basra."

"...it was a risk that we were at pains to try and mitigate, but it was a risk that we could not entirely avoid."

⁷² POR-19 Light Brigade.

⁷³ Iraq Inquiry testimony.

"We retained the ability to reintervene in Basra, and, indeed, General Mohan was very clear that, although he wanted us out of the city centre, he did not want us out of the south-east. He saw it as very important that he had this sort of big stick in his club, as it were, with which he could threaten people inside Basra. So we did retain that capability."

200. Op ZENITH was intended to set the conditions for PIC through the repositioning of British forces into operational overwatch which, in turn, would allow the further withdrawal of forces to the UK.⁷⁴ There were a number of variables on which this depended. They included the capability of the Iraqi Army to conduct effective independent operations, the credibility and capability of the IPS, the tactical and logistical challenge of getting British forces out of Basra, and remaining in step with the overall US campaign plan. Op ZENITH began in Jan 07 with the aim of consolidating forces on the Contingency Operating Base (COB) at Basra Airport. Under this programme, the Old State Building in Basra, Shaibah base, Provincial Joint Coordination Centre and Basra Palace were progressively handed over to the Iraqi Armed Forces throughout the year:

201. HQ 3 (UK) Division was relieved as HQ MNDSE by a bespoke team, commanded by Maj Gen Shaw, known as 'Shawforce'. Following on from Op SINBAD, and to complement the Baghdad Security Plan, the division continued to develop ISF capability to conduct centrally co-ordinated operations. Efforts focussed on developing a 'Ring of Steel' around the city with fully manned Vehicle Check Points (VCP) and supporting patrols into neighbouring districts. Operations were centrally co-ordinated at the PJCC and monitored by Coalition Forces, both at the PJCC and at jointly-run VCPs, and through mentoring visits from British forces to the Iraqi Army. Constant monitoring of security proved to be essential, with permanent VCPs in troublesome areas being a concern because of militia intimidation of the ISF.⁷⁵

202. The end state to which operations were focussed remained the handover of responsibility for the security of Basra to the ISF, concurrent with British forces consolidating on the COB. When the operation had been devised during 2006, it was very much in line with the overall concept of Transition for Coalition Forces. V Corps, which was the MNC-I until Dec 06, had written a concept of operations to draw down forces and to handover to the Iraqis in a process of accelerated Transition. A senior staff officer in MNDSE recalls that, *"by the time that we actually deployed, [the previous policy] had been stood on its head and the Americans had chosen 'victory and the surge' over immediate Transition...that put our Operation ZENITH out of kilter with the Corps. The UK and U.S. were on different political trajectories and electoral timelines."*⁷⁶

203. This divergence was increased when the British Government announced in Feb 07 further troops reductions, from 7,100 to just over 5,000. Prime Minister Blair explained, *"We are able to announce this reduction in Force levels because of the growing capacity of the Iraqi security forces"*. Officially the British interpretation of security in Basra was accepted by MNF-I: *"We really see Basra as something that we want to do in the rest of the country. They're a bit further ahead, obviously, in terms of security and in terms of violence than other parts of Iraq."*⁷⁷ However, some

⁷⁴ 080128-COS MNDSE.

⁷⁵ POR-19 Light Brigade.

⁷⁶ 080128-COS MNDSE.

⁷⁷ Rowan Scarborough, "No. 2 General Downplays British Withdrawal", *Washington Examiner*, 26 February 2007.

commentators openly questioned the British view, the validity of the British approach to Basra and the south, and to its understanding and interpretation of counterinsurgency. These tensions would not be resolved for another year.

204. Against this backdrop, in Feb 07, 10 IA Div was ordered to send two battalions to Baghdad to take part in the Baghdad Security Plan. This was a significant development as the same division had refused to take part in operations in Baghdad in Aug 06 and it acted as a metric as to how far their capability as a fighting force had evolved. MNDSE therefore focussed efforts on preparing the two battalions, inspecting their weapons, training, and logistics. Two British four-man teams were embedded alongside the American MiTTs. A senior British officer noted that the *“deployment worked a treat. It was a very British affair; ad hoc and completed by worthy volunteers. The validation from our point of view was that they performed at least as well as any of the other Iraqi battalions during that deployment.”*⁷⁸

205. Nevertheless, the situation in MNDSE was that, *“we were under remit from PJHQ to continue with ZENITH regardless: in order to support the increasing deployment to Afghanistan, we had to continue to drawdown force levels in Iraq. This inevitably caused problems of perception, management and to an extent trust between the Corps and ourselves. We had in fact already had our surge; during Op SINBAD, and there was no appetite for further investment of resources. Moreover, the UK view was that transition was the right thing to do to progress the campaign. Despite [this], we were not acting in isolation; we very deliberately staffed the plan through Corps HQ and would not have achieved Op ZENITH without Corps buy-in in the first place, and they supported us throughout: it was a Corps-owned and Corps-resourced plan.”*⁷⁹

206. The US leadership in Baghdad appeared to accept the view put forward by MNDSE and it supported the approach. The underpinning logic for the British approach was that the British presence was fast losing legitimacy with Basrawis, and that the British presence was the principal reason for violence; remove the British from Basra and the reason for the attacks, which so disrupted life in the city, would be removed. Basra’s security created a politically painful and potentially costly dilemma; if Basra was not secure, PIC could not be justified, but if PIC did not take place, London’s endstate could not be met. If British forces remained, casualties would continue, but British forces could not start to leave until Basra was secure. The difficulty was that 10 IA Div was not in a position to secure it: *“Our challenge was to get 10 Division operating against the militia on the streets of Basra because, in the South, it was the militia who presented the greatest threat to the Coalition.”*⁸⁰

207. 19 Lt Bde handed over to 1 Mech Bde in Apr 07. MNDSE continued to seek to improve security by conducting strike operations against JAM leadership targets, and to transition to PIC by improving the IA’s capabilities. The latter task was, as with previous brigades, the Main Effort, but it was somewhat overshadowed during 1 Mech Bde’s first three months in Basra by the continuing

⁷⁸ Idem.

⁷⁹ 080128-COS MNDSE.

⁸⁰ 071108-CH MITT.

high levels of violence, in particular IDF against the COB, and IED attacks against military operations in the city.

208. Maysan Province was handed over to its governor on 18 Apr and on 16 Jul, the formation of the new 14 IA Div was ordered, with responsibility for Basra province. The problems facing 10 IA Div were summed up by [REDACTED]: who was the Chief MiTT when he stated that: *"10 IA Div recruited almost exclusively from the MNDSE area and there was therefore a reluctance by them to confront people who were essentially their own, on their own doorstep. During the period Dec 06 – Jul 07 two 10 IA Div officers were kidnapped and murdered by the militia. On top of that there was huge mistrust within 10 IA Div; mistrust of their own, the people of Basra and the Coalition who they believed to be stitching them up; forcing them to confront the militia without recourse to the standard of kit that UK troops enjoyed"*. 10 IA Div was redeployed close to the Australian Battlegroup at Tallil Air Base and was replaced by the newly-formed 14 IA Div. It now became the focus of UK military training efforts.

The War against the JAM and the Basra 'Accommodation'

209. Op SINBAD had ended inconclusively; Basra did not want to be won. From early 2007 MNDSE became increasingly embroiled in a self-fuelling cycle of violence with the JAM. In the first six months of the year, the UK lost 29 killed and nearly 160 injured. The incoming brigade commander in May 07 recalled: *"We walked into a war."*⁸¹

210. These difficulties were partly due to critical weaknesses in governance, both national and local. Basra has a history of detachment from Baghdad, based on its distinct economy, demography and geography, and a record of autonomous and even secessionist ambitions. The results of the 2005 Provincial Council elections were unhelpful; the Sadrist declined to stand, excluding themselves from mainstream politics. The victorious Islamic coalition failed to agree on a Governor, allowing the election by default of Muhammad al-Wa'ili, whose Fadhila party had gained only 13 of the 41 seats. For the next four years, Wa'ili deftly circumvented all political and legal attempts to unseat him, consolidating his position at the heart of a black economy based on oil-smuggling, overseen by his militia within the Facilities Protection Service. Other militias - notably the JAM - carved out similar fiefdoms in electricity generation and the ports.

211. A weak Iraqi Government could do little to stop them. Preoccupied with the plethora of more serious threats to its existence, it showed little sustained interest in Basra until early 2008. The effect was to turn the deep south into a kleptocracy, where well-armed political-criminal Mafiosi were able to lock both the central government and the people out of power. The conflict in Basra was therefore fundamentally different to that in Anbar and Baghdad where AQI was essentially nihilistic; escalation was open-ended, with total collapse of the Iraqi secular state an acceptable end-state. Conflict in the Shi'a South was not nihilistic. Even at the height of the violence in 2006/07 the oil and energy infrastructure remained largely undisturbed, though its key nodes had long been identified as critical vulnerabilities by MNF. None of the militias wanted to bring the South to the point of collapse; they simply wanted as large a slice of the cake as possible. MNDSE increasingly

⁸¹ [REDACTED] Chief MiTT Op TELIC 9 POI dated 7 Nov 07.

found itself as an actor in an intra-Shi'a power-struggle. Through its obligation to support a legitimately-elected but corrupt and unpopular Governor, it was slowly but inexorably drawn into confrontation with the JAM. So by early 2007 legitimacy of MNDSE had largely expired. It faced MNF's ubiquitous problem of "finding a way to create a sustainable security architecture that does not require the 'coalition in the loop', thereby allowing Iraq to stabilise and the Coalition to withdraw in favourable strategic circumstances."⁸²

212. The UK considered that Op SINBAD had started to set the conditions for the handover of greater security responsibility to the ISF which would be necessary for the province to achieve PIC. The UK therefore sought to change the conditions of the campaign through early transition to Iraqi leadership and then release resources for Afghanistan. As part of the wider transition plan, over a six-week period in Apr 07, British forces handed back their bases in the Old State Building and the Shat Al Arab Hotel in Basra, the Shaiba Logistic Base at the old airfield south of Basra, which remained the IA Divisional Training Centre (DTC), and at Al Faw. This was recognition of lost and irrecoverable legitimacy, and an active effort to empower the ISF as a more appropriate force.

First Strike

~~REDACTED~~
2 R WELSH BG
OPTELIC 10

Our first operation was a real baptism of fire. We had 30 minutes planning time prior to leaving camp. The powers that be had decided that on this occasion it would be worth striking in daylight, something that was routinely considered too dangerous. En route to the first of 2 houses that we were to strike, the target house changed and therefore some hasty re-planning took place, limited by the very poor communications fit in Snatch. We eventually hit the first house but soon came under small arms attack.

Having arrested 4 young men, we remounted our vehicles and made our way to the second target house. Just short of the target, the lead Snatch of 1 Platoon was hit by an IED that disabled the vehicle but caused no casualties. It managed to limp around the corner before becoming immobilised. At this point we came under heavy small arms fire and took 2 casualties, ~~REDACTED~~ with a gunshot wound to the leg and ~~REDACTED~~ with a shrapnel wound to the ankle.

To add to our challenges, a Snatch that was trying to manoeuvre into a position to hook up the damaged vehicle got stuck in a ditch. Thus we had 2 casualties, 2 stuck vehicles and a decent firefight raging all around us; it was as if OPTAG had written the script and the only thing missing was an observer-controller watching our every move.

Eventually everything was hooked up and we got moving, having decided that we had had enough for our first operation. ~~REDACTED~~ guided the damaged Snatch that was now hooked up to a Warrior Recovery variant through the streets looking through the back doors, because it could only be towed rearwards and very slowly.

⁸² David Kilcullen, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt", Small Wars Journal blog, 29 Aug 07, online at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/>.

Unfortunately it was now around 0700 and we had been on the ground for some time and the enemy had set up a well coordinated ambush on our route out. As we were being lead out by Warrior, the lead vehicle was hit by an RPG, injuring the driver and blocking the route. What followed is what Riflemen now describe as the 'Mogadishu Mile'. We were hemmed in front and rear and took a large amount of small arms and RPG fire. One of the RPGs hit a 2 Platoon Snatch and caused 2 injuries.

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Any journey into the city is an experience in itself; it requires an Armoured Battlegroup to conduct what can only be described as a break-in battle. Recently one journey into the city encountered 14 IEDs along a 2 mile stretch of road alone, not to mention the small arms and RPGs that can be expected. In simple terms it requires a Challenger Squadron to dominate the main approaches into the city, 2 Armoured Infantry companies to picket the route and a strike company at the target end.

213. Maj Gen Shaw, viewed Basra as "*Palermo, rather than Beirut*": a violent but essentially self-limiting competition for power and resources rather than an ideological struggle. He saw the militias as a potentially useful vehicle of social cohesion in a fragmented society where central government authority was weak; a primary form of organising force, a sort of urban tribe. Their power was not dangerous per se; it could be harmful if misapplied, but if harnessed correctly, he felt that it could be productively employed. This chimed with the views of the competent and determined new Iraqi security chief, Maj Gen Mohan, who had arrived in August to head up the Basra Operations Command (BaOC) which controlled all Iraqi Army and Police in the city. Mohan assessed that the UK presence in the city was distorting normal politics and prompting nationalist Basrawis to fight simply to be free of occupation; early PIC would therefore help to clarify their loyalties and undercut public support for the JAM. This was the view highlighted by Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup in his Iraq Inquiry testimony⁸³.

214. This required a twin-track approach: increasing the tempo of strike operations to ramp up the pressure on JAM, whilst simultaneously beginning a search for effective interlocutors; essential to both was a less monolithic understanding of JAM. The first track led to the killing or capture of several leading figures in Basra JAM, amongst them Wissam Abu Qadir, its then leader. The second track required that intelligence assets supporting MNDSE seek to identify potential interlocutors in the JAM. This led to a series of discussions with high-ranking JAM member Sheikh Ahmed al-Fartusi, who had been in detention since 2005. These discussions sought to re-channel Fartusi's intense sense of Iraqi nationalism for productive ends, away from attacks on MNF and towards countering malign Iranian influence in the city. Shaw felt that "*he and I wanted the same things for Basra – prosperity, self-rule, religious moderation, education etc...*" and sought to persuade him that "*he should co-operate with redevelopment instead of attacking it.*"⁸⁴

⁸³ Page 45, para 182.

⁸⁴ Maj Gen Shaw Lecture to All Souls College 12 Nov 08.

215. Throughout the period [REDACTED] ⁸⁵ The problem facing commanders on the ground was how to target the Iranian influence as there was little direct evidence of their involvement in daily life as Lord Walker when CDS had stated: "I think that the intelligence community were convinced that they were having a lot of influence in terms of what was going on, but I can't recall that any of our generals and their headquarters actually came across [REDACTED]. There wasn't anybody there who appeared to be an Iranian Republican Guard actually in place."⁸⁶ No political solution to Basra could therefore ignore the Sadrists, and [REDACTED] in Basra might be offset by the JAM.

Fig 6. British soldiers clear a stairwell during a night time strike operation.



216. These discussions led to an 'accommodation' between the two parties, agreed on the first day of 1 UK Armd Div's tenure as HQ MNDSE. JAM would cease attacks on the Army and facilitate its extraction from Basra Palace; the Army would suspend its strike operations and progressively release 120 internees, including, late in the process, Fartusi himself. All were likely to have been released anyway on the expiry of UNSCR 1723, then scheduled for the end of 2007. And although not explicitly stated, there appears to have been an underlying understanding that UK forces, once redeployed outside the city, would have little reason routinely to return; security responsibilities within the city would be discharged by the ISF. It was intended that this would encourage more responsible JAM elements to move towards legitimate politics and against Iranian influence. In this respect the deal was a conscious effort to empower Mohan and the I.A. Moqtada al-Sadr subsequently froze activity of the JAM for six months on 29 Aug.

217. The benefits of this were felt immediately. IDF attacks dropped from a campaign peak in the preceding months to minimal levels, total attacks on UK forces fell by some 90%, and there were no further UK deaths from IDF in 2007. The Army was able to hand Basra Palace to the ISF and

⁸⁵ The technological advances made by JAM and satellite organisations were only possible with the collusion of Iran as Lord Walker made clear when he stated to the Chilcot Inquiry: "the other thing that shocked us was the extent to which the technology -- and this is where your Iranian influence comes in, I'm sure -- had, in the very short period we were there, achieved in about six months what it took the IRA in Northern Ireland to achieve over 30-odd years".

⁸⁶ Evidence to the Iraq Inquiry.

relocate to the COB – potentially a highly complex and hazardous operation - without a shot being fired, and refocus its efforts on training the IA. With IDF attacks sharply down, re-development work at the airport was able to resume, paving the way for its handover to the Iraqi authorities, and local politicians were content to resume their visits to the COB to engage with British consular staff. The building of the Basra Children's Hospital – suspended over access difficulties for Coalition staff and contractors – was able to resume, and with British forces no longer in the city, Basrawis were less likely to be caught up in any crossfire. As one sheikh told Maj Gen Biins in the autumn of 2007, *"Things are bad – but they're a lot better than they were."*

218. The accommodation was not an unqualified boon. The ISF proved unable to impose itself on the city with any authority, although Mohan came to value the accommodation both as a means of buying time to build up his combat power, and as a useful channel of communication with the JAM, which he was subsequently able to use to his own advantage. So the unintended consequence was to consolidate JAM control over much of the city. The extent of their depredations is difficult to judge objectively, but there is evidence that they ranged from widespread dress restrictions, through the forced closure of alcohol outlets and music shops, to ethnic cleansing, brutality and murder. All had featured pre-deal, of course, but the British withdrawal removed the one real remaining constraint. Basra IP chief Maj Gen Jalil later claimed that in the three months prior to PIC, some 40 women were killed in Basra for wearing make-up, not veiling, or otherwise failing to observe the narrow rulings of the repressive local militias. MNDSE should perhaps have foreseen this, but many felt that JAM control was unlikely, and were satisfied by Mohan's air of confidence and assurances of the future capability of the ISF, despite its evident lack of effective units at that time. Others were less sanguine, but felt that the UK's ability to influence had in any case expired, and that the increasing air of Islamisation was a price worth paying for PIC.

Provincial Iraqi Control in Basra

219. On 8 Oct, as part of a wider statement on HMG's Iraq strategy, the Prime Minister announced further force reductions, anticipating a reduction from 5,000 to approximately 2,500 by Spring 08. All political parties in Basra, including those with militia links, signed an agreement to respect the rule of law on 4 Dec, allowing the transfer to PIC of Basra Province on 16 Dec. From that point onwards, UK forces supported operations only when requested to do so by the Iraqi authorities and worked with Maj Gen Mohan, the Iraqi commander of Basra operations, on plans to enhance security in the city. By the end of the year, UK force levels had reduced to around 4,500. A senior officer concluded as the operation in Basra transitioned from one of Security Assistance to one of Military Assistance, *"We enabled a situation where the ISF became responsible for security operations in Basra, and where we could now step back and concentrate on Monitoring, Mentoring and Training (M2T). It was in many ways the perfect tour for us; with intensive military operations at the beginning, thereby setting the preconditions to allow the Political and Economic Lines to develop."*⁸⁷

220. The 'accommodation' brought an end to attacks on the COB but the price was that MNDSE had lost its by now limited control of Basra and ceded control of the city to JAM. Over the

⁸⁷ 080122-COMD I MECH BDE.

following months, first 1 Mech Bde, then, in December, 4 Armd Bde, its successor, concentrated on training the Iraqi Army with the overall intention of achieving PIC in Basra as conditions allowed.

221. Critically, the fall in violence in the city satisfied MNF that the conditions for transition had been met, and Basra went to PIC on 16 Dec 07; the last of Multinational Division SE's four provinces to do so. In line with all previous decisions concerning PIC, the transfer followed a rigorous assessment by the GOI and MNF-I to demonstrate that conditions were right and that the ISF were ready to take the lead. The ceremony formalized the reality of the situation in Basra since the 'accommodation', where the ISF had become responsible for security in the city and British operations outside the COB were restricted as much by Iraqi sovereign responsibilities as policy in Whitehall. In a statement made during the PIC ceremony, Maj. Gen. Graham Binns, GOC MND(SE), said: *"the Iraqi authorities have shown they can maintain stability in their own right and that is why it is now time to hand over control. We will continue to offer support, training and mentoring to the Iraqi Security Forces, as we support the Government in their efforts on economic regeneration and reconstruction."*⁸⁸

2008/09 – COALITION OPERATIONS

222. Both Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces participated in Op PHANTOM STRIKE which concluded in Jan 08. It was followed by Op PHANTOM PHOENIX which began in the first week of Jan 08. It sought to destroy the remaining AQI presence and was expected to last between 60 and 90 days. Additionally, PHANTOM PHOENIX attacked VBIED and suicide bomb networks in Baghdad as well as al-Qaeda's financial network. Following kinetic operations that cleared areas, Coalition and Iraqi forces built combat outposts and joint security stations into those places and then followed with CERP funds to improve governance and grow the local economy.

223. Ambassador Crocker and Gen Petraeus reflected the more promising picture in Iraq in their testimonies before Congress in Apr 08. Both emphasised that the progress made in Iraq was fragile and reversible. But it was clear from their reports that enough progress had been made to allow questions to be asked which had been almost unthinkable six months before, when the situation then was so uncertain; had the strategy worked; what exactly would constitute success; and when would America be able to leave Iraq? That these questions could be entertained at all marked a significant change in circumstances from the state of denial that existed in the two years or so after the invasion of Iraq.

224. But although many Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) groups termed themselves Awakening Councils, they were very different in nature to the original AA. Where most AA volunteers were progressively incorporated into the IP, and thus employed by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), the CLCs were US-funded until Oct 08. And where the AA had consistently had a relationship with the GOI – albeit initially a fractious one – many of the CLC groupings remain ambivalent towards it, even hostile.

⁸⁸ MOD Statement, *Iraq takes responsibility for Basra Province*, 16 December 2007.

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225. In several areas, the refusal of CLC groups to recognize the legitimacy or authority of the GOI had prompted it to act against them. In Mar 09, the Baghdad suburb of Rusafa saw two days of serious fighting, as the ISF and MNF pursued CLC leaders wanted by the GOI. The transfer of funding responsibility from MNF-I to the GOI added further frictions, and bureaucratic inertia and governmental unease meant that CLCs had been paid either late, or not at all. A falling oil price exacerbated the GOI's difficulties, as had its need to reintegrate detainees and refugees returning from abroad. There was intense suspicion on both sides, and the GOI's tolerance of all militias appeared to harden.

2008/09 – MNDSE OPERATIONS

Overview

226. 4 Armd Bde deployed into the COB on 1 Dec 07 and, after PIC, the forces were reduced by returning a battlegroup to Germany in Jan 08. Brigade and Divisional HQs were integrated into a single HQ with Comd 4 Armd Bde becoming DCOMOPS responsible for all military operations in MNDSE area.

227. From Dec 07 the IDF threat to the COB increased progressively. Casualties were reduced by 1 Mech Bde having built STONEHENGE individual protection shelters over all bed spaces, which subsequently survived strikes by 107mm rockets and close impacts from 122mm rockets. Troops conducted counter-IDF operations from the start, but were constrained because many of the firing points were located in areas in which they could not operate due to the "Accommodation". As 4 Armd Bde had less forces available than 1 Mech Bde, but still had responsibility for the same battlespace, they rolled the counter-IED, counter-IDF and convoy force protection operations into a single operation – Op BLACK DAGGER. A six month extension to the Shi'a militia ceasefire was announced by Muqtada al-Sadr on 22 Feb 08. But there was little restraint on JAM - the militia were in *de facto* control of much of Basra city.

228. The main effort continued to be SSR. MNDSE continued to run the Iraqi DTC at Shaibah, producing trained recruits, FIBUA training and improving combined arms and live-firing collective training. On the border combined counter-lethal aid smuggling operations took place with the IA and the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE). But overall few combined operations were conducted, as the IA saw little utility in routine framework operations to deter IDF teams, being more focussed on strike operations, which due to the "Accommodation" the UK was unable to support.

Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS

229. At the Iraqi national level the political situation had changed considerably over 2007 and into 2008. In April 2007 Sadrist support for the Maliki government evaporated and Sadr withdrew his ministers from the government, criticising Maliki openly. In August 2007, Maliki agreed a new alliance with ISCI and with the two Kurdish parties, and that significantly strengthened his position and removed his reliance on the Sadrists. This (politically) enabled anticipated operations in Basra.

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As seen from London, Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS was only unexpected in its timing. Air Chief Marshal Stirrup⁸⁹:

"...we must remember that between the period of withdrawing from the centre of Basra City, which included, of course, the handover of provincial Iraqi control in December, we had been pressing Mohan to develop his -- Basra security plan. As I had said to him when I met him in July 2007, it would be his responsibility. Clearly, we would support him, but we needed him to develop his Basra security plan. He was fairly slow in doing that and we were continuing to press him, and eventually we did get, with the support of our people, a plan drawn up which he then briefed in Baghdad...to General Petraeus and to Prime Minister Maliki. His plan was for, essentially, a six-week disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme, which would run up to the beginning of June 2008, and then he would disarm those who continued to bear weapons at that stage."

"I was in Baghdad shortly after him at the beginning of March and I stressed to General Petraeus and to General Austin, who was the Corps Commander at the time, two things: first of all, that the Mohan security plan was crucial, but it had to be delivered so we had to keep Mohan's feet to the fire; and, secondly, that it had to succeed, and, therefore, we would need to allocate sufficient Corps assets to support it. General Austin was fairly reluctant, I have to say, because his priority was Mosul, ... but General Petraeus was clear that this was the culmination of what we had been working up to in the south-east for the better part of a year and a half, and, therefore, we had to go through with it. So he undertook to ensure that the right corps assets were allocated."

"In the event, as we know, Maliki, towards the end of March, decided that he was going to launch and lead Charge of the Knights. I had a number of conversations on the telephone with General Petraeus about this. They were taken by surprise as much as we were. They were as nervous as we were, but General Petraeus described this to me as an express train that just couldn't be stopped. Our concern was the lack of planning. It wasn't the Iraqi capability. It was just going down there with no plan; and just doing it is a recipe for confusion at best and disaster at worst. As it turned out, we got the best, which was confusion, but then eventually some order out of the chaos."

"General Mohan at this particular stage was operating, how shall I say, more politically than militarily. General Mohan had been coming under a lot of pressure and I think one of the reasons -- there were a lot of reasons that Prime Minister Maliki launched Charge of the Knights. In part, it was his frustration with what he saw as slow progress, in part, as I have said, it was a complete shift in the political dynamics with regard to Moqtadr al Sadr, and, therefore, the Jaysh Al Mahdi, and in part General Mohan's position was being undermined by some of Prime Minister Maliki's advisers in Baghdad, and, also, throughout all of this period, we had to remember the dynamic between Prime Minister Maliki and Governor Wa'ili down in Basra. Prime Minister Maliki loathed the governor and made several attempts to remove him, all of which were ruled unconstitutional. So you can see this great

⁸⁹ Iraq Inquiry Testimony

sort of partly political, but partly also personality and an emotional mix driving forward here. So General Mohan, I have to say, spent quite a bit of time at the beginning of Charge of the Knights trying to protect his own position. So there was no real planning that went on for Charge of the Knights."

"I think our contribution was good, but it certainly wasn't appreciated by the Iraqis and by Prime Minister Maliki in particular, and I think there were a couple of reasons for that. The first was we were, to a degree, caught up in all of this irritation and frustration with regard to Basra and Maliki and Mohan, and, secondly, the commanders on the ground declined to attack a number of fairly indiscriminate targets, that the Iraqis asked us to attack, because of concerns over collateral damage, and at that stage, I think the Iraqis decided that we weren't really helping them. This was a false impression, the commanders did absolutely the right thing, but it didn't help with the political atmosphere with Maliki."

"... we reinforced our own people in Basra after the Charge of the Knights to try and recover 14 Division. Clearly, it had to be built up again. The brigade which had dissolved had to be reconstituted and its confidence restored. So there was a very large mentoring task to be taken on in Basra after Charge of the Knights. ...We – with hindsight, we should have done more mentoring earlier of 14 Division. I think there were a number of reasons why we didn't. One was the effort there was being put into the training, but, secondly, there was also the issue of having withdrawn from the centre of the city and having seen the benefits amongst the Basrawi opinion. For example, we were having reported by the Consul General that ordinary Basrawis were saying, "Why are the Jaysh Al Mahdi still armed now the British are no longer here?" So you could see those sorts of dynamics working."

"We were cautious about reintroducing an overt UK presence on the streets, and the other very significant factor was that the Iraqis were very reluctant to have us with them because they felt we attracted fire. So we were slower than we should have been, I think, in hindsight, in getting that mentoring going, although it was always, as I think General White-Spinner would have told you, the intent to move towards that as the Mohan security planning evolved."

"I think that from an overall coalition perspective, the fact that the Iraqis could move an entire division down to Basra so quickly was a telling example of how far they had come. But for me, it was the culmination of our efforts to get a political solution in Basra."

230. MNDSE had designed a four-phase operation for Maj Gen Mohan the Iraqi commander in Basra to defeat the Militia. It was envisaged as:

- a. A FIBUA training programme;
- b. An Information Operations campaign to sow the seeds of doubt in the Militia's mind that they would not be able to resist the IA for ever;
- c. A weapons hand-back programme,

- d. Culminating in offensive operations against recalcitrant SGC (Special Group Commanders) and militia elements.

231. Preliminary operations were to take six months. The plan had been briefed to MNC-I and agreed by MNF-I, who wished to complete ongoing operations to counter AQI in northern Iraq, before turning to Basra. Gen Petraeus and the Iraqi National Security Adviser briefed the plan to PM Maliki on Sat 22 Mar; at the end of the meeting Maliki announced that he had his own plan to clear the militia out of Basra. An Iraqi force would deploy to Basra the next day and Maliki would go to Basra the day after.



Fig 7. Iraqi soldiers with a captured militia improvised armoured vehicle and munitions.

232. The in place 14 IA Div was reinforced by an IA divisional HQ, two additional brigades and a National Police brigade, all with their attached US MiTTs. None had any prior notice of the operation. Many of the ISF units arrived without notice and deployed straight into Basra, beginning operations in an uncoordinated matter. These were not successful. An inexperienced IA brigade was routed and the militia struck back with heavy attacks, most notably on Basra Palace. Concurrently MNDSE had a challenge in providing accommodation and life support for the thousand Americans who were arriving, and the Iraqis found the logistics of the affair challenging; water, fuel, rations and ammunition were needed in great quantity.

233. MNDSE tried to influence matters with Maj Gen Mohan, but there was no doubt that it was PM Maliki who was directing operations personally, basing himself at Basra Palace with the Minister of Defence. Initial Iraqi operations were neither well planned nor well coordinated and failed. MNC-I made the operation, by then known as CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, the Corps main effort and deployed its Tactical Operations Centre (TOC) led by the Corps Deputy Commanding General (DCG) – MG Flynn USMC. Flynn explained to HQ MNDSE that the Corps TOC had been deployed to ensure operational oversight was properly conducted and did not fail again. He considered it had not worked because MNDSE did not have the necessary situational awareness to prevent a crisis from occurring, and that that was what operational oversight was all about.

234. The start of the operation did indeed expose MNDSE's lack of Situational Awareness and lack of resources to take the fight to the SGC, although this was not something MNDSE was designed to do. This led to the Iraqis and the Americans doubting UK commitment and ability, and tarnished our reputation. The main problem arose from the convoluted communication chain

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required to use joint fires in Basra. Iraqi calls for fire would be initiated on a mobile telephone and then had to pass through several nodes, before guns, aviation or air could even begin to acquire the target location. Often, by the time the location had been acquired, the moment had either passed or the target had moved on. Because UK forces did not have the ability to observe many of the targets being designated by the Iraqis inside the City, MNDSE were unable to identify and engage them. In addition, some of the requests were completely beyond the scope of UK Rules Of Engagement. This gave rise to accusations of the UK not supporting the Iraqi forces in contact with the enemy.

235. This capability gap was filled in a number of ways. First, Corps surged fast air, AH and armed UAVs to MNDSE. The kill chain was streamlined by the introduction of US MiTTs accompanying the Iraqi formations sent to Basra. Corps also sent additional MiTTs to link up with independent IA units deployed to Basra. Coalition JTACs, as integral members of MiTTs fighting alongside the Iraqis, were quickly in a position to observe, identify and engage targets by speaking directly to the air and aviation assets flying over Basra. This resulted in rapid success in striking Militia IDF teams and as the operation developed allowed attack of IED teams and intimate close air support to advancing Iraqi units.

236. MNDSE created MiTTs as quickly as they could to support 14 IA Div deployed in Basra. This worked; UK troops scored a number of quick successes. Once coerced into direct action by PM Maliki, Maj Gen Mohan's initial impulse was to launch everything he had into the Hiyyaniyah District of Basra. He was dissuaded from this and took a more measured approach, first securing the access routes into the City whilst cordoning the Hiyyaniyah. He was then persuaded to tackle other smaller areas of resistance whilst simultaneously pouring humanitarian aid into the Hiyyaniyah. This enabled the IA to chalk up some successes, which increased their confidence and bought consent for their actions.

237. MNC-I also sent a US Civil Military Operations Centre (CMOC). CMOC officers were able to follow immediately behind the IA and conduct clean-up operations, and initiate other employment generating work. This too reinforced local support for the IA, as people saw well-known (to the local population) criminals, murderers and thugs being taken off the street and their neighbourhoods being cleaned up instantly. By the time the IA deployed into the Hiyyaniyah, Iraqis were coming forward to point out weapons caches, criminals and hard-line militia members, and very little resistance was encountered.

238. Despite its initial teething problems, Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS created the opportunity for the IA to conduct operations that both the Coalition and the people of Basra wanted them to conduct. At the same time, a self-appointed delegation of Iraqi parliamentarians had flown to Iran where, [REDACTED], a ceasefire had been negotiated with Sadr. These factors combined to reduce the level of resistance to the operation, which produced a remarkable change in the operational situation. CDS summed up the UK's contribution when he told the Chilcott Inquiry that: *"our contribution was good, but it certainly wasn't appreciated by the Iraqis and by Prime Minister Maliki in particular, and I think there were a couple of reasons for that. The first was we were, to a degree, caught up in all of this irritation and frustration with regard to Basra and Maliki and Mohan, and, secondly, the commanders on the ground declined to attack a*

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number of fairly indiscriminate targets, that the Iraqis asked us to attack, because of concerns over collateral damage, and at that stage, I think the Iraqis decided that we weren't really helping them."

239. Planned UK troop reductions paused and on 1 Apr 08, the Defence Secretary confirmed plans to retain UK forces levels in Southern Iraq at around 4,000. On 10 May, the Iraqi Government and JAM signed a 10 point agreement on a ceasefire.

The Aftermath of Operation CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS

240. 7 Armd Bde replaced 4 Mech Bde in May 08. The situation was promising but fragile. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS had been successful and the ISF had achieved a measure of dominance across the AO. Many Basrawis had experienced militia "government" and its manifest shortcomings, and so the COIN "competition in government" had swung back towards the Government of Iraq and external support to the militias had reduced. These factors produced strong public support for the IA, and - since we were seen to be operating in their support - even for UK troops.

241. But there was at that stage widespread concern that their control might be only temporary, pending a return by the JAM. The divisional mission was to *"support and develop the ISF, and assist those building civil capacity, in order to achieve sustained security and set the conditions for Iraqi self-reliance and economic growth."* The concept of operations sought to:

- a. Adapt and consolidate security gains.
- b. Energise and deliver economic development and reconstruction.
- c. Catalyse inclusive politics.
- d. Deliver positive messages.

242. Receiving direction to form MiTTs as their Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX) was ending, 7 Armd Bde pooled elements of four combat units to form the UK MiTT Group; a bespoke organisation under ' [REDACTED]', which grew to over 1000 strong, containing 18 cap-badges. Initially the principal task was to support the ISF in consolidating security gains, and achieving irreversible momentum to Iraqi self reliance. Since the beginning of 08 the IA had developed and its commanders were more confident and receptive. They had seen how MiTTing could work and could see the potential benefits. MNDSE sought to exploit by rolling out the MiTTs as quickly as possible to support 14 IA Div. The MiTTs for the BaOC and 14 IA Div were found from staff augmentees from HQ ARRC.

243. During that summer IDF and IED attacks continued – albeit at a much reduced rate. Through good procedures and no small portion of luck, no significant casualties or damage were sustained. To better counter IDF a riverine capability in assault boats, used in the marshes to the north of the COB, severely disrupted the IDF teams. The IDF and IED networks were successfully targeted by a high tempo of UK and Iraqi strike operations, which made a significant dent in insurgent

capability, and deterred the return of other JAM members from abroad. It also fuelled the amnesty and reconciliation process. Insurgent activity reduced greatly, as did strike operations, providing the opportunity to re-role the AS 90 battery to support reconstruction efforts.

244. In parallel, operations were conducted at Umm Qasr port; (MiTTing the Iraqi Marines and linking the various port security agencies), Shalamsha Border Crossing Point (BXP) (FOB construction, border operations and FP for the US biometric teams) and the Divisional Training Centre (continuation and specialist training courses).



Fig 8. British river patrol on the Shat Al Arab.

245. Following the clearing of Basra, the IA took the lead in securing Maysan province. On 12 Jun, large numbers of ISF including 1st IA Div began preparatory operations — including replacing the guards along the Iranian border to interdict criminal movements. This coincided with the expiry of a Prime Ministerial ultimatum for gunmen in Maysan to turn in their weapons. On 19 Jun, the day the ultimatum expired, the Iraqi Security Forces launched Op PROMISE OF PEACE, to clear JAM and Special Groups from Amarah. The offensive met with minimal enemy resistance; Sadrist politicians and clerics, wishing to avoid the destruction that accompanied the push into Sadr City, instructed their followers not to resist the government's operations. Moreover, any Special Groups and JAM leaders that remained in Maysan in the wake of the Baghdad and Basra offensives fled to Iran before the operations commenced in Amarah.

Building Momentum Sep to Dec 08

246. HQ 3 Div was succeeded by HQ AMPHIBFOR in Sep 08. During their pre-tour preparation they had undertaken a period of analysis and understanding. Frustrated by the lack of a cross government strategy for Southern Iraq or a UK joint interagency campaign plan, they sought to develop an operational concept that would fill the gap. In conjunction with OGDs they formulated a simple plan, iteratively shaped with key stakeholders in-theatre and back in the UK. The plan reconciled UK's objectives with the US Corps Commander's intent, but also recognised that these had to be balanced with Iraqi considerations. It reflected Iraqi advice that became a central tenet: listen to the people, deliver to their needs and be the catalyst to enable Basrawis from all walks of life to connect with each other; Basrawi optimism became the centre of gravity.

247. It was important to maximise the ability of UK personnel actually engaged with Iraqis — mainly the leadership of the MiTTs and those involved in diplomacy, Key Leader Engagement (KLE), reconstruction and governance — to influence Iraqis and events on the ground. The mission was about support and influence — MNDSE would be the convening authority, catalyst and facilitator

to get everybody else to deliver success. The operational design and intent proved to be a decisive and adaptive tool that endured right to the end.

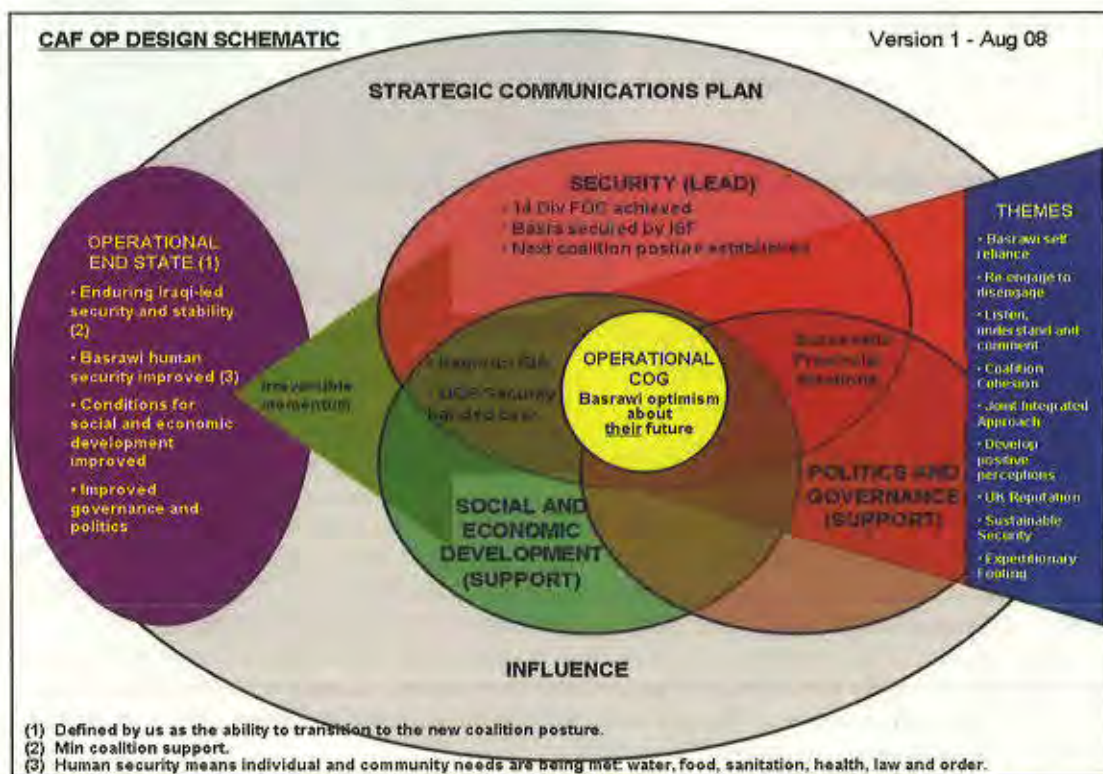


Fig 9. HQ MNDSE Operational Design Schematic (Sep 08 – May 09).

248. The security situation was not yet irreversible but good foundations existed. It would be necessary to improve the perception of normality in the City, reduce UK military profile by minimising tracked vehicle movement and other measures, and adapt to better security conditions, whilst raising the performance, confidence, cohesion and tempo of the ISF. As part of this MiTTs were allowed to move in IA vehicles for operations, which reduced opportunities for the insurgent.

249. The Brigade then entered a sustained phase of capacity-building through Ramadan and beyond, facilitated greatly by the opening of purpose-built Joint Operation Centres for HQ 14 IA Div and the BaOC. Concurrently, a major engineering operation was mounted to build nine Joint Security Stations – reinforced police stations in Basra's most challenging areas - and forward operating bases, to enable the deployment of a US MP battalion charged with developing the Iraqi Police. A logistic MiTT was created for the Iraqi Motor Transport Regiment. Improving Iraqi capability allowed reassignment of MiTTs away from battalions which had reached the required standard to others that had not. These also represented the first moves to "cut the umbilical", and

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begin to establish distance between Iraqi units and their associated MiTTs. By taking additional risk on force protection and using borrowed US vehicles additional MiTTs were created.

250. Security exponentially improved with levels of violence and attacks at record lows. By Oct 08 a turning point had been reached. Basrawis ceased to be preoccupied with security, were getting on with their lives and looking to the future with greater optimism.

251. Better security was complemented by improved delivery in reconstruction and governance. With the Consul General, the head of an increasingly effective PRT, the head of the US Regional Embassy Office (REO) and active support from all other US and UN agencies, an inclusive, open and integrated approach was established. Joint Reconstruction Action Teams (JRATs) formed from UK military, PRT and US personnel exemplified this and galvanised delivery. MNDSE's concept morphed into a Joint Inter-Agency Plan. Security became the supporting actor to a political and reconstruction lead. Organisational improvements were made to enable the Consulate and the PRT to fulfil their leading roles.

252. Civil and security authorities were brought together and connected with civil society, to see elections as an opportunity for constructive and collaborative politics, leading to better governance. An influence and marketing campaign emphasised tangible improvements in reconstruction and focused minds on investing in a better future. All of this took 4-5 months to realise but with aggressive housekeeping, the force on an expeditionary footing and contingency plans ready, the division was poised for early transition.

THE ENDGAME

Coalition Aspects

253. By Mar 08 the Surge and the three MNC-I corps level operations, FARDH AL QANOON, PHANTOM THUNDER and PHANTOM STRIKE had caused considerable attrition to AQI in Baghdad, the "belts" and Diyala Province. And Anbar had been transformed. The intention was to next concentrate forces on Mosul where AQI was still holding parts of the city in strength.

254. This was disrupted when Iraqi forces were diverted to Basra in Mar 08. In reaction to Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, JAM elements attacked the Coalition in other areas. Attacks in Baghdad rose from an average of 14 to almost 80 a day. Both the Special Groups and mainstream JAM participated. Many of these were rocket attacks on the Green Zone, which were countered by a combination of AH, armed and unarmed UAV and AC-130.

255. The changed political climate, including popular Shi'a rejection of the JAM and support for Maliki, transformed the political climate. This meant that after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS the Iraqi Army supported by the US had also regained control of Sadr City and the other hard core JAM areas of Baghdad, and that both the Iraqi Army and US forces could then concentrate on Mosul, albeit later than originally planned. By late June, Coalition and Iraqi operations in Baghdad and southern Iraq had significantly weakened Special Groups and JAM networks. Combined US and

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Iraqi multi-divisional operations continued to build stability in Baghdad and “the belts”, and clear AQI from Diyala Province and Mosul and Ninevah Provinces.

UK Operations

256. For the remainder of the year, increased Iraqi assertiveness over national sovereignty prevailed, as they negotiated with the US and UK for a post-UNSCR legal framework. On 18 Dec 08, the Prime Minister confirmed that UK forces would complete their training and mentoring of 14 IA Division by 31 May 09 and withdraw from Basra by 31 Jul 09. On 27 Dec, Iraqi Council of Representatives Resolution 439/2008 was ratified and on 30 Dec a joint UK/Iraq MOU was signed, these providing a revised legal basis for UK forces in Iraq beyond 31 Dec. On the last day of the year, UNSCR 1790 expired and all remaining provinces transferred to Iraqi control.

257. On 1 Jan 09, the US/Iraq Security Agreement and the revised legal basis for UK forces entered into force and Iraqi airspace and Basra International Airport transferred to Iraqi civilian control. Iraqi Provincial Elections passed off peacefully on 31 Jan. The UK published its first comprehensive strategy for Iraq⁹⁰ and MNF-I/US Embassy Iraq updated its Joint Campaign Plan.

Consolidation and Transition

258. Implementation of the new security agreement was negotiated sensibly with ISF leadership, the result of a close partnership. The ISF and Iraqi authorities passed the litmus test of ensuring that the elections on 31 Jan 09 passed without serious incident. People were euphoric as the politics of hope replaced the politics of fear. The international media took note, editorial opinion began to shift and more serious investors arrived.

259. Iraqis gained confidence but became tired and complacent after their successes. There were frustrations. A moribund Provincial Council impeded reconstruction. Key projects stalled, not helped by internal contractual and organisational difficulties. As momentum slowed, attack levels increased, challenging confidence in security. The ISF responded well and changed its *modus operandi*; MNDSE provided specialist support. Reconstruction recommenced, helped by the GOC's cultural advisor who galvanised the Iraqis. District development forums were appearing and capacity in the rule of law improved. Strategic communications dominated this period as the UK legacy was debated in the national media. Planning, influence and logistic preparations helped set up the conditions for transition to US forces.

260. MNDSE considered that the success of their plan was the result of everybody pulling together to create a compact that was focused on the needs of Iraqis. As UK forces withdrew, security had been transformed and Iraqis were in the lead; human security had improved and essential services kick-started; the conditions for economic progress and investment were improved; and a new provincial council had been elected freely and fairly. There was still much to do, but UK troops helped establish a foundation of security and stability for further development.

⁹⁰ FCO Iraq Strategy 2009 dated 13 Jan 09.

Relief in Place and Withdrawal

261. On 31 Mar 09, the UK-led MNDSE and US-led MND (C) merged to form MND (S) under US command, 20 Armd Bde remaining as a British brigade in the new MND (S). Formal completion of the UK military mission in southern Iraq was marked on 30 Apr, at which point 14 IA Div was judged ready to plan, execute and sustain operations with minimal coalition support.

262. On 11 May 09 British forces conducted their final combat mission in southern Iraq, escorting the last convoy of 20 Armd Bde's heavy military equipment in a move south from the COB in Basra, across the border into Kuwait. On 31 May, MOU permissions allowing UK forces to conduct operations expired and UK forces focussed solely on the withdrawal of personnel and materiel, which was successfully completed under Op BROCKDALE. On 31 Jul 09, the December 2008 UK/Iraq MOU expired and UK land forces left Iraq.

263. Whilst this represented the end of the land campaign, the UK Government did sign a bilateral Defence Training and Maritime Support Agreement with the Government of Iraq on 6 Jun 09, under which UK forces would continue to train the Iraqi Navy to a state where they could deliver littoral security for themselves, and Royal Navy ships would continue to protect Iraq's offshore oil platforms. This agreement entered into force on 22 Nov 09 having been ratified by both the UK and Iraqi Parliaments, and is due to last for one year. The UK also continues to assist the Iraqi Ministry of Defence in Baghdad to further professionalise its Iraqi Armed Forces as part of a wider NATO mission. The UK has taken the lead for assisting with the professional development of Iraq's officer corps.

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Fig 10. British soldiers take a break during Op SINBAD.

COMMENTARY ON LAND OPERATIONS 2005 - 2009

264. Many of those consulted have identified a central question concerning UK Land operations: *"After the successful Iraqi elections in Jan 05 UK and Coalition commanders publicly expressed guarded optimism for the future of Iraq. How was it that the situation in Basra and Maysan steadily deteriorated until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS?"*

265. **This commentary takes the form of an essay, complementing the narrative history by seeking to illuminate the factors and 'reasons why' that explain the ebb and flow of the land campaign at the tactical level, identifying lessons as necessary. It also assesses the lessons of Op TELIC for future transition operations, UK influence over Coalition land operations and the consequences of the campaign for the reputation of UK land forces.**

OVERALL LESSONS

266. Speaking at the RUSI shortly after UK troops had withdrawn from Iraq General Sir Richard Dannatt discussed the lessons of Op TELIC for land forces; *"We can and should be proud of the contribution we made in Southern Iraq and Basra. There is no doubt in my mind that our actions there over the six years of the campaign were decisive and instrumental in making Basra the stable and increasingly prosperous city it now is. Without the training and support that we provided the Iraq Army, without the security and development operations we conducted, and without the sacrifice of 179 soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen that we made, Basra would not be where it is today.*

Like any military campaign there were bumps along the way – our US allies experienced many of the same challenges and false starts before their bold, courageous and decisive decision to surge and to optimise their Army for the campaign. Like them, we are learning and adapting to ensure that the lessons learned are properly applied in Afghanistan. To this end I will highlight three lessons in particular:

- *The first is to recognise that time will very often be against us and that we need to achieve decisive effect early. In Iraq this meant acting while we had a window of consent to address the security and basic needs of the Iraq people – reconstruction, development and developing the capacity of the indigenous security forces. Our failure to deliver this through proper investment and a comprehensive approach and our early switch to an economy of force operation, in favour of Afghanistan, sowed the seeds for the dissatisfaction that followed and the rise of the militias, supported so cynically by the Iranians in the South.*
- *The second is to recognise the importance of persistent presence and mass in operations designed to secure the population. We must take a more flexible approach to force levels through the course of a campaign, being prepared to surge and ebb as the security situation dictates. In truth we failed to maintain the force levels required – either of Coalition forces or Iraqi forces, and particularly towards the latter end of the campaign, by which time we were already committed to a new operation in Southern Afghanistan.*

- *And the third concerns our approach to military capacity building. Local security forces, correctly trained and equipped and loyal to the government, serve as a powerful force multiplier; they change the geometry of a campaign and ultimately provide the means to return power to the local people. Military capacity building will be a key component of any intervention and stabilisation campaign, and of conflict prevention. We must invest substantially in this capability and be prepared to accept the risks of doing it properly. In Iraq we made the mistake of thinking we could separate training from fighting. The correct model is the one we have always traditionally applied – that of training, living and fighting with the indigenous forces we are mentoring. The proven OMLT concept in Afghanistan is the correct model – we should consign the Iraq model that we followed for a while to the dustbin of history.”*

THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

267. Many of MNDSE's tactical operations were successful. But it proved very difficult to translate these successes into enduring tactical or operational level success until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. For example, there were a number of operations where the Iraqi authorities had given prior consent, only for the outcome of the operation to be retrospectively repudiated by the same authorities. For example the destruction of the Jameat police station on Christmas Day 06 and a US operation in 07 to interdict Shi'a death squads operating from Sadr City that was vetoed by PM Maliki. A possible reason for this is that the operations were so close to the envelope of Iraqi governmental sensitivities, that by succeeding they threatened that government's political support.

268. Another factor may be our lack of understanding. It is not clear that all our plans began with the Iraqi viewpoint and considered outcomes and the future from their perspective not ours. It is likely that we tended to do better when we worked with the forces in Iraqi society, not against them, and that we were more likely to fail when we imposed or suggested our solutions on/to them and were surprised when they rejected them.

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE CONFLICT

269. During 2005 and 2006 UK strategic and Coalition operational direction to MNDSE were broadly complementary: a transition of responsibility to the ISF by force generating and training ISF units, while simultaneously supporting the development of Iraqi governance and economy. This policy of 'Transition' was articulated to progress through Tactical, Operational and then Strategic Overwatch towards a simultaneous withdrawal of US and UK troops.

270. For all of 2005 and the first part of 2006 SSR was the main effort in MNDSE. The rise in the IED threat from mid 2005 and the consequent increased requirement for force protection is often cited as the reason for the weaknesses of SSR in MNDSE. It certainly added unwelcome friction and significantly constrained resources, but was not the principal reason for the weaknesses of SSR in MNDSE. The main factors were:

- a. UK declined to match the US policy and practice of embedding MiTTs with Iraqi Army formations and units.
- b. Insufficient emphasis was placed on the IPS and the initial allocation of responsibility to the State Department and FCO was inadequately executed.
- c. In practice many UK units and brigades did not always appear to treat SSR as Main Effort.

271. At the start of the period the role of MNDSE was not characterised as COIN. Indeed not only was SSR the Main Effort but also formation commanders were keen not to be seen as the enforcement agency of the Baghdad or Basra governments. But in 2006 GOC 1 UK (Armd) Div characterised the conflict as COIN. By then, there were insufficient troops or ISF in MNDSE to implement a COIN approach, let alone protect the people. Such an approach *might* have succeeded in 2003, or in 2004 immediately after the Shi'a uprisings, but would have required between 40,000 and 60,000 security force personnel in Basra to meet the doctrinal COIN ratio. This *might* have been achieved by the UK deploying a strong division to execute full spectrum COIN, complemented by the same number of ISF (who would have had to be raised by the UK). It would have had to have been complemented by much more effective reconstruction of the South than in fact took place and a permissive political climate. This would have required a different set of strategic judgements from those made by the UK in 2003/4.

272. It was not until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS in 2008 that this force level was achieved in Basra when 4 Armd Bde and 14 IA Div were reinforced by the addition of experienced Iraqi forces, including a divisional HQ, two Iraqi brigades with their embedded US MiTTs, a national police brigade, the US MNC-I Tac, and combat enablers that had been largely unavailable to UK forces; namely Predator, aviation, AH, ISTAR and a CMOC with additional cash and the ability to spend it quickly.

273. The national strategic direction given to the British tactical commander in theatre was unambiguous and uncompromising: a timetabled withdrawal from Iraq measured by troop numbers (often referred to by the staff as 'strategy by spreadsheet' or 'O&D campaigning'). The dilemma for the UK tactical commander was two-fold. Firstly, he had to manage the imbalance in expectation between the British policy of disengaging from the people, and the US campaign requirement to conduct COIN. This applied even before the Surge. Secondly, he had to manage his own troops' moral and professional expectation in theatre to maintain fighting spirit and the reputation of the British Army against resource and force protection constraints.

274. In 2006 3 (UK) Div sought to balance these competing pressures by an offensive operation, Op SALAMACA. PM Maliki's wishes to safeguard his political interests and the minimal level of reinforcement available from both MNC-I and UK forces reduced the ambition of the operation to that ultimately executed in Op SINBAD. Based on lessons from US operations elsewhere in Iraq, the pulses of Op SINBAD achieved tactical effect and increased the capability of the Iraqi Army, but most of its success was not enduring. It demonstrated what might have been achieved in a more

promising political climate and with greater resources. In this way it was a valid forerunner for both the US Surge and Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

The Anbar Awakening and the Surge

275. The Feb 06 bombing of the Sammara shrines greatly increased the sectarian conflict between Shi'a and the Sunni and AQI insurgencies. The inability of the Iraqi Government and security forces to play the role that the Transition strategy required of them was cruelly exposed that summer with the failures of Ops TOGETHER FORWARD 1 and 2 in Baghdad. The country descended into civil war. Initially both UK and US governments failed to appreciate that the situation had changed and that Transition as envisaged was very unlikely to succeed and highly likely to fail.

276. But this descent into civil war was concurrent with successful clearance of Ramadi, which itself created the conditions for the Anbar Awakening. This was not simply an impromptu rejection by Sunnis of AQI's brutal methods and radical rule. There is evidence that the switch was based on three incremental realizations by tribal sheikhs: first that the political process might confer more benefit than continued fighting, second that AQI's transnational and fundamentalist goals were at odds with their own local or national objectives, and third and most importantly, that AQI was competing for control of revenue sources, such as banditry and smuggling, which had previously been the exclusive province of the tribes. But it was also a response to conditions created by the USMC, by means of dynamic security operations and engagement with tribal leaders, all underpinned by risk-taking by the US commanders in Anbar. In retrospect the clearance of Ramadi and the Anbar Awakening can be seen as a decisive point in the campaign.

277. President Bush's decision to declare a 'New Way Forward' in Jan 07 and mount the military surge was against most of the advice of most of the US political military establishment who may have been unaware of the opportunities created in Anbar. The Surge's approach of protecting the population saw a re-engagement with the people, requiring US forces moving out of large 'super bases' and establishing often vulnerable small unit outposts shared with Iraqi forces amongst the population. It succeeded not only because of numbers, but also because it restored the confidence of the ISF and some Iraqi political leaders, as well as taking advantage of the Anbar Awakening and other reconciliation efforts to persuade Sunni insurgents to change sides and become US paid auxiliaries. This created a bond of empathy and loyalty between the population, the Iraqi forces and the US military. It involved accepting the risk that isolated bases would be subject to heavy insurgent attack, including attempts to overrun and capture outposts. At times this risk was considerable, particularly in Anbar, and insurgents mounted a number of heavy attacks, none of which ultimately succeeded.

278. The surge also illustrated the value of a corps HQ to synchronise a multi-divisional land operation. The sequence of MNC-I offensive operations from Op FARDH AL QANOON in Baghdad, through Ops PHANTOM THUNDER, PHANTOM STRIKE, the unanticipated Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the clearance of Sadr City and subsequent operations in Diyala Province and Northern Iraq, required tactical synchronisation, not only of US and Iraqi ground troops, but also of ISTAR, all types of air, as well as humanitarian and influence operations. These

operations increased in effectiveness as US forces and the ISF learned from their experience. They were orchestrated by MNC-I to keep AQI off balance and succeeded in this.

279. At the next level down US division commanders shaped the battle for their brigades, tactically co-ordinated with the ISF and civilian agencies and reinforced their efforts with assets held at divisional level, not least their powerful combat aviation brigades. By this time, MNDSE had a single brigade and few of the divisional level assets that US divisions had. So although it fulfilled an important political/military function and co-ordinated with the Iraqis and UK and US agencies, it could not shape the battle in the way a US division could.

280. Although neither Corps nor MNF-I commanded Coalition SF operations, General Petraeus has publicly acknowledged that the SF attrition of AQI and Shi'a Special Groups was instrumental in both protecting the force and in creating conditions for success. And that close tactical coordination between SF and land formations down to battlegroup level paid dividends.

MNDSE's War Against the JAM and the 'Accommodation'

281. From mid 2006 until the 'Accommodation' MNDSE was engaged in a war against the JAM. They attacked us in considerable strength, whilst we responded with strike operations to reduce the threat. The British view of security in Basra was now characterized as "*Palermo rather than Beirut*,"⁹² criminality rather than insurgency, "*large scale gangsterism rather than all out war.*" This differed considerably from the views held in Baghdad and in Washington DC that Iraq required a classic counterinsurgency campaign, and that the population had first to be secured to allow political progress. CDS summed up the mood when he stated that: "*Basra is the key. The obstacles there are, one, militias and, two, governance. Neither is substantially in our hands and we need firm action by the government in Baghdad, but, as consent continues to reduce, as we have always foreseen it would, so, too, does our ability to effect further significant improvement. The law of diminishing returns is now firmly in play and there is an increasing risk that we become part of the problem rather than of the solution.*"

282.



⁹² GOC Multi-National Division (South East), Address to Multi-National Force-Iraq Commanders' Conference, 17 February 2007.

283. Short of withdrawal from Iraq (which would have been unwelcome to the US) the alternative course of action would have been to mirror the US surge and to seek a decisive military victory over the JAM. But where would the forces have come from? Even had this been politically and militarily deliverable, the UK was by 2007 operating well above Defence Planning Assumptions. There was also a marked national reluctance to request reinforcement from MNC-I. But by 2007 US forces were fully committed elsewhere and there was a widely-held US view that having carved out a discrete Divisional area, the UK owned the responsibility for resourcing it. Additional, capable ISF units would have helped but Iraqi priorities lay elsewhere, and the locally-raised 10 IA Div was weak, with JAM influence strongly apparent in its Basra-based brigades.

284. [REDACTED]

285. [REDACTED]

286. [REDACTED]

287. [REDACTED]

Operation CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS

288. The struggle for control of Basra persisted until Mar 08. A joint UK/ISF plan for a six month deliberate operation to clear Basra was overtaken by the surprise decision of PM Maliki to launch a clearance operation at 48 hours notice. After an inevitably shaky start, Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS became an effective Iraqi surge into Basra with US and then UK support. It restored security months earlier than the MNDSE and Maj Gen Mohan had planned. But the lack of UK situational awareness required deployment of MNC-I's TOC and additional US assets which resulted in reputational damage. So Basra was secured because the US surge had created the security and political conditions to allow PM Maliki to take on the Shi'a extremists and their militias. If there had been no surge, the UK approach in Basra would almost certainly have failed, as would have the rest of the campaign. But by ordering Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, Maliki confronted the JAM and redefined the militia and Iranian supported "special groups" as insurgents. Maliki's personal investment was also highly significant: by taking such a public stand against the JAM he explicitly re-defined Basra's turf wars as an insurgent challenge to the GOI, forcing Basrawis to decide where their loyalties were going to lie. UK forces were able to re-engage with their role clarified, not as occupiers but as direct supporters of the IA, and enjoyed a sea-change in public support as a result. Subsequent events suggested that extortion in Basra had been funding militia attacks in Baghdad.

289. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS was a high risk political and military gamble. Its success stemmed from MNF-I and MNC-I rapidly declaring it main effort and reinforcing Basra with aviation, air, the MNC-I TOC. CMOG and uplifting MNDSE's electronic connectivity and bandwidth. All of this depended on the role of Coalition MITTs, including the UK MITTs rapidly fielded by 4 Armd Bde. But none of this would have achieved anything without the fighting power of the two Iraqi divisions committed and the support of the Baswaris for the operation. And the political deal in Qom brokered by ██████████ may well have considerably reduced the credibility and effectiveness of Basra JAM.

290. These events remain controversial within the Army, but reflect the changing nature of our opponents and Shi'a politics within Iraq. The overriding lesson is that in future coalition land operations, **having a UK land tactical force operate to a different strategy and operational design from the rest of the land force creates risk of tactical incoherence. Whilst this *might* be manageable, the enemy, Coalition or other actors or unforeseen events *may* expose these contradictions, resulting in effects that *could* produce strategic, operational or tactical shocks,** such as resulted from Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. Other lessons include:

- a. As we found in NI and the Balkans, there is often great overlap between insurgents, organised criminals and political and religious extremists. And crime and extortion often fund insurgent activity.
- b. The nature of the conflict and the utility of force must be regularly re-assessed at every level from the tactical to the strategic.

- c. All levels of the force must achieve a shared understanding. For example, the term 'transition' seems to have been differently understood in Basra and Baghdad

Endgame

291. The military and political success of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS allowed Iraqi forces supported by the US to clear the JAM from Sadr City. The Iraqi Army was able to play an increasingly confident role in subsequent offensive operations.

292. In Basra a highly successful mentoring mission throughout 2008 and early 2009 restored some of the UK's military reputation with the US and IA (though not perhaps with Maliki), and enabled final withdrawal. The greatly improved security situation also allowed the UK PRT to return from Kuwait. HQ MNDSE played an essential role reinforcing the successes in security, not least by continuing to build Iraqi Army capability. And police capacity was improved by a reinforcing US police mentoring effort. The HQ also sought to encourage and energise the comprehensive approach – effectively acting in support of the PRT, UK Consul General and US Regional Embassy Office.

LESSONS FOR FUTURE TRANSITIONS

293. There was nothing new about the kind of security transition that occurred in Iraq. Many of our colonial campaigns since 1945 resulted in security transition to indigenous forces; some successful, others like Aden failures. From the declaration of 'The Way Ahead' and a strategic, operational and tactical objective of police primacy in 1977, the NI campaign had been one of transition. And from 1997 until 2005, NATO's campaign in Bosnia, had been one of transition, a direction of travel that has been continued by EUFOR.

294. In Iraq the Coalition always sought to transition the country to Iraqi leadership. The principal lessons from Op TELIC applicable to future security transitions are:

- a. **Understanding and Honesty.** Regardless of the metric used for deciding on 'go / no-go' for indigenous control the assessment according to that metrics must be rigorous and honest. The Iraq experience was that political pressure was brought to bear from all quarters for transition to proceed; but that without a fundamentally honest understanding of the situation then risk is increased rather than transferred, deferred or decreased.
- b. **Risk of End State Versus End Date.** There is always likely to be creative tension between achieving an end-state and the political requirements for an end-date for a foreign military presence. Transition is an inherently risky business and it is unlikely to go precisely according to plan. All partners must be prepared to accept that the process can go backwards as well as forwards, with all that that implies, especially in the battle for the narrative at strategic and operational levels.
- c. **Variable Speed and Re-Intervention.** Transition will occur at different speeds in different areas and often result in different outcomes. The plan must be robust enough to take

this into consideration and the capability to re-engage or intervene is required. Both Op SINBAD and the Surge can be seen as a re-intervention to counter-attack to create the conditions that would allow transition. Reaction forces must be held at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Use of over the horizon forces was a notable part of NATO's approach to transition in Bosnia, but did not achieve the same effects in MNDSE.

d. **Increasing, not Decreasing ISTAR Requirement.** As transition progresses and UK boots and eyes on the ground decrease, so there is an increased requirement for ISTAR in order to maintain the same overall level of situational awareness. The Iraq experience demonstrated that once we withdrew to the COB we lost a very large part of our situational awareness. Supporting indigenous forces with our ISTAR also enhances their effectiveness and commanders' prestige and thereby maintains our ability to influence.

e. **An Inverse Relationship Between Transition And Influence.** As transition progresses and the indigenous government gains in strength and confidence so will our ability to influence them decline. Simply put they will need us less and so will listen less. This may well lead to increasing divergences in policy as well as opinion between the UK and the indigenous government. Increased emphasis on building effective relationships with key players as well as maintaining influence through control of high value niche capabilities are two ways of mitigating this.

295. **Comprehensive Approach.** All of this applies across the full spectrum of the comprehensive approach including development, governance and SSR.

UK INFLUENCE ON THE COALITION LAND CAMPAIGN

The 'UK's Invaluable Contribution In Iraq'

General Petraeus
RUSI 9 Jun 2010

British military and civilian officials were full participants in the Joint Strategic Assessment Team that helped us refine the change in our strategic approach at the beginning of the surge in the spring of 2007. Indeed the lead writer of our Joint Campaign Plan was a brilliant British colonel. In fact, for my entire tenure at MNF-I, our lead campaign planners were British officers. The critical Force Strategic Engagement Cell that oversaw the political reconciliation effort and eventually helped manage the 103,000 so-called Sons of Iraq was led by a series of British two-stars with experience in Northern Ireland, after being established under the direction of the great Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Lamb, then my deputy. In fact, I'd personally asked Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup and then-Prime Minister Tony Blair to extend Graeme even before I took command in Iraq – and they did.

...Simply put, what we achieved in Iraq could not have been done without our UK partners.

296. Many commanders and staff officers who served in Basra and Baghdad consider that the UK deputy commanders and staff officers punched well above their weight and had influence out of all

proportion to their numbers, and senior US commanders have been consistently grateful for the both the quality and perspective that they added.

297. But were our embedded staff officers in Baghdad really as influential as many like to think? There is no evidence that in 2006 they helped narrow the ever-increasing divergence between the decline into sectarian civil war in Baghdad and the Transition approach being adopted by MNC-I and MNF-I. Subsequently they played a role in the staff work required to execute the Surge, but whether the MNC-I operations in 07/08 would have been executed less competently without the UK staff in Baghdad is unclear.

298. It is also clear that a British civilian, [REDACTED], had great influence and [REDACTED] a Sandhurst academic, played an important role at the COIN Centre for Excellence. But the UK's failure to provide any military staff to the Centre and reluctance to send incoming UK commanders and staffs to the short courses there was an influence opportunity that was missed. It is notable that with the exception of Lt Gen Lamb, US journalists and commentators have not identified any other UK officer who achieved the influence of [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. This may in part be explained by the loss of collective understanding of COIN discussed in Chapter 1, but it is also an indicator that in achieving influence, as opposed to working in the HQ, our contribution was less effective than many think.

299. What is clear is that in NATO operations in the Balkans, our tactical contribution and our embedded staff had much greater influence. One SFOR commander told an outgoing UK brigade commander; *"You have great influence on me and this HQ. It comes from four things; the quality people you provide to the HQ, the quality of your national intelligence and tactical intelligence, and above all the success of your operations, which are a positive example to the whole force."*⁹³ Until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS only half of these four factors applied.

300. UK influence was also reduced by the national C2 resulting in COMBRITFOR being misplaced in MNDSE. It seems that neither PJHQ nor MOD paid sufficient attention to the campaign as a whole. This shows that to maximise campaign coherence and multinational unity of effort, there is a clear requirement for a single campaign plan, owned by the in-theatre operational headquarters. British military influence should be focussed at influencing the campaign plan; and establishing clear and unambiguous situational awareness at the theatre campaign level.

301. At the tactical level, mutual understanding between UK formations and superior US formations would have been improved by US embeds being integrated into UK brigade and divisional HQs, throughout the whole force generation cycle as well as the operational tour. This was only achieved by HQ AMPHIBFOR, but is a strong pointer to the future.⁹⁴

⁹³ Farewell interview COMSFOR/Comd MNBW Bosnia Sep 03.

⁹⁴ This point is expanded further in Chapter 3.

THE REPUTATION OF THE UK LAND COMPONENT

Our Reputation With The Americans

General Dannatt
CGS 2006-09
Iraq Inquiry Jul 10

I think at the senior level in the American Military they understand what we are doing, why we are doing it and give us consideration for that. I think at the middle level in the US military not everyone did understand and couldn't understand why we were not doing more in those critical periods of 2005 and 2006...

So I think there are a variety of views within the US military. That said, the relationship in general terms between the British Army and the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps is very good and very close. We respect each other and I think that has always been the case and I think will remain the case. I have used the term 'lumpy' a couple of times. I think there were some lumpy moments as far as Iraq was concerned.

302. There has been much negative public comment about our military performance in MNDSE. While much of this has been ill-informed and often driven by political agendas, there is no question that our institutional self-confidence was dented. Opinion is divided between those who see the events of 2007/8, particularly the 'accommodation' and Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS as military failures and those who regard them as the best that could be achieved in an extremely challenging strategic and operational environment. On balance this report favours the latter interpretation.

303. At the start of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS HQ MNC-I discovered that MNDSE was unable to do what the Coalition wanted with the resources available and that both HQs' situational awareness of SE Iraq had been fragile. Bagdad had assumed that the tactical commander in SE Iraq was sustaining a level of security that was actually beyond his resource capability, exceeded his national expectation and which he could not measure on account of his own lack of situational awareness. [REDACTED]

304. This and the impression that whilst US troops had been fighting hard in the 'Surge' Britain had cut a deal with JAM and had hung up its boots, as well as an almost complete lack of knowledge of the hard bloody fighting that had preceded the accommodation resulted in a [REDACTED]. This impression is also held in sections of the UK and US media and by some in the Army, which does nothing for our sense of self worth.

305. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

306. The rapid tactical response of MNDSE to the shock inflicted by the opening phase of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS had some effect in countering this. Subsequent successful UK operations in MNDSE also restored confidence of US commanders. Some US commanders with knowledge of MNDSE will have noted our relatively slower rate of adaptation to many requirements of the campaign, as described in Chapter 11. Many of those consulted for this study have remarked on this.

307. It also appears that many in the Army and Defence do not understand the narrative and ebb and flow of the Iraq campaign in general and in Southern Iraq in particular. For example, many officers appear ignorant of the logic behind Op ZENITH, the withdrawal from Basra and the successes of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the subsequent endgame in Basra.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But we need to be able to explain to others what happened, why it happened, the tactical successes and the limitations of the utility of our force, as well as the strategic and operational level factors and constraints that influenced MNDSE's operations. This is so that a balanced and informed understanding of our role in the campaign can be made. We also need to enable our people to fight corner against uniformed and unjustified criticism. **But it is only by demonstrating that we have learned the lessons of Op TELIC that are of wider relevance to Afghanistan and beyond, as well as competence, fighting spirit and enduring success on future operations that can lay this ghost to rest.**

CHAPTER 1 - UNDERSTANDING

BACKGROUND

"The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking." Clausewitz

"We were operating virtually blind...I was astonished that, having been there for four years we had such little understanding of the region." GOC MNDSE 2007

101. Iraq was always going to be a more difficult conflict to understand than Northern Ireland, the Balkans and Sierra Leone and many of the well documented strategic misjudgements made by the Coalition in 03 and 04 stemmed from a lack of understanding of Iraq. It is clear that the degree of understanding achieved by the UK Land Component in Iraq could have been improved.

POLICY

102. The defence policy extant for most of the campaign did not recognise counter-insurgency (COIN). The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) New Chapter had considered counter-terrorism but had not recognised that al-Qaeda (AQ) had many of the classical characteristics of an insurgency, albeit on a Global basis. Neither the Defence White Paper 2003, the Medium Term Workstrand exercise, nor the Defence Strategic Guidance 2005 recognised COIN as a military task. They did, however, anticipate peacekeeping (PK) or peace enforcement (PE) operations, including that such operations might follow on from deliberate intervention. The detailed and classified articulation of this policy guidance did not envisage PK or PE involving sustained tactical combat, and there was no consideration of the implications of a conflict that was opposed by the majority of the UK public and media.

103. It was not until 08 that UK defence policy formally recognised the type of conflict being experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan in the new military task; Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development (MASD), which could include COIN.

WHAT KIND OF WAR WAS IT?

104. UK and US experience reinforces the importance of answering the question posed by Clausewitz. In 2004-05 many considered the situation in MNDSE to have more in common with peace support operations (PSO) than anything else. It was only in 2006 that MNDSE formally characterised the operation as COIN, but even at the peak of Op SINBAD there were insufficient UK troops or Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to tactically execute a COIN strategy. Subsequent analysis was that we were *"part of the problem"*⁹⁵. In 2007 Shawforce assessed that the conflict was one of Shi'a internal competition for power and ability and that we should withdraw from Basra in order to help

⁹⁵ Gen Sir Richard Dannatt interview Oct 06.

and encourage the ISF to assert themselves. At the time Maliki was unwilling and probably unable to challenge Shi'a extremists politically and US priorities were elsewhere. But by ordering Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, Maliki confronted the JAM and redefined the militia and 'special groups' as insurgents. Subsequent events suggested that extortion in Basra had been funding attacks in Baghdad. These different analyses remain controversial within the Army, but reflect the changing nature of our opponents and Shi'a politics within Iraq. Lessons include:

- a. As we found in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Balkans, there is often great overlap between insurgents, organised criminals and political and religious extremists.
- b. The nature of the conflict and the utility of force must be regularly re-assessed at every level from the tactical to the strategic.
- c. All levels of the force must achieve a shared understanding. For example, the term 'transition' seems to have been differently understood by UK, US and Iraqis.



Fig 11. Basra Mar 08.
JAM, tribesman,

105. Whatever the nature of the conflict, consent of the people is dependent on their perception of legitimacy. Translating the success of tactical operations into more enduring tactical and operational level success also largely depended upon the political climate and context within which the operations took place.

DOCTRINE

106.

107. It appears that the UK Land Component employed on Op TELIC thought that it had a better doctrinal understanding of the conflict the US Army. In practice this was not so. The British Army had good doctrine for COIN based on ADP Counter Insurgency Operations, written in 1995. This was updated in 2001. In retrospect, both publications contained a solid foundation of understanding of insurgency and the principles of countering it. Until 1996 the Army's heritage of successful and unsuccessful COIN and the NI campaign, was reflected in teaching at the Army Staff College where several weeks were devoted to COIN, counter terrorism and Northern Ireland.

108. On the formation of the Joint Services Command and Staff College in 1997, the teaching of COIN to the Land Component was reduced to a single day of instruction. COIN was not taught to Royal Navy (RN) or Royal Air Force (RAF) officers at all. There was little or no consideration of COIN on the Higher Command and Staff Course (HCSC).⁹⁶ COIN had effectively been displaced from the syllabus by PSO and there was no joint doctrine for COIN. Teaching of COIN at JSCSC was not substantially uplifted until 2008.

109. Army COIN doctrine had been refreshed and republished in 2001, including some discussion of Islamic extremism. It does not appear to have been read by many, probably because it had not been widely publicised within the Army.

110. The understanding of Northern Ireland held by the majority of our people was of the theatre from the mid 80s onwards when it was mature; the police were in the lead, counter-terrorist operations had become highly specialised and from 1994 onwards Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefires were in place. Experience of Northern Ireland in the 1970s was much more relevant. Between 1969 and the early 1980s the Army had:

- a. Moved from being in the lead in hard republican areas, through shared responsibility with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to the RUC being firmly in the lead; an example of both transition and embedded partnership.
- b. Made a major contribution to rebuilding the RUC Special Branch police intelligence capability by lending intelligence specialists to them.
- c. Based on experience from colonial conflicts adopted a devolved and decentralised tactical intelligence capability and the training to support this.
- d. Developed a highly sophisticated approach to covert operations and intelligence targeting, with the formation of the Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG) passing the lead to Special Branch.

Much of this was introduced by the then Brig Kitson in 39 Inf Brigade. His book "*Bunch of Five*" described not only the principles of COIN but also the role of intelligence in it. Throughout Op

⁹⁶ For example COIN was deliberately excluded from the 2000 HCSC.

TELIC the book remained out of print and very few of our middle ranking officers appear to have read it. Overall, many UK officers serving in Iraq did not adequately understand our COIN heritage, the most relevant lessons of Northern Ireland and the extant land doctrine.

111. It is therefore unsurprising that many officers in Iraq, Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) and the MOD saw the conflict as a 'stability operation' that resembled PSO. This reflected the primacy of PSO experience seasoned by some Security Sector Reform (SSR) experience from the Balkans and Sierra Leone, skill fade from Northern Ireland and that COIN was neither acknowledged by defence policy nor taught at all to RN and RAF officers. Indeed 1 Mech Bde training in 2004 consciously chose to use PSO doctrine as the basis for their training; although in the event they adapted extremely well to the unexpected challenge of the Shi'a insurrection. In 2006, the conflict in MNDSE was characterised as COIN and the fact that we were able to do so reflected the understanding of COIN by many senior officers, who were Camberley graduates⁹⁷.

112. In 2006, the Army Doctrine committee considered the General Staff Analysis of Stability Operations in Iraq⁹⁸. There was discussion of whether the principles of COIN applied to Iraq. The conclusion was that they did. But at the time of this discussion, UK officers who attended ACSC or HCSC after 1997, who then served in Op TELIC in ranks from major to major general received little or no education or training in COIN.

113. **Did This Matter?** Although the US Army came from an even weaker corporate understanding, it learned on the job faster than we did and rapidly wrote new doctrine, which was quickly published, taught and applied. US COIN experts, both academic and military, formed a view that many of us did not understand our COIN heritage and relied too much on Northern Ireland and Balkan experience of questionable relevance. This was reflected not only in private comments, but also in the US media. The evidence described above suggests that these criticisms were justified.

114. **UK Doctrinal Adaptation.** A policy mandate placed on the Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre (JDCC)⁹⁹ in 2005 to produce joint COIN doctrine was not actioned until the production of JDP 3-40 *Security and Stabilisation – the Military Contribution*. Both it and the Army's new COIN doctrine were not published until after UK troops had withdrawn from Iraq.

115. **Implications of Iraq for Doctrine.** Many of the lessons of Op TELIC and of US operations in Iraq have been incorporated in AFM Vol 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency. Comparing the lessons identified in this exercise with the AFM suggests the following general COIN lessons:

- a. The term COIN is sufficient as a categorisation of what the coalition was conducting in Iraq (2003 onwards) and now in Afghanistan. It does not need to be changed.

⁹⁷ PSO, PE and COIN doctrine all share a common characteristic in acknowledging consent of the population as critical.

⁹⁸ This was a DG&D analysis paper.

⁹⁹ In 2006 renamed the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC).

- b. COIN is more than just politics and influence, it ranges from formation level combat to reconstruction.
- c. COIN can only be successfully conducted when sufficient resources are available, but resources in themselves are no guarantee of success.

116. **Overlap between Insurgency and Criminality.** Recognising that the problem in Southern Iraq was Shi'a/Shi'a rivalry over politics and criminal or corrupt exploitation of the economic potential of Basra allowed us to withdraw from Basra City and created the conditions that gave rise to Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. But even before Prime Minister (PM) Maliki redefined the JAM as insurgents in Mar 08, they displayed many of the characteristics of insurgents, including finance and logistics. Smuggling, kidnap and extortion in MNDSE's Area of Operations (AO) were known to have funded the purchase of weapons used in Basra and Baghdad. For example ordnance and funding for JAM "special group" attacks on US forces in Baghdad came from Basra and the border with Iran. JAM was eventually defeated in Basra and Baghdad by full spectrum COIN operations.

Insight. This suggests that there can be considerable overlap between insurgents, organised crime, political and religious extremism and militias. Such boundaries as may exist between these groups can be very fluid in both time and space. It should be no surprise that this occurred in Iraq, as it had also been a feature of Irish Republican extremism and we had seen similar linkages in the Former Yugoslavia. All of this suggests that a COIN approach may be of wide relevance across the spectrum of security operations, just as many principles of COIN have been applied by governments seeking to suppress organised crime. The responsibility for counter-crime activity in a COIN environment should be articulated at force level to prevent the exploitation of crime by insurgents.

CAMPAIGN CONTINUITY

"Continuity is the key. There was little intelligence, and absolutely no depth; we started anew each time."¹⁰⁰

"Memories were individual not corporate.....where has all the information from the past four years gone?"¹⁰¹

117. During Operation TELIC the UK Land component had inadequate levels of campaign continuity, which reduced operational effectiveness and eroded our influence with US forces, the Iraqis and other actors.

¹⁰⁰ Maj Gen J Cooper DSO MBE GOC MNDSE Op TELIC 7-8.

¹⁰¹ Maj Gen JD Shaw CBE, GOC MNDSE Op TELIC 9-10.

Background

118. During the Northern Ireland campaign the Army achieved high levels of campaign continuity. The force HQ and Brigade HQs were bespoke standing HQs specific to Theatre and a high proportion of the force troops were on two year resident tours. The RUC and Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)/RIRISH battalions lived in theatre. Although the majority of units were on 4/6 months unaccompanied tours, they were mentored and guided by the resident chain of command, allowing a long term approach. This was a major factor in forging strong relationships with the police and was a key contribution to the success of intelligence led counter terrorist operations. Continuity in this campaign was reinforced by the military campaign plan and tactical execution being controlled by Headquarters NI, which also had full command of the special to theatre training and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs).

119. From the late 1970s roulement units were assisted by deployment of continuity NCOs (CONCOs) to battalion and company intelligence cells. These people came from the resident units on two year tours. They commuted to work Monday-Friday, but their deeper knowledge and understanding of the AO was an invaluable force multiplier.

120. Although initially all troops deployed to Bosnia were on 6 month tours, the two UK commanders of UNPROFOR were sent on one year tours as was HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) for the NATO International Force (IFOR). Thereafter most troops were on 6 month tours, but key individuals in Sarajevo and Banja Luka were on extended one year tours. Continuity was considerably improved by the security situation allowing the civilian staff of international organisations to live in the country. This latter point also applied to Kosovo.

US Practice In Iraq

121. In the 1990s most US Army tour lengths for the Balkans had been 6 months. In Jul 2003 they announced a one year 'boots on the ground' policy for Iraq *"in order to give time to develop situational awareness experience and connections with Iraqis"*¹⁰². The Chief of Staff US Army directed that deployed US commanders were not to change over in theatre.

122. During the Shi'a uprising of 2004 and the surge of 2007 some units and formations had tours lengthened to 15 months. All US army individuals in Baghdad were on a similar regime. Some, including Gen Casey the Commander of MNF-I 2005-07, stayed for longer. The same policy was applied to US Army deployments to Afghanistan. This put great strain on the US Army, but did not break it. It achieved the benefits expected above. It also meant that in the second half of the campaign US commanders had developed a good personal understanding of the IA and its officers.

123. The USMC adopted a different policy, with battalion tour lengths being 7 months, but brigade and higher HQs deploying for 13 months. Although this often breaks the peacetime connection between battalion and brigade, the USMC considers it effective. With USMC units being

¹⁰² On Point II page 165.

exclusively deployed in Anbar Province, it meant that although USMC units served there shorter tours, they returned to Anbar more often.

UK Practice in Iraq

124. We continued our policy of both units and individuals deploying for 6 months. Commanders considered that for the majority of people in units, a 6 month tour was satisfactory. As time went on an increasing number of senior officers in posts in Baghdad deployed for longer tours. UK civilians in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID) and the ██████████ were on longer tours; the default setting being a 2 year tour consisting of a 6 week on/2 week off basis.

125. We allowed brigade commanders to change over in mid tour, resulting in seven different brigade commanders in Basra in 2004/5 and for most of the period placed little or no constraint on mid tour rotation of Commanding Officers, Officers Commanding and key staff officers. There are examples of key UK personnel being short toured in MNDSE and Baghdad in order to man non-operational posts. We also allowed the COS MNDSE appointment to change over mid tour, in order to allow the incumbent to attend HCSC. So whilst HQ 3 US Corps acted as HQ MNC-I from Nov 06 to Feb 08, their COS who served the whole tour dealt with 5 different UK colonels acting as COS MNDSE.

126. All UK Brigade and Divisional commanders saw this as a great weakness. In all post operation reports they assessed our level of continuity to be inadequate. On their own initiative brigades and units deployed continuity personnel to theatre before the brigade rotation and numbers doing so increased as time went on. Some GOCs requested the basing of continuity personnel on residential accompanied tours in Kuwait. There is no evidence that the option was ever seriously considered by the Army.

127. The only UK force element deployed for more than 6 months was HQ Amphibious Force (AMPHIBFOR), which deployed prepared to act as HQ MNDSE for a year and served for 8 months until relieved by a US HQ. This gave them greater continuity and understanding.

Continuity of UK Operational Direction in Iraq

128. The shorter UK tour lengths should have been countered by continuity of assessment, advice and direction by PJHQ, which was manned by trickle posted individuals. Over the course of Op TELIC, each General Officer Commanding (GOC) MNDSE achieved some tactical successes with the resources available and in the political context at that particular point in time, but lacked the planning continuity and resources to CONPLAN their longer term consequences and translate them into enduring tactical or operational success. Each MNDSE action was in line with PJHQ and national strategic policy, but continuity of approach was eroded by the tendency of incoming MNDSE commanders to take an *ab initio* view of their tour. There was some resistance to extending divisional HQ tour lengths. For example: *"The fact that I said that the military tend to suffer from short-term-ism should have lead me to recommend longer tour lengths; yet I resisted attempts to extend the HQ tour to nine months. The reason was simple: the bulk of my Division was still in*

*Germany. However, it is time that the UK does embrace longer tours for their senior commanders and principal staff. The Consul General was in theatre for eleven months, [REDACTED] and many of the American staff in Basra had been there for over a year. I think that sometimes we overstate the cohesion that a formed headquarters brings to an enduring operation to suit our own purposes, and this should be closely considered when tour lengths are decided. There is a balance between cohesion and continuity: at the beginning of an operation cohesion is key, but for an enduring operation the need for continuity takes over.*¹⁰³

Insight. Continuity provided by PIHQ appears to have been less than that achieved by HQNI during Operation BANNER. The US achieved a much higher degree of campaign continuity, as did the FCO, DFID and [REDACTED]. The Army's apparent 'business as usual' approach to manning command and staff appointments eroded continuity and reduced our credibility with the Iraqis and with the US.

Insight. Given the intensity of lower tactical operations, battlegroup tour intervals of six months appear to be the right balance for troops engaged in high intensity operations. But there would be merit in understanding the value of brigade HQs doing one year tours. A better understanding of the USMC approach to tour lengths would inform this. Had our approach of sending UK divisional HQs for a year to Afghanistan been applied to MNDSE, our continuity and effectiveness would have been greatly improved, provided that key personnel such as the COS were not allowed to change over mid-tour.

Insight. Whatever approach is adopted, there is a strong case for fielding continuity NCOs and officers on 2 year tours who can add continuity at brigade, battlegroup and sub-unit level, using the same approach as the Northern Ireland CONCOs.

LANGUAGE CAPABILITY

129. Many commanders have emphasised the importance of interpreters. Throughout the campaign, the Army had insufficient language speakers in uniform. As in the Balkans, English speaking Iraqi civilians and third party nationals were hired. But the exodus of educated middle class Iraqis and intimidation by militias meant that there were never enough interpreters for every patrol to have been accompanied by one. Translating documents, such as operations orders to improve co-ordination with the ISF, could be both slow and problematic.

130. [REDACTED] Efforts were made by the Army and the MOD to increase Arabic language capability, but no Operation TELIC commander has observed that these made any difference. Attempts to encourage service personnel to train and act as interpreters for a TELIC tour did not generate the numbers required due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel and the time taken to bring students up to an acceptable colloquial standard. And from 2006, personnel with an aptitude or interest in learning languages were

¹⁰³ Maj Gen GJ Binns CBE DSO MC, GOC MNDSE Op TELIC 10-11

more attracted to learning Pashtu or Dari for Afghanistan.

131. It was found that the majority of third country nationals used for interpreters in MNDSE usually lacked cultural understanding of southern Iraq. So the great majority of UK interpreters were



Fig 12. UK female interpreter (centre) with UK MiTT and Iraqis.

locally employed Iraqi civilians. They were an OPSEC risk were very vulnerable to threats and intimidation and a number were killed. This type of interpreter with its attendant risk was also employed by US forces. In addition, they used a large number of US servicemen of Arabic extraction and contractor provided interpreters. These were US civilian language experts, some from an Arabic background and others not. Those that worked for senior commanders had high level security clearance, equivalent to UK Developed Vetting (DV). This of course reflected the larger and more ethnically diverse nature of US society, as well as the way many immigrants have better assimilated than in the UK. This contractor option was not fielded by the UK to anywhere near the same extent.

Insight. For stabilisation operations, including not just COIN, but also PSO, there need to be sufficient interpreters not only to meet the requirements of commanders, but also to guarantee that every patrol is accompanied by one, and to meet the requirements for translation of documents. This was never achieved in Iraq. There would be merit in using contractor provided interpreters in the same way in future operations, including the use of US citizens with appropriate clearances. And if operations were US led, ABCA or NATO operations there should be no reason why we could not call on American, Canadian, Australian or NZ citizens.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

132. The Coalition appeared to have believed that it understood the Iraqis in the sense that they would be grateful to have been rid of Saddam and thus welcome the Allied presence. Events showed this assumption to be false. This demonstrates the need to develop an understanding of the Human Terrain and to generate appropriate cultural understanding.

133. However, the UK also failed to effectively utilise the Iraqi interpreters it had, not just for their language skills but also their ability to provide detailed cultural understanding, despite the fact that a development of cultural understanding was often seen as far more important to commanders on the ground.

134. As senior commanders, who had priority for the better interpreters, often observed that, given a good interpreter, cultural understanding was more important than language skills. Commanders felt it would have enabled them to work effectively and cause less offence. In retrospect, we could have grown our cultural understanding capability faster. Commanders also formed the view that the Army lacked enough Arabists and did not fully exploit the ones it had.

Insight. Future operations will require us to achieve a greater level of cultural understanding than we achieved in Iraq.



Fig 13. Graffiti, advertising and propaganda, but which was which and what did the shopkeeper think?

135. US forces made some use of expatriate Iraqis or Arab Americans and interpreters. Although there were fewer of such people in the UK, there were some. OPTAG used Iraqis from the School of African and Oriental studies for cultural training. HQ AMPHIBFOR in preparation for their tour on TELIC 12 engaged these people through the London School of Economics. Apart from that there seems to have been no effort to engage Iraqi expatriates in the UK, or to persuade them to serve as interpreters or cultural advisers. There was also no effort to draw on such a capability resident in other Coalition allies, principally the US and Australia.

Insight. Acquiring linguistic capability and cultural understanding may benefit from engaging and employing expatriates in the UK or in Allied nations. This will require MOD buy-in and effective yet streamlined security vetting procedures.

CHAPTER 2 - INFORM (ISTAR)

BACKGROUND

201. All academic and military experts on counter-insurgency (COIN) consider that intelligence is vital. Not only does it help protect the force and trigger successful operations, but it can also improve understanding of the campaign, particularly of the insurgents and the affected population. As Op TELIC progressed, commanders increasingly sought to achieve both kinetic and non-kinetic effects. Promotion of a comprehensive approach and outcome-based thinking to operations in a very foreign culture presented intelligence staffs with a greater challenge than that met on previous operations.

202. Intelligence requirements came to extend well beyond the boundary of the adversary and included many uncommitted and neutral parties, whose interest, trust and activities could represent the difference between success and failure. There was increasing demand to understand cultural factors. Human Terrain and Target Audience Analysis became necessary. Supporting Influence Activities in particular required a nuanced and deeper understanding. And there was an ever increasing requirement for intelligence so as to protect the force, both defensively and by disrupting IED and IDF networks.

203. UK land forces had a very successful track record of collecting and exploiting intelligence in Malaya, Kenya and Northern Ireland (NI). Probably the best analysis of intelligence in COIN is that by General Sir Frank Kitson. "Low Intensity Operations" and "Bunch of Five" contain the best explanations of the enduring principles of intelligence in COIN. He showed how the land component needed to field an expanded and decentralised tactical intelligence organisation down to company level, and provided plenty of examples showing how commanders should lead their lead their intelligence effort and use it to drive operations. This approach was successfully applied in NI from the early 1970s and at the start of Op TELIC. In 2003 this approach was used by both covert and framework troops in Bosnia and Kosovo.

204. So despite all the factors inhibiting our understanding described in the previous chapter, there should have been a good chance of us quickly building the kind of expanded and decentralised intelligence organisation described by Kitson, and of commanders being able to use it to increase the effectiveness of their operations. In fact most MNDSE commanders from company to division considered the intelligence available to them inadequate, that there were insufficient ISTAR assets available and that the standardised force wide continuity and intelligence databases that had been so useful in Northern Ireland were either inadequate or absent.

205. 


[REDACTED] Despite these improvements even in the final year of Op TELIC most commanders still considered intelligence and ISTAR capabilities inadequate, and in some areas to be behind those capabilities fielded over the same time span in the first decade of the Northern Ireland campaign. For example an intelligence database was fielded too late and was never fully populated, protocols and mechanisms to allow high level intelligence to reach the tactical commander who needed it were inadequate and we never deployed continuity intelligence personnel as we had in Northern Ireland.

206. **Assessment.** There is overwhelming evidence of a comprehensive failure to generate an adequate tactical intelligence capability to meet the requirements of tactical commanders. What capability was fielded was almost always too little too late. This appears to have resulted from significant weaknesses in almost every area of intelligence direction, collection, analysis, dissemination as well as the support the land component received from the Int Corps and the ISTAR capability staffs.

INTELLIGENCE BASELINE

207. In spite of the intelligence gathered during 12 years of US/UK air operations, our understanding of Southern Iraq was inadequate. [REDACTED] This was compounded by an ethnocentric approach to intelligence analysis. The Coalition underestimated the nature of the insurgent network that quickly started to develop after Saddam was deposed.

208. To overcome these difficulties, it was important to deliver fully trained intelligence teams to theatre. This required a comprehensive preparation to allow staffs to be immersed in the history, culture and current intelligence of the country, so as to maximise understanding, and minimise the dip in effectiveness when individuals, units and formations changed over.

209. At formation level Int Corps sections and individuals were frequently deployed to theatre with an inadequate understanding of the region as a whole and of its history, which meant that time was wasted in theatre reading into such areas. There was also too little interaction between intelligence sections in theatre and those preparing to deploy, meaning that vital knowledge relating to current intelligence was inevitably lost during the relatively short handover time available. Some units had inadequate handovers when they arrived in theatre. These factors meant that on deployment the level of understanding significantly reduced and could take several months to rebuild.

210. Towards the end of the campaign units and HQs rotated G2 personnel into theatre up to eight weeks in advance of their unit or formation. This gave better continuity, but was at the expense of Pre-Deployment Training (PDT), making it more difficult for G2 staff to fully integrate with the commanders and staff with whom they would be working. The successful Northern Ireland practice of establishing continuity personnel on two year tours was never adopted. This was despite repeated requests to base such personnel in Kuwait.

211. In comparison with NI and the Balkans, UK forces lacked the low level database based on information and intelligence collected at company and battlegroup level. It was not that Battlegroups were incapable of collecting the information and gathering low level intelligence. There are plenty of reports of Battlegroups doing so and being able to mount operations based on this. Rather it is that the computerised database needed was fielded too late and was never adequately populated. This further inhibited our ability to retain knowledge and understanding. So battlegroups used their own IT, including privately owned systems, to create databases of varying types. Many of these were based on spreadsheets, but other approaches were developed. But above battlegroup level there appears to have been no direction on standardisation and on relief in place; it appears to largely have been left to incoming units to decide for themselves whether or not to continue to use the outgoing units approach and data. There was no overarching guidance from the UK on the desired type, structure and contents.

212. The interim ISTAR toolkit was deployed to theatre as an Operational Capability Demonstrator in order to exhibit a possible solution to the problem. But its deployment was insufficiently planned, it was not properly supported and the database was designed in such a way as to be unfit for purpose. This was complicated by the use of a reach-back capability for database population, where the bulk of the database loading and linking was done by intelligence staffs in the UK. Due to a lack of appropriate CIS, there was a substantial air-gap, which led to unacceptable time delays in getting this information back to theatre. The lack of understanding and situational awareness on the part of UK-based staffs led to mistakes being made in database population which caused a loss of confidence in this material in theatre. Even at the end of Op TELIC in summer 2009, the intelligence database in MNDSE was inadequate. And a similar capability was yet to be fielded in Task Force Helmand in Afghanistan.

Comment. It may be that at the tactical level units and formations were too reliant on an expectation of a computer database being an all embracing solution. While an adequate IT system was only fielded in NI in the late 1970s, at least seven years after the start of the campaign, an adequate paper based systems had been fielded much earlier. It is not clear that this “reversionary mode” was ever taught to or practiced by intelligence personnel. It is also likely that the vast majority of tactical commanders and G2 personnel had little or no relevant experience of tactical intelligence from NI.

Insight. Our approach to preparing intelligence personnel for such operations needs improving. It would be useful to have a central “knowledge base” of material relating to an operation that could be used by sections preparing for theatre. Once essential initial understanding has been achieved, focus would switch to the current intelligence flowing from theatre and interaction with the deployed section enabled.

Insight. For future stabilisation operations key G2 posts should be manned for at least a year. And there is a strong case for following NI practice by forming G2 continuity posts on two year tours from division to company level to minimise intelligence fade as units and formations hand over.

RESTRICTED

Insight. Future expeditionary stabilisation operations require an expeditionary G2 database capability at the same readiness as the deploying force. It should be capable of being interrogated in a number of ways, presenting differing views of recorded information. This should institutionalise operational memory, improve intelligence assessment and enhance campaign continuity. It should also support reach-out and mission specific training in the UK. This is a core capability.

DIRECTION

213. Most tactical commanders were keen to improve the intelligence available to them to improve their protection and operational effect. But it also appears that the direction to the tactical intelligence effort would often change significantly as units, formations and personalities changed over. In part, this appears to have been a result of the lack of continuity in both commanders and intelligence staff discussed in Chapter 1.

COLLECTION

"The two SNCOs who conducted [REDACTED] on TELIC 13 came to theatre untrained. They produced excellent results but only due to extremely hard work and individual initiative. This cannot always be guaranteed without official training."¹⁰⁴

214. Despite the relatively lower force density compared to NI, battlegroups were able to collect information by getting Iraqis to talk to them. This depended on troops being present on the ground in sufficient strength. For example in Basra, except during the Accommodation, companies were able to generate actionable intelligence from low level patrolling. US troops in Baghdad also achieved this wherever they stayed in sufficient strength to give the population confidence. This did provide actionable intelligence.

215. UK Battlegroups were also capable of fusing information and intelligence from a variety of sources and using this to drive operations and improve force protection. In 2005-07 this was achieved by the battlegroups based in Basra Palace who built up productive relationships with [REDACTED].

216. But all battlegroup intelligence personnel were combat arms officers and soldiers. Int Corps personnel were not placed at battlegroup level, which meant that some intelligence was not captured and exploited as a result, leaving battlegroup and brigade activity to be less well-informed than it could have been.

217. For most of the NI campaign battalions and regiments on both resident and roulement tours fielded and expanded and decentralised intelligence staff at battalion HQ and company HQ. They received very specific direction from HQNI as to the minimum ORBAT to be fielded. This would require five times as many people as that unit had in its intelligence section in barracks. Generally

¹⁰⁴ SO3, HVI Tgts 20 Bde, OpTELIC 13 POR.

COs sought to appoint the 'brightest and best' to these roles. And a tailored package of training highly focussed and relevant training for these people would begin up to year ahead of the tour. It appears that on Op TELIC this degree of rigour was not applied. Battlegroup commanders appear to have been given considerable freedom to decide the size and structure of their tactical intelligence staffs. Some of these were very effective, others less so. Often this depended on the calibre of the officer chosen for the battlegroup intelligence officer role.

Insights. Op TELIC confirmed the value of expanding and decentralising tactical intelligence staffs, down to company level and of the NI experience of prescribing minimum battlegroup intelligence ORBAT, linked to relevant pre-tour G2 training.

Tactical Census Collection

218. On a number of occasions US units conducted information gathering operations that had the effect of a tactical census. This technique was used during the clearance of Ramadi in 2006 and again during the surge in Baghdad the next year. It required the battalions concerned to refine the local street and house numbering systems. Information was collected by patrols knocking on doors taking pictures of military age male inhabitants and loading the information on databases that related the information to overhead imagery. Licence plate number and descriptions of any vehicles owned by the occupants were also collected. The information gathered proved extremely useful for company and battalion level analysis and prediction.

Insight. There was nothing new about such activity; indeed the British Army conducted it from the outset of the NI campaign. US experience reinforced the value of a low level database to intelligence in COIN. But all of this depends on troops having the freedoms and presence on the ground to collect the information.

BRIGADE SURVEILLANCE COMPANIES

219. The post operational tour reports and interviews make scant mention of the Brigade Surveillance Company (BSC) that was introduced as an established capability on TELIC 6 with 12 Mech Bde. Prior to TELIC 6 the Brigade surveillance capability was an ad hoc affair resourced from the recce trained FE from within the orbat. This is somewhat surprising given the specialist uniformed static covert surveillance heritage from NI and the Balkans¹⁰⁵. Comd 12 Bde instigated a Brigade wide selection process and formed up the selected personnel under an OC and two PI Comds 6 months prior to the deployment hosted by [REDACTED]. Officers and SNCOs completed the Close Observation Platoon (COP) Controllers Course before taking though their respective platoons of four teams on the COP Cse with a TELIC 'flavour'¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁵ The evolution of the training regime for surveillance capability has been problematic with a number of players from COTT to COTAT to SRW and the [REDACTED]

¹⁰⁶ The COP was used extensively in NI and then in the Balkans and provided a static covert surveillance capability.

220. In its original form the BSC was mounted in SNATCH LR with a [REDACTED] communications fit and took part in FIND and FIX roles as well as providing intimate support to STRIKE operations¹⁰⁷. Specialist equipments included [REDACTED]. The BSC did not generally operate in the urban environment, less drive by reconnaissance tasks (where they operated within overt framework patrols) to conduct specific surveillance activity and did not partner or mentor ISF¹⁰⁸.

221. By TELIC 13 the BSC represented a fully coherent and equipped specialist surveillance organisation integrated within the MNDSE targeting process. The BSC received bespoke training, including the use of specialist surveillance equipment, for example UGS, supported by [REDACTED]. It could deploy in MASTIFF and be self sufficient for up to 72 hours without re-supply. Operations focused on CIED, counter smuggling tasks and tracking HVTs. It mostly operated in the border region and on MSRs as part of an integrated ISTAR matrix ([REDACTED]) to track and intercept suspicious movements towards Basrah making use of an Air Reaction Force¹⁰⁹.

222. Although it proved of limited use in the urban environment its ability to provide a sustained all weather surveillance capability in rural areas was much valued and proved the requirement for brigades to maintain an integral uniformed static covert surveillance capability within their ORBAT. Importantly the BSC had qualitative value in that it could refine and confirm target sets provided from other sources, especially [REDACTED] and focus STRIKE assets onto target sets avoiding 'collateral'. While not battle winning in itself, it did become an integral asset to many bde operations. Many BSC commanders have commented that BSC could have been used more to complement battlegroup operations but a lack of understanding of BSC capabilities linked to a general poor understanding of ISTAR planning and targeting by brigade staff hampered its full employment.

Insight. Battlegroup commanders and staff, as well as brigade staff, require briefing on brigade ISTAR capabilities, including any static covert surveillance capabilities, in order that they can better use them.

BIOMETRIC CAPABILITIES

223. Deployable biometric capabilities had already been fielded by some civilian US police forces down to squad car level and linked to police databases. By the surge in 2007, US forces were fielding deployable biometric sensors down to platoon level. They also actively gathered biometric data from the civil population; in effect conducting a biometric census. All Sunni insurgents who changed sides were biometrically scanned as they were re-employed by US forces. Towards the end of Op TELIC the US installed biometric sensors at border crossing points.

¹⁰⁷ This function was later taken over by the 'Armageddon Platoon' which operated in lieu of [REDACTED] assets.

¹⁰⁸ [REDACTED] and the STRIKE BG provided the MCB capability.

¹⁰⁹ Similar activity was planned for on TELIC 6 but not executed.

Insight. US operations in Iraq show the considerable utility of biometric data and the value of deploying biometric scanners down to patrol level all connected in real time to a biometric database. This capability is being further developed in Afghanistan. But it is a core capability required at readiness for future expeditionary stabilisation operations. And in war it would be an aid to identifying and controlling prisoners.

Insight. US units used biometrics in conjunction with other information gathering to create significant knowledge of the population of their AO. Accepting that their troop density in the Surge was greater than the UK ever achieved in Basra, it still illustrates the importance of this approach. In future expeditionary stabilisation operations it will be important to legally empower and protect the capability to gather information about individuals through Status of Forces Acts (SOFA), national emergency legislation or UNSCRs.

DETENTION AND EXPLOITATION CAPABILITIES

224.

[REDACTED]



225

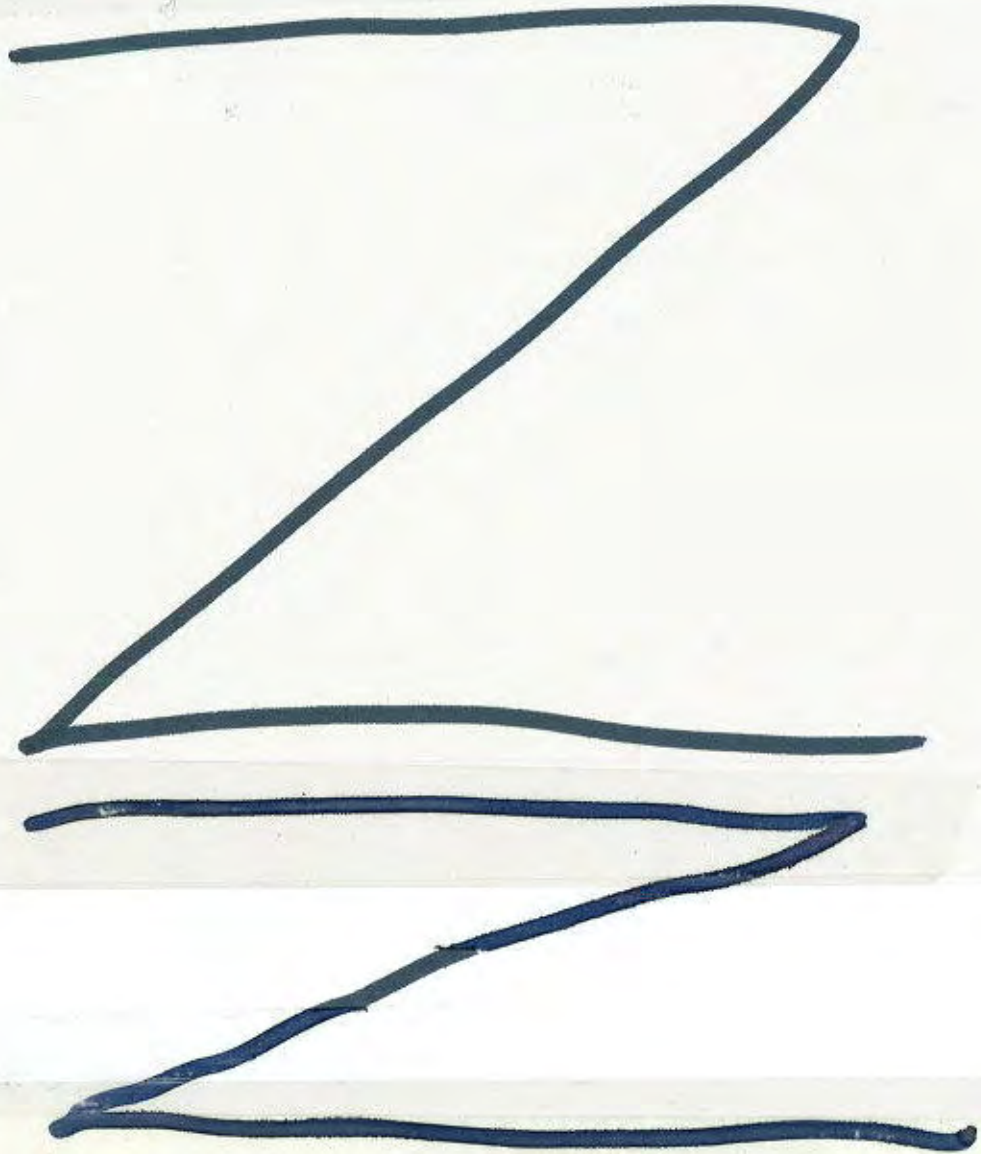
[REDACTED]

Fig 14. Soldiers from 7 Armd Bde detain a suspect during an operation in 2006.

[REDACTED]

226.
TFI

227.



¹¹⁰ For instance, the transfer of detainees to another Coalition partner or to Indigenous Forces and Judiciary.

¹¹¹ Directorate of Operational Capability Audit 4/07 and "The Aitken Report. An Investigation into Causes of Deliberate Abuse and Unlawful Killing in Iraq in 2003 and 2004" 25 Jan 08.

¹¹² ArmyInsp/DH/01 "Army Inspectorate Review into the Implementation of Policy, Training and Conduct of Detainee Handling: Final Report by the Army Inspector" 15 Jul 10 and LWC/G7 "Review of Policy, Training and Conduct for Detainee Handling" 17 Feb 10.

¹¹³ For example Biometric Data Collection System – recently deployed to Op HERRICK

¹¹⁴ MND9SE0/J2/200.1, dated 11 May 09 refers.

OPERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT GROUP

228. To improve access to UK national military and civilian agencies an OISG was deployed to HQ MNDSE. This was successful in delivering effective intelligence support, particularly to targeting. [REDACTED]

From TELIC 7, the provision of OISG capability and equipment was increasingly coordinated by HQ Intelligence Collection Group, which has since acted as the focal point for deploying OISG across Defence.

Insight. The OISG was regarded favourably by commanders and staffs in theatre. [REDACTED]

This capability not only applies to Afghanistan, but is also required at readiness for expeditionary operations of all types.

AIRBORNE SURVEILLANCE

229. Operations in NI and the Balkans and police practice in the UK had shown the value of the “unblinking eye”, not only for surveillance in its own right for both conventional forces and SF, but also overtly deployed to provide “top cover” for troops on the ground by deterring attacks.

230. From TELIC 2 onwards, there were insufficient UAV or airborne collection assets available to MNDSE. [REDACTED]

Broadsword was eventually fielded in MNDSE and Nimrod MR2 was at times available for direct tasking. But after 2005 MNDSE was competing with Afghanistan for Nimrod sorties. However, other RAF tactical recce assets in theatre were under-tasked. This reflected a failure on the part of G2 staffs to utilise this capability due to a complex tasking chain, a



Fig 15. A USAF MQ 1B Predator takes off in Iraq. MNDSE lacked sufficient UAV or airborne collection assets from TELIC 2.

corporate UK lack of staff expertise in Intelligence Requirements Management and Collection Management and no suitable toolsets that allowed this activity to take place seamlessly across different levels of command.

231. US Forces fielded large numbers of UAVs and other airborne ISTAR platforms over Iraq, including USN P3 Orions. A UK contribution to the US Predator effort was not linked to a guaranteed allocation of Predator hours to MNDSE. UK fixed wing tactical surveillance capability such as the Army and RUC Islanders used in Northern Ireland was never allocated to MNDSE.

232. The Number of US airborne ISTAR systems increased greatly during the campaign, but from 2003 until Mar 08 MNDSE was never MNC-I's main effort, so it received very little of these resources. The Italian Brigade had organic UAVs and the Australian contingent fielded a UAV in 2006. This was contractor operated and had been fielded in 12 weeks from the requirement being identified in theatre. Both of these systems were retained under national control and were not available to support UK forces. Senior US officers were astonished to find the UK so lacking in this capability.

233. Operations in NI and the Balkans and police practice in the UK had shown the value of the airborne ISTAR not only for surveillance, but also overtly providing "top cover" for troops on the ground by deterring attacks. Fielding Hermes 450 and Desert Hawk, helped, but it was only during

Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS that MNDSE had sufficient airborne ISTAR capability. Once the operation ended MNC-I shifted their priorities and ISTAR assets elsewhere. So for the rest of Op TELIC there was never enough ISTAR to meet the requirement for C-IED road watch or for ISTAR support to intelligence led strike operations to disrupt the network.



234. Experience in rural areas of NI showed that airborne ISTAR needed to be complemented with the ability to quickly achieve effect on the ground. This led to the fielding of armed helicopters carrying dedicated airborne reaction forces. Similar effect was achieved by the US in Iraq by fielding air platforms capable of both persistent ISTAR and armed action. By combining persistent sensor and precision shooter in the same platform they improved the ability to engage fleeting targets and to act as deterrent "top cover" for ground troops. All US Divisions made good use of organic AH for ISTAR in this role. AC-130, although primarily designed for armed action, carried powerful STA systems.

and AC-130 had a powerful deterrent effect on

Both AH Fig 16. A Desert Hawk is enemy

launched to provide cover at a border crossing point.

fighters and acted to reassure US, UK and Iraqi ground troops. UK AH was not deployed to Iraq, but as the capability achieved operational readiness it was deployed straight to Afghanistan.

As the campaign went on the US fielded ever increasing numbers of armed UAVs. These, AH and AC-130 all greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Iraqi forces during Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and subsequent Iraqi operations in Baghdad and elsewhere.

Insight. The NI air ISTAR capability was based on manned helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. By the start of Op TELIC, UAV and surveillance technology had advanced sufficiently to create a proliferation of airborne ISTAR capability. Despite this, and conclusive evidence from Op BANNER that troops deployed on the ground without an airborne unblinking eye in direct support were more vulnerable and less effective, the UK failed to adequately resource the airborne ISTAR requirements of its land component.

Insight. The difficulty MNDSE had in obtaining Corps and theatre level US and UK assets, as well as obtaining support from Italian and Australian UAVs, flowed from a combination of it being neither main effort nor able to compel junior coalition partners to re-subordinate assets they considered as essential for their own operations and force protection. This suggests that for future operations any UK contribution to theatre or corps level airborne ISTAR must be complemented by an allocation of dedicated organic tactical airborne ISTAR to the UK Land component. A UK brigade on an enduring stabilisation operation would appear to require a higher level of organic UK airborne ISTAR than that provided during Op TELIC. Not providing this will reduce effectiveness and increase risk, especially when the UK land component is not main effort.

Insight. US experience and capability suggests that manned and unmanned aircraft that can both conduct persistent ISR and carry precision weapons will be of great value in future land operations.

PROCESSING

235. Throughout Op TELIC, commanders increasingly looked to their G2 staff to gain a comprehensive contextual understanding of the information collected about the operational environment and all its actors¹¹⁵. This was particularly important for targeting 'amongst the people', where there was a requirement for intelligence staff to be aware of how collection assets could be integrated to support 'man hunting' as opposed to targeting as envisaged in war fighting doctrine.

236. **Targeting 'Amongst the People'**. Initially there was difficulty in adapting intelligence processes into an integrated targeting approach suitable for operations amongst the people. This was despite this being the core of the Kitson approach to intelligence in COIN, covert operations in NI and intelligence led operations in the Balkans. By 2005 commanders did start directing intelligence targeting through a Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG).

¹¹⁵ Ibid, Para 301.

[REDACTED] A successful approach to development of high value target packs was evolved in theatre, accelerating the number and type of strike operations taking place that were intelligence-informed, especially in the Basra area. However, these operations were often based on [REDACTED], which is more risky and more likely to fail than targeting based on multiple sources. This improved when airborne ISTAR capabilities increased [REDACTED]

Insight. The principles of the intelligence informed targeting approach evolved in Basra have wider applicability. It was highly successful, despite formal G2 training, not because of it. This approach needs to be a core subject taught to G2 staffs. Targeting 'amongst the people' in Iraq required a dedicated and complimentary mix of ISTAR collectors and analysts. It had to be narrowly focussed on a particular target set, supported by an agile decision making process. An all-source approach was required, focussed on an agreed command directed, intelligence informed target pack. It was ISTAR resource intensive, and collection assets were still required for wider intelligence requirements. Improving collection, linkages, analysis and processing, would enable greater tempo and support decision-making with an enhanced level of confidence, and not just drive decision thresholds upwards. It would also allow greater empowerment of Battle Groups to act on this intelligence.

237. **Intelligence Fusion.** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The OISG approach was successful at integrating their output. But the targeting approach described above required some analysts to become deep experts at very short notice, while the analytical tools to better draw together extensive intelligence information were absent. This was exacerbated by continued reliance throughout Op TELIC on 'flat files' and spreadsheets, which were sometimes removed from Theatre on rotation, resulting in poor corporate memory.

Insight. Co-location of [REDACTED] analytical teams would have improved effectiveness even more, but was never achieved at brigade or divisional level. This required the provision of adequate infrastructure, vetting and resources for working at Secret and Top Secret levels, including in an open-plan office. Better reach back to analytical teams in the UK and US would also have improved capability.

238. **CIS Constraints.** CIS support to intelligence was problematic. Before deployment it was usually impossible for in-theatre G2 staffs to achieve regular intelligence exchange with formation HQs and units in UK and Germany. This was further complicated by a lack of appropriate Information Management (IM)/Information Exchange (IX) practices in the UK, which caused a loss of information or the unnecessary duplication of messages and files placing pressure on the bearer networks. In Iraq staff were often having to work off several different IT and communications systems, which hampered the flow of information. A move to web-based working was instigated in the UK through the ISOCELES ISTAR test-bed programme, which was led by Cap ISTAR from TELIC 6 onwards. There was significant disconnect between the aims of the programme and what HQ Land Forces required for theatre, meaning that the utility of this research, and the advantages it could offer in bringing forward 'quick-win' elements, was lost. Even by Op TELIC 12, it was noted

that there was a disappointing amount of data in theatre, constrained in part by server capacity.¹¹⁶ An increasing number of collection resources, including technical enhancement to existing platforms and more coherent ISTAR architectures, resulted in the production of a significantly greater amount of reporting that required collation and integration, adding additional complexity to the analysis task. It was also identified that databases also needed to feed directly into the US intelligence reporting system.

Insight. There has been a misconception that ISTAR was solely ISR - the [redacted] team or the asset that flies in the sky.¹¹⁷ This is not to deny the need for continued investment in Collect - there is ample comment currently about the need to provide more at the operational and tactical levels. But there needs to be an appropriate balance of investment in resources between Intelligence Processing and STAR Collection to support the Understand and Find functions.

DISSEMINATION

239. Commanders needed to acquire the highest grade intelligence down to the lowest levels of tactical decision making; brigade, battlegroup and sometimes company/squadron. They considered that intelligence reports were often over-classified and there was a lack of flexible dissemination protocols to enable tear line reports to be produced to share with multinational and Iraqi partners. Compartmentalised information systems prevented all source analysis at every level and decision superiority was limited by security accreditation issues.

240. This was different from the dissemination envisaged for war fighting. It presented significant challenges to an otherwise secretive community, who were naturally concerned to protect sensitive sources, methods and techniques in order to retain access. This all worked against the requirement to share insight and knowledge to aid decision making.

Insight. There is now an enduring requirement in stabilisation operations to deliver sensitive classified material down to battle group and in some cases sub-unit level. The OPSEC battle must be factored into all force and capability development work. But it must not overshadow the 'Need to Share' information and intelligence. An increasing (inclusive) 'Responsibility to Share' as opposed to a decreasing (exclusive) 'Need to Know', requires improved disclosure principles and practice.

[redacted]

Insight. Intelligence support to land forces needs to be much more dynamic and operations focussed to be of greater use. This suggests a flatter intelligence structure which allows analysts at all levels access to the best intelligence from which they can make their assessments. In addition, a greater understanding of and coordination with international partner intelligence systems and a review of rules for release is required. CIS connectivity

¹¹⁶ COS 7 Bde, Op TELIC 12 POI.

¹¹⁷ SO2 ISTAR, MNDSE, Op TELIC 11 POR refers.

would benefit from web based distribution systems in order to allow users in multiple locations to benefit from the real-time output from a single sensor.

INDIGENOUS FORCES AND TRANSITION

*"To gain credibility and trust, it was identified that there was a need to give the ISF information that was actionable, rather than the woolly intelligence that we were cleared to share."*¹¹⁸

241. The issue of sharing intelligence was identified as particularly important as Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) approached. But Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS exposed that we had inadequate understanding of the UK AO, resulting from PIC, lack of UK embeds in the ISF and UK ISTAR capabilities being reduced in favour of Op HERRICK.

Insight. It appears that inadequate use was made of Iraqi intelligence organisations and sources that had a greater understanding of the AO and AIR. There was a lack of UK embeds in the ISF. This shows that in such periods of transition, forces in 'over-watch' need more ISTAR assets at their disposal rather than less. Embedded teams in the indigenous force can improve situation awareness, but they need to be complemented by layered collection assets.

Insight. Intelligence Corps and G2 staffs need to be trained in interacting with indigenous forces before deploying to theatre. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Clear direction will be required regarding what they can pass on and Intelligence Requirements (IR) set and individuals debriefed regularly. The breadth and detail of what can be passed must expand over time as authority is passed to the indigenous force.

Intelligence to Support Indigenous Legal Process

242. The new UK and US SOFA with the Iraqi Government required considerably more engagement with the Iraqi judicial system, including obtaining arrest warrants from Iraqi judges. This mirrored similar requirements from the NI campaign and also from operations in Bosnia from 2003 onwards.

Insight. In stabilisation and COIN operations there may come a point where an evidence chain may take precedence over situational understanding. Restoring legal process as an element of a return to regular governance needs reliable evidence from credible sources. The requirement in stabilisation operations to support the legal prosecution of individuals with information derived from intelligence sources is probably enduring. G2 staff will need to make allowance for this, applying recognised standards to the protection and control of physical evidence. It

¹¹⁸ COS, 4 Mech Bde Op TELIC 11 POI.

may sometimes be necessary to disclose the source of information to support a case, where the methods and techniques allow.

FORCE PREPARATION OF INTELLIGENCE STAFFS

243. A number of the problems and issues described above have implications for the force generation of intelligence capability. Other force generation issues are described below.

244. **Land ISTAR Focal Point.** Throughout the duration of Op TELIC, there was no single land component focal point for LF G2/ISTAR issues. This caused a lack of coherence in delivery of G2 doctrine, training and intelligence capability development. The growth of G2/ISTAR capabilities was therefore largely reactive as opposed to proactive. Too many stovepipe capabilities endured and there was considerable imbalance between Collect and the rest of the intelligence cycle.

245. **Preparation of G2 Personnel.** The operating environment in Iraq challenged the training given to, and professional skill sets of J2 staffs from all three services. Some commanders believed the Army's G2 community was too slow to react to the challenges of the Iraq operating environment, resulting in G2 personnel arriving in theatre less well-prepared than they had been for the NI or Balkans campaigns. Staff found it difficult to apply fundamental intelligence processes in Iraq, a situation further complicated through insufficient depth of understanding of the local culture and population dynamics. A repeated observation was that G2 staffs had to be taught how to do targeting on the job – [REDACTED]. Too much corporate knowledge was lost on Op TELIC by failing to capture intelligence best practice. The extant intelligence doctrine at the time was also insufficient for the Iraqi theatre.¹¹⁹ Within the Army, this was then further complicated by no single G2/ISTAR focal point for coordinating related training issues. Even at the end of Op TELIC it appeared that the G2 training delivered to battlegroup intelligence staff was less effective than that delivered during the NI campaign.

246. **Lack of G2 Staffs Understanding of Operations and COIN.** Often G2 staffs lacked understanding of the operational plan and the commander's intent for its execution. An appreciation of COIN was a particular challenge to many staffs, particularly as much individual understanding on the subject was based on experience from NI. But in that particular theatre the intelligence architecture was bespoke and offered few tangible lessons that could readily be transposed to Iraq. The apparent lack of up to date UK doctrine for COIN also contributed to this problem. Some staffs, by dint of their professional background and training, were more operationally 'savvy' than others. But it was sometimes a case of G2 staffs waiting to be tasked, rather than being proactive in assisting the command decision-making chain. Whilst operational staff and commanders right up to a senior level needed to be made more aware of, and be realistic with regards to, the type of intelligence that could be provided to support them, these problems reflected a lack of operational training for G2 staffs, such as attendance on the Joint Operational Planning Course (JOPC) or Brigade Planners course.

¹¹⁹ JWP-2.0, AFM ISTAR and the Land ISTAR Handbook.

Comment. There was much more raw information available – often stove piped by ISTAR platforms – to divisional and brigade headquarters which led to a variety G2 and ISTAR organisational structures for analysis and dissemination. While the evidence is subjective, some structures appeared to work better than others. Further work is necessary to produce a G2 and ISTAR staff structure that supports analysis and dissemination but one that is generic and scalable.

Insight. The complexity of the G2 analysis task in contemporary operations has greatly increased, and demands enhanced capability and resources. G2 must be structured and staffed to be able to support the planning process; to better process intelligence requirements and thus manage collection; to be able to process considerably more raw data and semi-processed information in order to deliver better understanding which in turn will refine target development and further planning. In all this, the delivery of non-kinetic effect will be as significant as kinetic, demanding greater attention during training.

Insight. A Land Forces focal point for ISTAR has been established and is improving coherence of ISTAR throughout the Army and across the lines of development. Intelligence training needs to include both the principles of intelligence in COIN as well as other campaign themes, and be sufficiently adaptable to be kept up to date. This requires greater pre-tour immersion of individuals likely to be chosen as subject specialists, for example in tribal affairs. This immersion should begin at an early stage within FORM and requires ready access to high grade intelligence and Theatre reporting within the home base. There is a need for cultural advisors to work with the ISTAR staffs.

247. **Future Priorities for Land Component Intelligence Staff.** Some other Armies provide military intelligence personnel at battalion level. For example the New Zealand Int Corps provide battalion Intelligence Officers. The increasing importance of intelligence and complexity of collecting and processing it suggest that there is a case for Intelligence Corps staff to complement battalion and regimental intelligence personnel, as well as Top Secret connectivity to battle group HQs.

Insight. There may be a case to re-assess priorities for Intelligence Corps manning and training. Of the four Int Corps specialist disciplines it was combat intelligence that was most pressed in Iraq. But commanders often felt that the manning and training of combat intelligence staffs seemed to be a lower priority than SIGINT, IMINT and ██████████ this has not necessarily been top priority for Int Corps manning and training.

SO WHAT?

248. Overall, it appears that the significant weaknesses in tactical intelligence and ISTAR were an example of multiple failures to adapt resulting in a tactical intelligence capability that even after six years of the campaign had failed to establish many of the pillars of successful intelligence in previous COIN campaigns, including Malaya and Northern Ireland. This may in part be due to the

gap in education and training in COIN described earlier, as the intelligence approach to successful COIN was squeezed out of the syllabus.

249. It may also be due to weaknesses in transfer of intelligence capabilities from NI. In 2004/05 the Army had planned to ensure that capabilities then employed mainly in NI would be run on after Op BANNER ended. Some of this was successful, including EOD, ECM and search, all capabilities with effective Army sponsors. But the ability to field an expanded decentralised tactical intelligence organisation down to sub-unit level was not successfully exported from NI. This may be in part due to a lack of widespread understanding of the role of tactical intelligence in COIN and the lack of an effective single Army focus and interlocutor with the Centre.

250. Finally, the overall impression is of intelligence capability that was prioritised from a top down point of view. But the enduring principle of intelligence in COIN is that by expanding and decentralising tactical intelligence right down to sub-unit level, bottom-up intelligence can be generated to equal tactical effect. The multiple weaknesses of our tactical intelligence on Op TELIC suggest a strong case for inverting the land component intelligence pyramid, rebalancing from top down to bottom up, in order to best generate integrate intelligence at the tactical level.



Fig 17. Basra as seen from Basra Palace. A complex physical as well as human terrain to monitor and understand.



Fig 18. Quick Battle Orders.

CHAPTER 3 - COMMAND AND CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

301. Isolating the Land environment tactical Command and Control (C2) lessons from Op TELIC is a challenge as the different levels of operations were in practice blurred, and complicated by national C2 arrangements.

302. At brigade level and below C2 on Op TELIC was robust, agile and effective, particularly the maintenance of offensive spirit and the continual adaptation in a complex environment. There was notable use of mission command. At the campaign level the ambiguity and fragility of UK C2 led to a lack of campaign coherence and continuity, and ultimately a gulf in situational awareness and contextual understanding between MNDSE and Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I). Relative successes at the tactical level were rarely translated into enduring operational success until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

303. For the majority of the campaign the UK effort in Southern Iraq was not treated either by the UK or US as an integrated part of a unified effort. To Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and MNC-I it was economy of force. Up to May 08, MNDSE was never the Corps Main Effort. But MNDSE did not always effectively engage MNC-I and tended to seek assistance not from MNC-I but from the UK. Coalition assets, including air, were therefore not exploited to the full. It also appears that UK commanders and staff in Basra saw their primary command relationship as being with Northwood, not Baghdad. It also appears that the land campaign being executed by MNC-I did not appear to have been as well understood in PJHQ and MOD as it should have been.

304. The lack of Communications Information Services (CIS) interoperability within the Coalition was an enduring friction, but equally important was the lack of understanding of how to best engage the US Corps HQ. Although policy and Army doctrine had envisaged a high probability of a UK formation being subordinated to a higher US formation, the evidence of Iraq is that we had underestimated the challenges this would pose. So Maliki's surprise decision to launch Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the resulting deployment of the MNC-I Tactical Operations Centre (TOC) to Basra was a strategic, operational, tactical and reputational shock. It showed that there had been little mutual understanding between the MNC-I and MNDSE staffs. MNC-I did not consider UK overwatch to be effective. In the short term, frank talking by Commander 4 Armoured Brigade as acting GOC, rapid adaptation by the staff and the US fielding their CIS systems and Blue Force Tracker managed the consequences. Subsequently MNDSE went out of its way to fully engage MNC-I.

305. **Unity of Effort.** Not only did UK national C2 cause divergence of understanding and effort between Baghdad and Basra, Northwood and London, but UK inter-agency unity of effort from grand strategic to tactical level was often sub-optimal, thus limiting the land component's effectiveness. Full tactical inter-agency unity of effort seems only to have been achieved in 2008, after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

C2 OF THE LAND CAMPAIGN

306. **Introduction.** Our difficulty in translating land tactical successes into enduring operational effect stemmed in part from campaign management and frictions at the strategic and campaign level. There was insufficient awareness in Baghdad of the situation on the ground in SE Iraq, and insufficient mutual understanding of the campaign context between the tactical HQ in SE Iraq and the UK. This was compounded by a failure to achieve the campaign continuity that we had achieved in Northern Ireland (NI), eroding our credibility with the US and Iraqis.

307. **Theatre Level C2.** After the fall of Saddam's regime Coalition C2 had been based on the civilian Coalition Provincial Authority (CPA) and the military Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7), a three star HQ formed at short notice from HQ 7 US Corps. Setting aside the considerable tension between the two HQs, CJTF-7 struggled to manage the military campaign and the US Government as a whole found achieving unity of effort equally problematic. Over the period Apr-Jul 2004 the US separated the Corps with HQ MNC-I commanding the operational and tactical land campaign from a higher HQ; MNF-I working at the strategic level. It also created Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I). For the period of this study the following C2 arrangements influenced the UK Land component.

- a. HQ MNF-I was characterised by the US Army as a "theatre-strategic" HQ. It designed and led the operational level campaign plan but much of its actions had strategic effects. It was manned by trickle posted individuals. A British Lt Gen was appointed Deputy Commanding General (DCG) who was also appointed Senior British Military Representative-Iraq (SBMRI).
- b. HQ MNSTC-I managed the creation of new Iraqi Security Forces.
- c. HQ MNC-I was the senior tactical headquarters in theatre, but sequenced and sustained the campaign in addition to planning and executing battles and engagements. It was formed by former US Army Corps HQs which rotated through Iraq as a formed body on one year tours. It had a British Maj Gen as a DCG.
- d. Below MNC-I were a number of multinational divisions. Most were led by former US Army divisional HQs, but two were provided by Poland and the UK. These led and coordinated the tactical operations of their subordinate brigades, as well as acting as an important focus for civil military operations and partnering with the ISF.
- e. The British land component commander, GOC MNDSE, was simultaneously a tactical commander working to the Coalition campaign plan and a national commander working to a UK operational HQ; PJHQ. The GOC held the UK national "red card" for land operations.

Insights. The MNF-I/MNC-I/MNSTC-I construct endured and is still in force. This shows the value of separating the high level political/military HQ from the HQ executing the land campaign. And the divisional level of command was fully justified in Iraq.

2007: Command Responsibilities

Bing West *The Strongest Tribe*

Distinguishing what part of the operational strategy was Petraeus versus Odierno was not particularly revealing or productive. Ultimately, the responsibility lay with the senior commander. Petraeus set the mission and the intellectual framework. Odierno, as corps commander, prioritized resources, deployed the forces and fought the battle.

308. **UK Command and Control.** British campaign management in Iraq was bifurcated, as the British-led HQ MNDSE worked up two different chains of command: a British national chain of command to PJHQ and a Coalition one up to MNC-I. GOC MNDSE was a Coalition tactical commander working to a Baghdad campaign plan in the Coalition command, but a national commander (COMBRITFOR) working under direction from PJHQ in the national command chain. He had the discretion to write his own tactical plan, although it was often extant for no more than his tour. This was complicated by sometimes receiving conflicting direction from different UK authorities (civil and military), the Iraqi Government and Coalition headquarters.

309. **British Senior Officers in Baghdad.** The UK had a 2-star Deputy Commander (DCOM) in MNC-I and a 3-star SBMRI in MNF-I. Neither were designated COMBRITFOR, nor placed in the British national chain of command. All British personnel in Baghdad interviewed for this study stated that they spent no more than 10 % (most usually less) of their time on operations in SE Iraq.



Fig 19. Australians in Iraq.

This was a result not only of the relatively low priority MNDSE usually had in MNC-I, but also in UK direction that they were to be impartial. Many of the senior British officers serving in Baghdad consulted for this study considered that despite regular reporting to UK by SBMRI and the DCG MNC-I, PJHQ and MOD appeared to have insufficient interest in or understanding of the campaign as a whole. Some British officers also observed that the Australian contingent in Iraq achieved greater unity of effort with consistent political messages at all political and military levels. They had their NCC in Baghdad and the right representation elsewhere in the Coalition to ensure their message was understood.

310. **Understanding of Southern Iraq in Baghdad.** SE Iraq rarely appeared to be important to MNC-I and MNF-I as they were so consumed by the complex combination of the Sunni insurgency and al-Qaeda-Iraq (AQ-I) terrorism. The intra-Shi'a power struggle in the South-East was accorded a lower priority. The British were trusted with running an 'economy of force' operation in SE Iraq (the effect was to 'Sustain'). As Baghdad's attention became increasingly focussed on the situation in central Iraq, so MNDSE increasingly turned to PJHQ for resources and policy. Baghdad was

complicit in this estrangement, as long as the British remained clearly in control. However when PJHQ could not provide the resources required for the tactical commander to achieve what Baghdad expected, there seems to have been some unwillingness to press MNC-I for Corps assets in support of British operations in SE Iraq. Some comment has linked this with the degree of operational honesty in reporting of the situation in SE Iraq between MNDSE and MNC-I, which further eroded Baghdad's situational awareness of the SE. From 2007 the strategic divergence explained in the narrative reinforced this gap of understanding between Baghdad and Basra.

311. **Corps and Division Re-engage.** During Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS it became clear that Baghdad's situational awareness of SE Iraq had been fragile. Baghdad had assumed that the tactical commander in SE Iraq was sustaining a level of security that was beyond his resource capability and exceeded his national expectation, which he could not assess on account of his own lack of situational awareness. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS consequently exposed a void in situational awareness. The rapid and effective tactical response to the Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS mitigated these immediate effects. Subsequently MNDSE set out to fully engage Corps HQ. This was successful for the rest of Op TELIC.

Insight. The Iraq experience suggests that there was nothing wrong with having the UK Land Component Commander also commanding a coalition land tactical area of operation (AO). But by giving him the NCC/COMBRITFOR function, and not harnessing the potential of our senior officers in Baghdad, we inadvertently focussed UK understanding and influence at Basra and reduced UK understanding of and influence over the campaign. These arrangements contributed to the strategic shock of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

Insight. To maximise campaign coherence and multinational unity of effort, there should be a single campaign plan, owned by the in-theatre headquarters in which all tactical plans are nested. British influence should be focussed at the campaign plan and establishing clear and unambiguous situational awareness at the theatre campaign level. So COMBRITFOR is best placed at the theatre headquarters, to influence the campaign plan and establish unambiguous situational awareness. This would be the best place to de-conflict any British land tactical issues with the coalition plan, rather than leaving it to the UK land tactical commander.

IMPLICATIONS OF A UK LAND FORCE BEING SUBORDINATED TO A US FORMATION

312. Since the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), policy and Army doctrine envisaged a high probability of a UK land force being subordinated to a US formation. This was often practised by both armies during training, experimentation and force development. But the evidence of Iraq is that we had underestimated the practical challenges this would pose.

2006: Battlefield Update Assessment (BUA)

Bing West *The Strongest Tribe*

Every morning, Casey and Chiarelli met with the enormous staff for what was called the BUA, or Battlefield Update Assessment. Each staff section would present Powerpoint slides filled

with mind-numbing data about enemy activity, significant events, electricity and fuel consumption, Iraqi politics and so on. The BUA was seen simultaneously at a dozen bases and agencies in the States with the data widely shared.

313. In retrospect, it is clear that between Jan 05 and Mar 08 HQ MNDSE had at times failed to fully engage the body of the US Corps HQs. Successive GOCs had made significant efforts to personally engage both the Corps and Force Commanding Generals. But the size and stove piped nature of these US led HQs often resulted in the Commanding General's (CG) understanding not percolating to the staffs. This was reinforced by the way the Basra HQ behaved towards MNC-I. Examples include:

- a. Persistent British reluctance to 'feed the beast' of the Corps staffing processes and information requirements.
- b. UK under representing itself at Corps video tele-conferencing (VTCs). For example MNC-I VTCs that would feature the CGs of the other divisions would often not see GOC MNDSE or even his COS. The corps commander expected his division commanders to be at the VTC. Comd MNDSE saw his attendance as possibly optional.
- c. The UK sometimes rebuffed US offers of help. For example, MNDSE declined to become engaged in the '████████████████████' initiative to raise pro-Coalition militias.

But MNC-I was not entirely blameless, particularly in failing to exercise the higher HQ doctrinal responsibility of pushing adequate CIS assets down to a subordinate HQ.

Insight. If the requirement for UK land forces to operate under US land formation HQs is enduring, this shock and the way we recovered shows that we need to better understand how a UK formation should integrate into US led formation. Embedded staff in the predominantly US-manned Coalition headquarters was highly influential and effective. Effective liaison to US headquarters works best as a full time (not just war time) activity. This has implications for our understanding of US land forces and the way they work, command and staff engagement of US HQs, CIS and physical connectivity, liaison and exchange posts. We should consider investing more effort in embedding personnel in key US headquarters.

314. **Connectivity.** Until Mar 08, situational awareness and communication between MNDSE and MNC-I were degraded by lack of interoperability of data and voice systems and poor bandwidth. Doctrinally, MNC-I should have pushed communication assets down. But MNDSE does not seem to have been as robust as it should have been in asking for them. When Corps Tac HQ deployed to Basra in Mar 08, situational awareness and communications greatly improved; bandwidth increased from 5 Mbps to 36 Mbps. But connectivity between Corps HQ and the UK HQ in the Contingent Operating Base (COB) was dependent on US Systems allocated by the US. Once US military training teams (MiTTs) and other forces arrived in MNDSE, situational awareness and C2 was

dependent on US Blue Force Tracker loaned by the US and Bowman/SINGARS interoperating using insecure voice.

Insight. Future combined UK/US land operations will require a higher level of connectivity than that achieved on Op TELIC between 2005 and 2008. And the interoperability difficulties experienced by MNDSE before Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS reinforce the importance of UK formations having adequate CIS capability to integrate subordinate coalition formations and units into UK framework C2.

315. **UK Command and Staff Engagement of US HQs.** Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS showed that MNDSE staff lacked familiarity with US military staff procedures such as storyboards, battle rhythm and language. The British culture of understatement was also misinterpreted by the US at MNC-I, leading them to underestimate the situation in SE Iraq.

Insight. For future US/UK operations we must recognise the industrial volumes of staff work demanded by a US Corps above a UK Div HQ. If it is not possible to completely “feed the beast”, UK commanders and staffs must understand what bits of the beast we must feed and to what levels to ensure that we can meet the mission and maintain mutual trust.

316. **Understanding of US Corps Level Operations.** MNDSE commanders and staff sometimes seemed reticent about asking for Corps assets and resources, yet MNDSE operations were significantly improved by allocation of US Corps assets. This attitude may have come from a lack of familiarity with operating at the Corps level. The US divisional commanders integrated Corps assets early into their planning and fought doggedly for their allocation, a skill that needs to be better exploited.

Insight. As a junior partner in a US-led operation, better access to US combat support is

dependent on equipment interoperability and staff understanding of the US formation level operations and US staff procedures and culture.



Fig 20. US aircrew and UK staff conduct joint planning in Basra.

317. **Mutual Understanding of Terminology.** It is not clear that MNC-I and MNDSE had a shared understanding of campaign terminology. This was particularly the case for the term “overwatch”. Although this was a key part of the campaign design of transition, Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS demonstrated that in practice, the phrase meant different things to MNC-I, MNDSE and the Iraqi Army (IA).

Insight. In future coalition operations,

commanders and staffs must ensure that there is shared understanding, not only of the campaign design, but also of the terminology used to describe it.

318. **Assessment and Measures of Effectiveness.** Assessment and the different measures of effectiveness (MOE) used in Iraq were controversial amongst British commanders. Much staff time was spent in collecting and collating different metrics for the UK and Coalition chains of command. Apart from the metrics designed by the US to measure the operational effectiveness of an Iraqi Security Force (ISF) unit, none of the metrics collected were considered successful in producing a useful assessment. Most commanders valued subjective military judgement and human feeling more than statistics. Over time this led to HQ MNDSE treating the MOE direction from Baghdad less and less seriously, giving rise to yet more misunderstanding.

Insight. The employment of MOE to aid assessment should be carefully considered; suitability, measurability and context in preference to subjective military judgement should be examined before a system is implemented. But “opting out” of higher formation HQs’ MOE carries great risk of the subordinate formations position not being properly understood.

319. **US/UK Liaison and Exchange Posts.** Throughout this period MNDSE deployed a liaison team to Corps HQ. It was found that the higher the quality of liaison officers, the more effective the liaison. On Op TELIC 12 HQ AMPHIBFOR deployed with its two established USMC exchange officers. One was allocated to lead the divisional liaison team in Baghdad, whilst the other was employed in a post that maximised his contact with the increasing number of US units being deployed to MNDSE. Both of these posts maximised the HQ’s ability to “talk American” both upwards and downwards. GOC MNDSE considered this investment well worth making, but also considered that his ability to engage US forces would have been further improved by inviting the US to provide a US deputy commander.

Insight. US/UK interoperability and our ability to “talk American” and better understand how to engage a superior US formation and employ US forces could be improved by following AMPHIBFOR’s example by having US exchange officers in our formation HQs. This suggests that both armies should improve interoperability by establishing US/UK exchange posts in formation HQs. Currently this applies to HQ ARRC, 30 of whose staff is US, but there is only one US officer in our three deployable division HQs. And there are only four British exchange officers (all SO2 or SO3) in the ten US divisional HQs. There are no UK posts in the four US Army Corps HQs. Based on AMPHIBFOR’s experience we should aim for two US army officers in each UK division and there is a case for inviting the US to embed an officer in all our deployable brigade HQs.

320. **UK Officers in Baghdad HQs.** Some UK DCGs of MNC-I were nominated in sufficient time not only to attend the US Land Component Commanders course at the US Army War College, but also to be able to take part in all the preparation of the Corps HQ, including theatre recces and the full Corps HQ pre-deployment training. Not all did this, but those who did considered it greatly increased their effectiveness. The US also invited UK officers to fill key staff posts in MNF-I, MNC-I and MNSTC-I. The majority of our people embedded in Baghdad were effective, influential

and greatly appreciated by the US. A minority were not, but the US usually politely worked around them. Invariably they found themselves using US staff processes and planning tools. There is no evidence of proven credibility with US forces (or the opposite) as a factor in selection of personnel working in Baghdad. At times the Army appears to have prioritised manning UK posts over posts in Baghdad, for example by short-touring a senior officer to fill a post in MOD. But there is evidence that the US Army has formed a clear view of those British officers they would or would not like to work with again.

Insight. In future operations where similar invitations are issued we should seek to maximise the effectiveness of UK officers, by nominating them sufficiently in advance to attend the force preparation of formed HQs which they are joining. And compatibility with the host nation or alliance should be an essential requirement in selecting people for such appointments. There is also a requirement to track the contacts our people have made with key US officers, so as to better deploy UK officers to US HQs in the future.

MULTINATIONAL COMMAND WITHIN MNDSE

321. MNDSE included:

- a. An Italian brigade including a Romanian contingent.
- b. A Danish battlegroup including a Lithuanian platoon.
- c. A Dutch battlegroup.
- d. A Czech MP company and medical staff.
- e. A Japanese reconstruction group.
- f. An Australian battlegroup operating as the Al Muthanna Task Force and protecting the Japanese contingent.



Fig 21. Romanian troops on patrol.

322. All UK formation commanders considered that we had successfully integrated these forces into MNDSE. Feedback from the Dutch and Australian armies confirmed how Brig Lorrimer summed up the approach used by most UK formation commanders in Iraq: *“appreciating the operational context from your multinational partners’ point of view is probably the most significant aspect of making multinationality work at brigade level. You need to understand that they are probably there for different reasons than you, and that they have a different outlook in terms of their commitment to the operation. You also need to remember that the commanding officers have their own direct lines back to their capitals. It may even come as a surprise to some that they often look to us (UK) to lead and to act as a balance to the Coalition’s senior partner (US) on their behalf. My*

advice is to get in early with the multinational commanders; make them feel to be absolutely part of the home team, and share whatever intelligence you can with them; despite some of the caveats. You have to be a realist and acknowledge that these are partners who are prepared to invest their national blood and treasure with you. You must always treat your partners' casualties and fatalities with the same importance as you treat your own. The Danes lost their first casualty while I was



there, and you ignore things like that at your peril. Finally, make sure that everyone knows what the individual national caveats are, so that you don't give them an order that might result in a red card being produced. There are always ways of working around these sorts of issues beforehand, so that they don't become show-stoppers on the day."

Fig 22. Danish checkpoint.

UK – IRAQI C2

323. Before this period, the decision was taken not to follow the US plan to embed teams with the Iraqi Army. But as security sector reform (SSR) became the MNDSE Main Effort, the bond between the IA units and the British grew. The switch of Main Effort to offensive operations during Op SINBAD reversed this as did the increasing power of the Shi'a militias to the point where IA units refused joint patrols and the British began to see themselves as a 'distorting presence'. The popular Iraqi support for US troops embedded with IA units in Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS then led to the re-integration of the British military with the IA in embedded partnering prior to withdrawal. This included both MiTTs and expanded mentoring of the Basra Operations Centre (BaOC). However, HQ MNDSE chose not to collocate itself with the BaOC. At no point was there a defined C2 relationship or framework within which the IA and British forces worked. Its requirement is keenly debated, but its adoption would have removed ambiguity and ensured a more cohesive working relationship.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH AND INTER-AGENCY C2

324. Inter-agency cooperation was personality dependent and impeded by stove piped structures. There was no top-down inter-agency leadership, consequently the military, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) were working to different missions and aims. Inter-agency cooperation and situational awareness was lost when the Consul was left in Basra Palace on the move of the GOC to the COB; and again when consul staff and DFID moved out of SE Iraq for force protection. Military commanders were frustrated by the lack of delegation of financial authority until Op TELIC 12, and reliance on US Commanders' Emergency Response Program Spending (CERPS).

Insight. In the absence of any political appetite to appoint a cross-department empowered executive to oversee the UK elements of the comprehensive campaign in theatre, arbitrate between departments and make empowered decisions to achieve unity of command and effort, there is a requirement to clearly define a supporting/supported relationship between government departments in theatre in order to empower cross-department unity of command and effort.

TACTICAL C2

325. During this period tactical command was usually very good and was often outstanding; for example the maintenance of offensive spirit between Ops SINBAD and CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. But there are lessons about the capability of UK land tactical HQs.

326. **Role of Divisional HQ.** Throughout Op TELIC US and UK divisional HQs integrated Iraqi forces, Coalition civilian agencies and Iraqi local authorities in order to give tactical direction and co-ordination to brigades, as well as reinforcing them with division level assets and effect, most notably the US organic combat aviation brigades. They were the focus for the tactical execution of the comprehensive approach at provincial level. Both MNDSE and Multinational Division Centre South (MNDSCS) had important roles in integrating multinational forces. MNDSE's ability to do this was from the outset less than that of US divisions and reduced over time as the Italian brigade withdrew and the size of UK forces reduced.

327. **Generation of Divisional HQs.** US led MND HQs were all based on formed US Divisional HQs. There is no sense of any serious weaknesses of these HQ's. A variety of approaches were used to generate the UK core of HQ MNDSE:

a. **Formed HQs.** HQ 1 and 3 Divs were each used twice; firstly in 2006 and secondly in 2007/8. HQ AMPHIBFOR was used in 2005 and 2008/9. All of these were deployed for six months, less AMPHIBFOR's final tour of eight months during Op TELIC 12 and 13. Both Army HQs left a proportion of their staff behind, especially in their 2008/9 tours. This was to manage the non-deployed part of the division, including brigades preparing for operations.

b. **Ad Hoc HQs.** For the whole of 2004 and the first half of 2005 three successive iterations of HQ MNDSE were generated as ad hoc HQs. We struggled to man these with sufficient quality and they only reached the required standard of effectiveness by virtue of the high quality of some multinational officers. This was recognised and the approach was adjusted for the ad-hoc SHAWFORCE HQ.

The commanders of SHAWFORCE and AMPHIBFOR considered that the preparation of their HQs benefited from not having to command troops at the same time.

Insight. This comment and the tendency of the Army division HQs to leave behind increasing numbers of staff officers, suggest that for an enduring operation a divisional HQ's commitment should be as unencumbered as possible from any other commitments, including

command and management of subordinate units and formations that are not deploying to the same operation. This includes pre deployment preparation and training.

Insight. Ad hoc HQs are inherently less coherent and experienced than formed HQs, so should be regarded as the HQ of last resort. If they have to be used they must be given sufficient time to fully prepare themselves. As they have to overcome more internal friction and climb a steeper learning curve than formed HQs, they should be manned by personnel of a higher quality than the formed HQs, not the opposite practice which we employed in 04/5.

328. **The Integrated HQ.** From Op TELIC 11 the divisional and brigade HQ merged to become a single integrated (2*/1*) HQ. This was similar to the model used for HQ MNDSW in Banja Luka during SFOR. The GOC was commanding a single Brigade in a small province with far less organic ISTAR, aviation and divisional troops than a US division. Opinions vary about the effectiveness of this construct, but it is not clear that the US Staff always understood the difference between our division and the US divisions. The US Marines in Multinational Force (West) (MNF(W)) called themselves a force because they did not consider themselves a division; they explained to MNC-I what that force consisted of, in order to avoid misunderstanding of capability.

Insight. When working in a coalition, we must avoid misnaming our force. If it is not a conventional Division, then we must use another term and explain what it is to the corps HQ.

329. **Brigade C2.** Brigade C2 proved to be robust, cohesive and adaptable to the friction and requirements in theatre. The British Brigade HQs expanded in size to accommodate their wider range of responsibilities in Iraq, planning and executing many functions previously confined to Divisional level. These included Information Operations (Info Ops), Media, Influence Activities, Air, Battlespace Management and ISTAR. From 2006 the additional challenges of exploiting increasing real-time ISTAR feeds and shortening the sensor-shooter link and decision making time were successfully overcome through reorganisation. Brigade planning horizons in Iraq were also far greater than in warfighting (one month not 48 hrs), raising the requirement for a G35 planning capability. The increased breadth (functions) and depth (planning horizons) of brigade activity has increased the number of lieutenant colonels in the HQ, increasing the challenges of co-ordination for the COS¹²⁰.



Fig 23. The integrated HQ's Operations Centre and multinational staff.

330. **Battlegroup C2.** Battlegroup HQs adapted quickly to the tactical challenge of Iraq. They were required to plan and fight at the same time and co-ordinate not only classic all arms operations,

¹²⁰ In an American BCT and 3 Cdo Bde RM, the COS is an OF-4 (Lt Col).

but also synchronise air and ISTAR assets that previously would have been employed at a much higher level. Experience exposed a lack of commonality in the structure and equipments of battlegroup HQs and their ability to interface with non-organic sub-units coming under command. This could slow down and complicate tactical regrouping within brigades. With the expansion in battlegroup responsibility, sub-units found themselves operating more independently and were reliant on augmentation to maintain enduring C2 and extended CSS support.

331. **Future Capabilities of Tactical HQs.** In the 20th century brigade HQs were optimised to operate within the divisional context. They were not staffed to support the multiplicity and diversity of planning issues they faced in Iraq; where they effectively undertook many of the tasks previously expected of both division and even corps levels of command. This coupled with the wealth of information and intelligence they were required to handle placed considerable demands on the HQs. During this period the capabilities of division and brigade HQ were examined by Projects ROBERTS and BOB. It promulgated the revised deployable structures for both divisional and brigade HQs to deliver greater standardisation and increase capability in the areas of G2, STAR, Plans, POLAD, CULAD and cognitive effects. Since then, the experience of Op TELIC shows increased demand for both collection assets and analytical resources, and suggest that the Project BOB structures need further evolution to meet future challenges.

Insight. The experience of brigade and battlegroup HQs in Iraq from 2007 onwards suggests:

- a. A need to reassess the capability of brigade HQs, especially structure and size.
- b. The extended responsibility in battlespace and planning horizons requires augmentation of battlegroup planning staff and sub-unit C2 and CSS support.
- c. A requirement for greater coherence amongst the battlegroup C2 structures which would allow a swifter tempo of battlegrouping.

CIS

332. Tactical communications were often problematic. An all-informed Brigade command net was only achieved by brigades fully converted to Bowman. Considerable effort was devoted to creating a contractor operated static CIS network for bases. But throughout the period commanders considered its flexibility and speed of response to changing deployments were sub-optimal, resulting from an inflexible contract. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Work-rounds involved the use of additional communications systems that exacerbated the interference and complicated C2. US Blue Force Tracker provided a more useful capability than Bowman Automatic Position Location, Navigation and Reporting (APLNR). After Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS it was used in preference. Before Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS a lack of bandwidth and an insufficient number of US data terminals / [REDACTED] significantly affected the situational awareness

between Basra and Baghdad. Even at the end of the operation there was a [REDACTED]

Insight.

- a. Improved tactical CIS are required for future COIN operations.
- b. For future US/UK operations UK/US CIS interoperability needs improvement.
- c. [REDACTED]

C2 PROCEDURES

333. Battlespace Management capability was poor. There was a lack of interoperability with the US and other allied nations. It was especially pertinent with the ISF: 'transition' was dependent on the development of their capability, but joint fires support was impossible without the situational awareness of an embedded team. Battlespace management staff procedures were also poor compared with the US. As well as a poor G2 database, information management was considered inadequate. There was no shared understanding of staff duties in the electronic age, reducing the value of deployed Information Technology (IT) and the efficiency of staff at every level. Formation Information Management (IM) procedures and staff need to be standardised across the land component. A particular weakness was the lack of a commonly understood Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for staff handover of electronic records.

Insight.

- a. Battlespace Management and Information Management processes need improvement.
- b. There is a requirement for electronic staff handovers.

RESTRICTED



Fig 24. Snipers proved highly effective on Op TELIC.

3-14
RESTRICTED

CHAPTER 4 – OPERATE AND PROTECT

INTRODUCTION

401. Although Operate and Protect are often considered separately, the threat during this period made them indivisible in practice at the tactical level.

402. **Rules of Engagement.** During this period, commanders found that the UK Rules of Engagement (ROE) were adequate. They were successfully changed to allow engagement of Indirect Fire (IDF) teams setting up their weapons.

403. **Use of Force.** But whatever the ROE, consent of the people is dependent on their perception of security force legitimacy and precision in their use of force. Translating the success of an operation into tactical success in Iraq also depended upon the political climate and context. There were a number of operations where the Iraqi authorities had given prior consent, only for the outcome of the operation to be retrospectively repudiated by the same authorities. An example from MNDSE is the destruction of the infamous Jameat police station on Christmas Day 05. A possible reason for this is that the operations were so close to the envelope of Iraqi governmental sensitivities that by succeeding they crossed outside of it.

404. **Election Operations.** Throughout the campaign election operations were a consistent success story at all levels and across Iraq as a whole. This is probably because the great majority of Iraqi actors, less the Sunnis who disenfranchised themselves, saw the elections as an opportunity. MNDSE mentored and supported the Iraqi Security Forces' (ISF) election operations, which provided a valuable confidence building and learning opportunity. These were therefore well within the envelope of Iraqi political consent.

Insight. Commanders in COIN operations will need the best possible understanding of host nation political factors to maximise the chances of tactical operations achieving success.

CONDUCT OF THE LAND CAMPAIGN

405. **Land Campaign Plan.** Throughout the period, the campaign plan was a Coalition campaign plan. It never became a joint Coalition/Iraqi campaign plan and MNDSE was usually considered by the US to be a lower priority than Baghdad or Anbar. The only time MNDSE became main effort was during Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

406. **Coalition Force Ratios.** Throughout 2004-06 Coalition and MNDSE force levels were inadequate; falling well below levels historically required for both COIN and Balkan style stabilisation operations. Experience and operational analysis has shown that concentrating coalition forces could stabilise an area, achieving 'Clear', but there were insufficient forces to achieve 'Hold' without denuding other areas. This led to an episodic series of US led local offensives and tactical surges, as well as reaction to events. The use of forces in this period was often characterised by US forces as 'whack a mole'. Enduring effect against the insurgents was often minimal and in MNDSE

the rise of the IED threat in 2005 significantly reduced the amount of force available for operational effect.

407. But in 2007 the success of coalition efforts to persuade Sunni insurgents to change sides, the US surge and increasing ISF capability meant that force levels were better able to provide security in Sunni areas and in the Shia/Sunni interfaces. Even so, some areas, including Diyala Province and Sadr City saw little US or ISF presence in 2007. After this Iraqi forces with US support were able to clear previously uncontested JAM strongholds including Sadr City, and then move on to subsequently tackle insurgents in Diyala Province and elsewhere.

408. In MNDSE we never achieved adequate force ratios in Maysan and Basra until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

Insight. These lessons reinforce the danger of clearing insurgent held territory that cannot be subsequently held. It often took more forces to hold than to clear.

HIGHER FORMATION OPERATIONS

409. Throughout the period, the highest land tactical formation was Multinational Corps Iraq (MNC-I). The Commander and core of the HQ were provided by formed US corps HQs. The UK provided a Deputy Commanding General (DCG) and some embedded staff. In this period the UK land component made little contribution to Corps level effect.

410. The US Corps often used US Stryker Brigades to rapidly deploy across the country as part of Corps reaction to unforeseen events. Their combination of fully digitised Command and Control (C2) and ability to sustain high speeds of convoy movement made them particularly suitable for rapid redeployment across the Corps Area of Operations (AO).

411. Once Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS began, it was rapidly designated as the MNC-I main effort. The Corps rapidly deployed a Corps Tactical Operations Centre (TOC), a Civil Military Operations Centre (CMOC), additional Communications Information Services (CIS) for MNDSE, armed and unarmed UAVs, helicopters and fast air.

412. The US deployed formed divisions which meant that US Divisional HQs controlled not only brigades, but also divisional level combat power, which they used to support brigades and meet their priorities. For example they all had powerful Combat Aviation Brigades. By 2008 MNDSE lacked the ability to do this and the Integrated HQ did not have the capabilities the US expected to find at Divisional level.

Insight. This shows the value of division, corps or the land component being able to designate main effort (ME) and switch resources to support it around the battlespace quickly.

Insight. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS also suggested that UK officers needed a better understanding of the corps level of operations.

Insight. If what is being fielded is not a division, it should not be called such and its reduced capabilities should be made clear to the coalition HQ.

Formation Offensive Operations

413. Many MNC-I operations in 2004 to 2006 had cleared areas of al-Qaeda (AQ) and Sunni insurgents, but MNC-I's force levels meant that it was often unable to 'Hold' or 'Build' in these areas. MNC-I lacked the force levels to implement a full COIN strategy in this period. There were exceptions, principally in Anbar where MNC-I and the Iraqi Army mounted successful formation offensive operations to 'Clear' and 'Hold' urban areas, including Tal Affar, Ramadi, and Al Qaim.

414. In MNDSE in 2006 Op SINBAD attempted to apply US lessons. It successfully integrated tactical operations to 'Clear' with capacity building of the ISF, as well as tactical reconstruction (funded by the US) and Influence Activities. It achieved some 'Clear', but had insufficient resource to 'Hold' or 'Build'.

The Surge

415. Following the announcement of the Surge the US adopted a campaign objective of protecting the population which saw a re-engagement with the people. US forces moved out of large 'super bases' and established often vulnerable small unit outposts shared with Iraqi forces amongst the population.

416. The surge worked at the tactical level not only because of numbers, but also because it restored Iraqi confidence and deployed US and Iraqi forces amongst the people, as well as taking advantage of the Anbar awakening and other reconciliation efforts to persuade Sunni insurgents to change sides and become US paid auxiliaries. US battlegroups deployed into company and platoon combat outposts, apparently without fixing themselves in place. This created a bond of empathy and loyalty between the population, the Iraqi forces and the US military. It involved accepting the risk that isolated bases would be subject to heavy attack, including attempts to overrun outposts. At times this risk was considerable, particularly in Anbar and insurgents mounted a number of heavy attacks. But dogged defence by US troops and support from armour, snipers, ~~Attack Helicopters (AH), AC130 and UAVs~~ meant that none of these attacks succeeded.

Insight. To separate the insurgent from the people, tactical risk has to be taken to build an empathetic relationship with the people.

Operation CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS

417. This was a decisive point in the campaign. Its success depended on having an Iraqi face as well as MNC-I having concentrated Corps assets: the operation concentrating force to the COIN doctrinal norm (20/1000); joint fires, especially from AH and UAVs; influence operations; tactical reconstruction using money as a weapon system to encourage consent and Iraqi; and Coalition ground manoeuvre, including tanks and armoured/ protected infantry. These themes applied to

subsequent operations including the offensive operations into Sadr City, Diyala Province and Baquba. All of these operations had popular support and were Iraqi led.

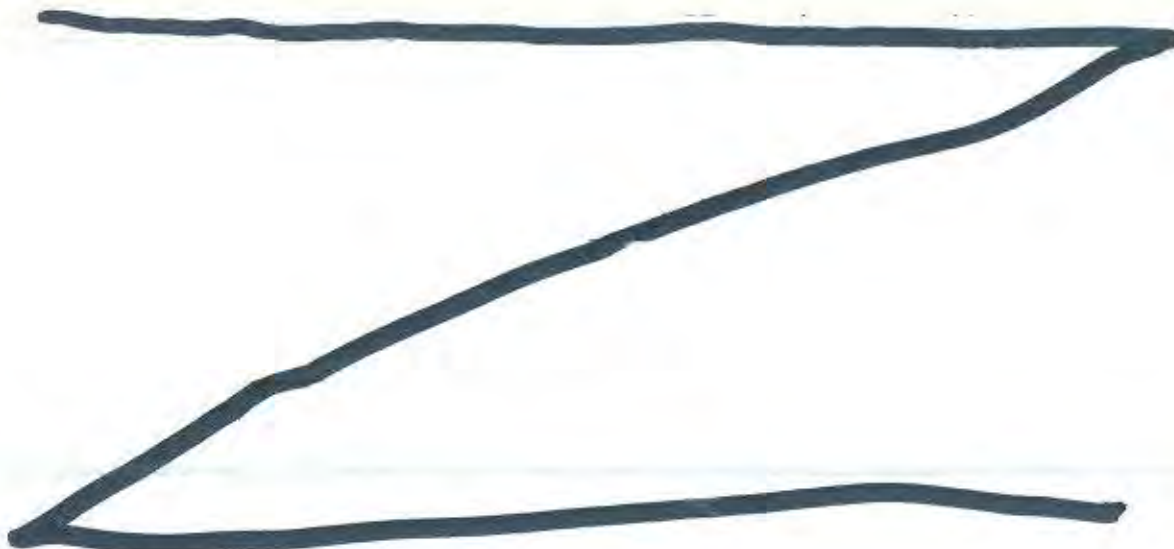
Insight. Analysis of successful formation offensive operations in Iraq suggests that success depended on concentrating force to at least the COIN doctrinal norm (20/1000)¹²¹, on joint fires, especially from AH, AC130 and UAVs, influence operations, tactical reconstruction and ground manoeuvre, including tanks and armoured/protected infantry. The more the operation involved Iraqi forces, giving an “Iraqi face” to build empathy with the civil population, the better. These are pointers to future formation offensive operations amongst the people, both in COIN and other conflicts.

418. **Protecting the Population Requires Population Control.** Iraqi operations in Basra after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and US operations in Anbar and Baghdad showed the value of physical barriers in urban areas and permanent checkpoints. They also showed the value of biometrics to aid this by providing rapid identification (ID) of civilians for patrols, checkpoints and arrest operations.

Insight. COIN is manpower intensive. In Iraq its success depended on the ability to surge combat power for ‘Clear’ and ‘Hold’, and the operational agility to generate sufficient trained indigenous force to take over the ‘Hold’ and ‘Build’.

Insight. We must pay more attention to the use of population control measures as a COIN tool.

419.



¹²¹ 20 security force members for every 1000 population.

UK TACTICAL OPERATIONS AND CAPABILITIES

The Battle at Red 10

██████████: 4 RIFLES
Op TELIC 10

After a long and hot wait in the small base we rolled out into the busy streets of Basra. Almost immediately we came under small arms fire from a very well sited ambush. A fuel tanker driver was killed and a large crowd began to develop around the tanker, which was almost immediately set alight. We broke contact and continued to the Palace, but a second civilian vehicle in the convoy, a low loader, collapsed on the bridge at Red 10 – it had been badly shot up in the ambush. Also in the initial ambush ██████████ the other section commander in my platoon had been hit by small arms.

The task for the rest of the small convoy was to CASEVAC him back to Basra Palace. My Bulldog and our lead element of Warriors were tasked with the protection of the low loader. This was my first major contact! We were now fixed by the low loader – we had to protect it – all we could do was hard target the Bulldog like a dismounted Rifleman. This is where our driver ██████████ really came into his own, moving us about without any command so we, the top cover and Scotty could concentrate on our arcs.

I was positioned with my head and shoulders out of the mortar hatches using the Bulldog as a firing platform. I was observing my arcs when I noticed the streets were emptying and the vehicle traffic decreased – an attack was imminent. I was relaying this to ██████████ when the first mortar rounds landed. They resulted in civilian casualties; I had never expected to take indirect fire on the city streets. For the next few hours we fought a 360 degree battle to protect the disabled low loader.

I found it really hard to locate the enemy; this wasn't Brecon with clearly identifiable positions to practice on, this was a city street with corners, walls, cars, windows and rooftops. Added to that the smoke, crack and thump of small arms, RPGs and rounds banging off your vehicle all confused the situation.

We were engaging targets from as close as ██████████ metres away and up to ██████████ metres away, snap shooting and rapid fire, popping up and down like jacks-in-the-box, although there was not much ██████████ could do about hard targeting, waist up in his cupola as he was. I don't think we ever won the firefight; once one position was suppressed another would engage from a new or previous position. To combat this we started to fire into likely enemy and previous positions as warning shots. The situation was getting worse. We were now taking fire from an Iraqi Police Station, which we were using as cover. Our driver '██████████' was now showing signs of stress. He'd already fired all his pistol ammo and was shouting over the speakers that we needed to get out of here. I don't blame '██████████' for 'stressing out'. He was on his own in his hatch, isolated from the rest of us, gun fire all around him, so I pushed through to his hatch and gave him a shake and told him to just drive. Immediately he snapped out of it.

We finally got back to the Palace after more than 11 hours on the ground. The low loader was eventually denied to the enemy by Warrior 30mm fire. As we were extracting the Bulldog commanded by my platoon commander was hit by an IED, forcing another recovery. It had been an extraordinary first day in Basra. Men killed, other serious casualties, vehicles destroyed and recovered and a real test for troops on the ground.

420. Battlegroup level operations included framework tasks and fighting convoys through enemy controlled areas. The evidence is that tactical operations at brigade level and below were well planned, led and conducted. Success depended on our all arms and joint warfighting capabilities, albeit under tight ROE, and with an additional emphasis on ISTAR and force protection to minimise own casualties. This included not only warfighting equipment, but also thorough training in warfighting tactics and confident and experienced commanders and HQs. For example, the strike operations mounted in the 'war against the JAM' in 2006/7 were effectively battlegroup offensive operations. Without the confidence and experience arising from warfighting training they would have carried much greater risk.

Close Combat

421. From summer 2003 there was a considerable amount of dismounted close combat conducted in response to insurgent attacks. This applied not just to Infantry, Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) and Royal Artillery (RA) (when deployed as battlegroups), but to all arms and who deployed into theatre. MNDSE fought



Fig 25. Challenger 2 proved its worth.

without much collateral damage or many bystander fatalities. Militia came off the worst from the

majority of firefights, but most UK casualties were from IEDs and IDF. Snipers provided an invaluable tactical capability for stealthy precision attacks of enemy at range that minimised the risks of collateral damage. Dismounted combat capability was improved by Urgent Operational Requirements (UOR), particularly better body armour, the Underslung Grenade Launcher (UGL) and sniper capability.



Fig 26. Warrior was highly rated.

422. Night operations gave considerable advantage as long as there was sufficient night vision equipment and troops had conducted sufficient training. [REDACTED] UORs improved the infantry night fighting capability, but logistic troops consistently complained of inadequate scaling of night vision equipment and night sights.

423. Warrior and to a lesser extent Challenger were the Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFV) of choice to go in harms way. Warrior and Challenger armour were successfully upgraded through UORs and the intimate tactical co-operation between Warrior and dismounts provided by armoured infantry was invaluable. Although Snatch Landrovers were significantly overmatched by Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) warheads fielded from 2005 onwards, commanders were prepared to accept the risks involved in confined urban terrain unsuitable for larger vehicles. Snatch could also move faster and more quietly than heavier vehicles, occasionally being used on strike operations at night to achieve surprise. But there were never enough Warriors to meet the protected mobility requirement, a capability gap filled by fielding of Bulldog and Mastiff towards the end of the period. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The success of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the improving security climate resulted in Mastiff, Bulldog and Warrior being used less and embedded MiTTs travelling in Iraqi Army vehicles.

424. Most combat support integral to armoured and mechanised brigades deployed to Iraq leaving many of their armoured vehicles in the UK or Germany. Sometimes this created risk, for example when the engineers were required to demolish the Jameat police station and had to squeeze themselves into Infantry Warriors; equally there was never adequate protected mobility for Explosive Ordnance Device (EOD) and Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) parties. The armoured ambulance capability fielded was inadequate.



Fig 27. IEDD Team in lightly protected vehicles.

Insight. Full spectrum COIN requires a full spectrum of protected mobility capabilities, from armour and armoured infantry, through heavy, medium and light armoured vehicles, allowing commanders the flexibility to adjust firepower, protection, mobility, capacity and profile to match the threat, the ground (including constricted urban terrain) and changing nature of operations. Infantry and RAC protected mobility should be matched by equivalent protected mobility for battlegroup combat support. Not fielding “full spectrum” protected mobility will constrain tactical effectiveness

and increase risk. This lesson also applies to urban operations against conventional opponents.

Strike Operations

425. By 2006, the requirement to disrupt insurgent networks [REDACTED] resulted in the development of a capability for Battlegroup intelligence led urban precision strike/detention operations that [REDACTED]. Key to this was pre-tour training and incorporation into Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MRX), [REDACTED] mentorship and advice. Given the small number of bases in Basra and the insurgent's ability to monitor our movements and concentrate force very quickly, deception and surprise were important factors in success. From Jan 09 raids were conducted within the Iraqi legal framework, evidence was gathered and quickly published for the locals and detainees were arrested and handled by ISF personnel.

426. These operations played an important role in the 'war against the JAM' in disrupting insurgent activity and in detaining suspects, which gave us some leverage over the JAM. They also played an important role in sustaining morale, which fell when they were not allowed. However, raiding carried with it a danger of being seen by the uncommitted as just another warring faction. Efforts were made to both avoid collateral damage and unsubstantiated accusations of criminal damage and abuse, including influence operations. But it is not clear that we maximised the use of Information Operations (Info Ops) to exploit successful strikes and to explain our actions to the Baswaris. Too often a vacuum was left into which resentment and anger poured.

Insight. This capability is of enduring value, provided that battlegroups are under no illusions as to the limitations of their capabilities, against the more demanding targets [REDACTED]. But the ability to exploit opportunities created by strike operations needs to be better understood and resourced. The role of Influence in strike operations and its utility and effect needs to be better understood, taught and applied, particularly in the pre and post strike phases.

Joint Fires

427. During most of the fighting in MNDSE we did not use indirect fire or air delivered weapons and joint fires were never used as much as we were using them in Afghanistan; nor did we cause significant collateral damage. For most of the period brigade artillery regiments were used 'out of role', sometimes re-rolled as infantry and sometimes for Security Sector Reform (SSR). As a result most battlegroups operated without their artillery tactical groups. But at times in this period the full range of joint fires from mortars to fast air, US armed UAVs and AC130s were used. This gave commanders and soldiers great confidence, especially during risky operations or periods of sustained close combat. During these periods, battlegroup commanders assessed that not having their tactical groups made planning more difficult and increased risk.

428. An enduring lesson of the NI campaign was the value of manned airborne surveillance for intelligence gathering and in providing top cover for units on the ground. Overt presence of helicopters as a deterrent could reduce the Irish Republican Army (IRA) attacks by up to 80%.

PMSC's, but the people they are contracted to escort who may well be government, Coalition or NGO staff and where a poor response can have an operational or strategic level consequence.

Insight. PMSCs proved a valuable source of low level information, in particular relating to atmospherics, politics and cultural norms.

Insight. Friction was sometimes encountered between Coalition and PMSC responsibilities, in particular deconfliction of operations (PMSCs) and response to incidents (military forces). The 'AEGIS umbrella' solved most of these. Future operations will require a clear understanding of respective responsibilities together with a robust liaison and coordination element.

432. Unlike the US practice PMSCs were not used by the UK to provide primary force protection for UK bases.

Insight. It is possible that in line with US and other nations' practice, a greater role for PMSCs can be found in protecting fixed infrastructure, including base locations.

FORCE PROTECTION

433. The steady flow of casualties and the ever-increasing unpopularity of the war meant that force protection was of ever-increasing importance.

Counter – Improvised Explosive Device



Fig 28.

434. In 2003 and 2004 there was an IED threat, but it was not a significant constraint on MNDSE's activity. C-IED suffered initially from being seen as the province of specialists in the Royal Engineers (RE), Royal Signals (R SIGNALS) and Royal Logistic Corps (RLC), but considerably improved once it became a command led all arms, cross Defence Lines of Development (DLOD) activity, based on rapid information exchange across the force. This approach used a threat forum to assess the lessons of enemy attacks, initiating counter action and passing direction and information back down the chain of command.

435. In 2005 a new threat from the [redacted] EFP first appeared in Maysan and then migrated to the rest of the AO. [redacted]

[redacted] The remote controlled initiation, combined with the ease with which it could be concealed amongst roadside debris meant that it was initially countered by adjusting Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) and rigorous control of road movement. Subsequent measures included uparmouring Warrior, fielding new ECM and the

These effects were never achieved to the same level in MNDSE. Whilst there was no shortage of fast air, MNDSE appears to have been persistently under-resourced in Support Helicopters (SH) and airborne surveillance capabilities. The US were much better able to exploit the air flank, for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR), top cover for ground forces, precision strike and C-IDF. By the later TELICs, UK forces were able to use combination of UK UAVs, US AH and AC130 and armed UAVs in this way.

Insight. The tactical value of the airborne “unblinking eye” to improve protection, strike and manoeuvre by land forces is a lesson of wide applicability.

Insight. The deployment of Artillery Tac Groups is likely to be essential in COIN to plan and execute Joint Fires in a proportionate manner, recognising the constraints of collateral damage. They also provide the focal point for airspace deconfliction and the control of UAVs in the battlespace.

Private Military and Security Companies

429. Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC) were an increasing factor of operations in Iraq. They were widely used to protect UK Government personnel, UN and NGO personnel as well as materiel convoys. Operating in the same battlespace, liaison between PMSCs and the military is essential and this was achieved in Iraq by AEGIS¹²² acting as an umbrella organisation for all PMSCs operating within the MNDSE AO.

430. PMSCs tended to keep people in theatre for longer periods than the military. This combined with the fact that they tended not to rotate out en masse meant that they were a valuable source of information especially with regards to atmospherics and changes that might not be so apparent to personnel rotating in and out of theatre every six months. During the Accommodation PMSCs proved in particular a valuable source of information on the MSRs.

The Role of AEGIS: Op TELIC 9

Extract from HQ 19 Light Brigade POR

AEGIS acts as an umbrella organisation for all recognised PSCs operating in MND(SE) and proved to be a crucial link into the Brigade HQ throughout the tour. Whilst the sheer volume of PSC patrols and convoys in MND(SE) made it impossible for the Brigade to continuously monitor them, AEGIS provided timely information when significant activities were due to take place and reported incidents as and when they occurred. As PIC and re-posturing progress in Iraq the link that AEGIS provides to the other PSCs will continue to remain crucially important.

431. Contract dependent, PMSCs often relied on Coalition forces to provide the immediate reaction forces to any incidents involving them. UK forces, and in particular operations room staffs must be quite clear what their responsibilities are in such instances. The issue is not so much the

¹²² AEGIS is a London based, privately owned, British security and risk management company

Bulldog and Mastiff vehicles, and adjusting Rules of Engagement (ROE) to allow use of force against those emplacing devices. But there were never enough troops to allow patrolling in depth around routes often used by coalition vehicles, or enough SH to fully exploit the air flank for movement of people and supplies.



Fig 29. EFP components.

Countering The New EFP Threat

Lt Gen Riley GOC MNDSE Nov 04-Apr 05
Testimony to the Iraq Inquiry

It was borne in on me very strongly how much the collective experience of the Army of dealing with the IED threat had wasted out during the long period of ceasefire in Northern Ireland. We had forgotten institutionally how to deal with this... not just as a series of devices but as a system and how to attack the device and attack the system behind it.

So as well as asking for upgrades in protection, we also began to refocus the intelligence-gathering effort on to people who were likely to be initiating and running the networks to try and break the thing up...

The armour on the Warrior and Challenger main battle tanks was upgraded very rapidly. The Snatch Land Rover was also uparmoured and I began to see the introduction of a new series of vehicles which were more effective, but these devices were of such power that there was... no technological silver bullet in this.

So we were doing what we could within the constraints of the available technology. There was nothing else around. We had not procured anything, there was little on the market that could have been deployed to assist me. The responses to it were, therefore, not just about protection against the device. They had to be about breaking the networks.

436. When fully mature, the UK CIED approach in Iraq was as follows:

- a. **Preparation of the Force.** CIED training was rigorously conducted throughout Mission Specific Training (MST), including the MRX, and confirmed during Reception, Staging and Onward Integration (RSOI) and continuation training in theatre.

b. **Defeat the Device – Prevent and Avoid.** 'Prevent and avoid' was facilitated by a focused Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) process led by engineer intelligence combined with route usage and control system [REDACTED], as well as a road side clearance civilian contract [REDACTED]. There was also a sustained security presence in Basra City, border crossing points and main routes. The required force density was only achieved after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, when there were sufficient Iraqi forces.

c. **Defeat the Device – Protect.** [REDACTED] drills were designed to disrupt attempts to fire the devices and their constant revision. They were complemented by enhancing side and belly armour on AFVs, improved ECM and fielding of Bulldog and Mastiff.

d. **Defeat the Device – Effects.** IEDD and search teams, complemented by US Route Clearance Teams, [REDACTED]

e. **Capacity Building.** Specialist training and expertise was provided to enhance the ability of the ISF to conduct CIED.

Route Clearance Capability

437. After the start of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, MNC-I attached a Route Clearance Company to MNDSE to enhance force protection for all troops deployed in Basra city. This self contained capability based on specially modified wheeled armoured vehicles complemented other CIED measures by conducting high speed route clearance at [REDACTED]. It proved itself most suitable to clearing Main Supply Routes rather than urban routes, where low hanging power lines and complex terrain slowed its progress. It required no integral escort, being content to rely on support from the standard Quick Reaction Force (QRF).

Protected Mobility for All Arms and Service

438. UK EOD and IEDD teams were equipped with dedicated vehicles, including our most capable ECM platforms, but these vehicles were less protected than uparmoured Warrior, Mastiff or Bulldog. This restricted the movement of these vehicles resulting in teams often deploying by helicopter or in someone else's Bulldog or Mastiff and without their bespoke ECM. This had an impact on the size and composition of the EOD and Weapons Intelligence Staff (WIS), and the capability to carry specialist equipment. Other than the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) variants of Warrior, Challenger and CVRT there was no dedicated protected mobility for logistics throughout the period. Local expedients included improvised up armoured of B Vehicle cabs.

Platform Design and Integration

439. [REDACTED]. As the threat developed incremental UORs had to be fitted to platforms that had not been designed to accept the additional weight, space

and power needed. Electronic fratricide between ECM and communications equipment on individual platforms, as well as with US and Iraqi communications was a problem never solved during TELIC.

Insights. In COIN operations, EOD and IEDD are as much combat support as artillery or engineers, and their vehicles require equivalent protected mobility to those of battlegroups. A UK route clearance capability would be an advantage in COIN operations. Deploying B vehicles with unprotected crews incurs additional risk.

440. Many commanders felt that the policy for exploitation of IEDs was too weighted in favour of long clearance and hold operations where little if any forensic benefit was gained, at the cost of ever-increasing militia attacks on cordons. In practice, during 'the war against the JAM' battlegroups conducting strike operations often had no alternative but to leave IEDs. Soldiers need to be given real-case examples of the benefit of forensic exploitation to improve their understanding, and commanders need latitude to decide when to clear and when to destroy.

Counter Indirect Fire



*Fig 30. Tented accommodation in the COB.
The exterior breezeblock blast protection was repeated inside the tents (Op Stonehenge).*

441. During this period IDF against the Contingent Operating Base (COB) and other bases increased considerably. For example, Basra Palace received over a thousand rounds of IDF in the three months before it was handed over to the Iraqis. This carried with it the prospect not only of a trickle of casualties, but also a mass casualty event, such as IDF striking a loaded Hercules or Merlin.

442. In 2004, MNDSE had predicted that the IDF threat would increase. The threat was acknowledged, but did not seem to result in increased structural

force protection of our bases for some time. Although some were in very robust buildings, such as Basra Palace, the majority of troops on the COB remained in tented accommodation until very late in the campaign, as did critical facilities such as the hospital. It was only during TELIC 11 that the programme of enhanced individual overhead protection (Op STONEHENGE) significantly increased force protection for troops on the COB. Even so the risk of a mass casualty event caused by IDF could never be eliminated.

443. The Counter Rockets and Mortar (C-RAM) defence solution fielded in 2007 delivered an initial sense and warning capability using radars and an intercept capability using Phalanx guns. An

early lesson was that an effective sense and warn system saved lives. Soldiers' drills need to be correct and immediate and they needed to have confidence in the false alarm rate of the system. The combination of TTPs, the ROE change that allowed the attack of IDF teams setting up, and early warning saved lives.

444. Brigade HQs adapted to this by radically reconfiguring themselves to shorten the sensor to shooter loop and to exploit better ISTAR. This did shorten response time but the C-IDF response remained procedural rather than digitally integrated. A sensor to shooter Urgent Statement of User Requirement (USUR) investigation concluded that placing sensors, intercept and strike effectors into a partially automated, fully digitised C-IDF capability was feasible and it would reduce the risk of error and speed up C-IDF response times. A digitised C2 system would also allow a more rapid deconfliction of other agencies' activities, battlespace management, and more rapid synchronisation of all-arms strike options. This was not implemented for Op TELIC.

445. We used counter-battery fire from AS90, but this was neutralised by enemy use of timers, allowing them to leave the rockets in place once set up. Hezbollah had used a similar tactic against the Israelis in 2006. There is no evidence that counter-battery fire ever killed or deterred any insurgent rocket teams in MNDSE.

446. Conducting patrols in depth into areas identified by IPB as likely firing points to deter IED teams was essential. It sought to deter and disrupt militia activity through co-ordinated and unpredictable patrolling, surging into defined operations boxes as directed by J2 assessment. The reality of the terrain available to IDF teams and the depth and quality of their 'dicking'¹²³ screens was such that ground manoeuvre alone would not have eliminated IDF teams.

447. UK and US experience showed that Joint Air-Land operations with a significant airborne ISTAR capability were an essential part of the C-IDF approach. During Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS the precision strike capability of aircraft and armed PREDATOR was used successfully against IDF teams, destroying a significant number. At the same time as Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, Shi'a extremists in Baghdad subjected the Green Zone to an intense rocket barrage. The US countered this with offensive use of armed UAVs, AH and AC-130. These measures are thought to have accounted for the deaths of over a thousand members of rocket teams.



Fig 31. Phalanx C-RAM firing in the COB.

¹²³ An informal surveillance screen used by indigenous people to monitor coalition movement and actions.

movement of troops in heavily armoured vehicles rather than Snatch or Humvees. This created opportunities for insurgents and militias. Getting the balance right was a key command judgement at every level from vehicle or section commander to Commanding General (CG) MNF-I. This involved making hard judgements about risk and operational tempo.

453. Force Protection is as much a function of leadership, especially commander's responsibility for battlefield discipline, as of technical capability. Tactical commanders often felt that they had too little devolved authority to manage risk for themselves. This particularly applied to the trade offs to be made at company level and below, concerning heat, the loads carried by the dismounted soldier and temperature inside vehicles without air conditioning. Many commanders considered that UK risk management was held at too high a level with risk waivers having to be approved by Commander Joint Operations (CJO).

454. Protective drills, TTPs and equipment are all essentially passive and if taken to extremes would have resulted in a force unable to achieve any tactical effect as well as being one in which morale and fighting spirit would be increasingly difficult to sustain. Effectively the only way to guarantee against IDF attacks would have been to leave Iraq. So commanders sought wherever possible to gather intelligence about the networks that conducted and supported IED and IDF attacks, in order to deter and disrupt them. MNDSE had some success in this, despite the ISTAR shortcomings and capability limitations described earlier, mounting successful strike operations by both battlegroups and ' [REDACTED]

Insight. The C-IED and C-IDF lessons of Op TELIC suggest that a holistic 'full spectrum' approach is essential from the outset. This includes intelligence gathering and strike operations to disrupt enemy networks. Commanders not only have to enforce counter threat TTPs and battle discipline but also need the understanding and authority to set the balance between force protection, interacting with the population and mission success.

Operational Security

455. Towards the end of the period, commanders assessed that operational security (OPSEC) was inadequate. Too many weapons and too much kit were stolen and too many computer disks and memory devices were lost. Action was taken by the chain of command. This coincided with a period in the UK when a number of embarrassing incidents showed the MOD's approach to data security needed improvement.

Insights. There is nothing new to such a threat and nothing new to countering it through security awareness, collecting information on the enemy or criminal efforts to negate our security, and commanders enforcing high standards.

TACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE ENEMY

456. The Shi'a militias and insurgents in MNDSE rapidly learned and adapted and achieved campaign continuity. The same applied to Sunni and AQ insurgents in the rest of Iraq. For example, use of the web for passing information and sharing best practice meant that the insurgent's IED

448. It is not clear that our intelligence support to C-IDF was as effective as it could have been. The artillery disbanded its C-IDF intelligence capability in the 1990s, which initially contributed to a lack of the necessary intelligence to make timely decisions.

Insight. The ease with which the enemy could cause casualties by IDF suggests that this would be an attractive option to future irregular opponents. Whilst it can be countered by basing troops inside existing robust buildings, this will not always be possible.

Insight. There is nothing new about counter-battery operations, including attacks by artillery or aircraft, but sensitivity to our own casualties means that C-IDF will be required across the spectrum of combat. Given the ease with which insurgents can field this capability, it needs to be held at readiness for future operations. This includes dedicated C-IDF intelligence and the ability to harden base accommodation.

Insight. Counter-battery fire by artillery against insurgent rocket teams in populated areas is easily countered by insurgent use of timers, and is likely to be counter-productive. Offensive C-IDF from airborne platforms is likely to be much more effective against insurgents and it must be complemented by security operations and patrolling of likely firing positions.

COUNTER THREAT IN PERSPECTIVE

449. By the later TELICs an integrated approach to the managing of counter threat issues was in use. It used Threat Assessment Groups (TAG), comprising C-IED, C-IDF and others as required. These groups sought to analyse incidents which had occurred in order to identify trends and hone countermeasures. Points arising from these TAGs were briefed at the fortnightly Counter Threat Working Group, attended by subject matter experts and unit representatives, where incidents were discussed and changes to TTPs and force protection measures promulgated. This process was flexible and agile, with the ability to act very rapidly when required. The UK chose to make this a core function of commanders and HQs. The US set up a dedicated C-IED Task Force, TF Troy.

Environmental Protection

450. In 2003 and 2004 heat caused casualties and had been an operational constraint, but better training and better air conditioning for accommodation and some vehicles meant that it was not a general constraint thereafter; apart from crews of vehicles without air conditioning.

Effects of Protecting the Force

451. Some measures taken to protect the force had significant operational effects. For example, suspending boat movement after three boat bombings, and helicopter movement over Basra by day after the Lynx downing in summer 2006. Not only did these measures reduce our effect on the enemy, but had a psychological effect in increasing caution.

452. Throughout the campaign across Iraq many counter threat measures increased the separation of Coalition forces from the people. For example, the firing of artillery at IDF teams or the

capability improved far faster than the IRA capability had developed in Northern Ireland. The capabilities of the Shia militia were boosted by external advice, training, mentoring and supply of key equipments.

457. **Urban Operations.** As well as using small arms, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) and IEDs in ambushes and to harass road movement and cause casualties, the militia sought to defeat our strike operations. During the 'War with the JAM' the militia opposed our strike operations by contesting our withdrawal as much as our advance. This would not only involve hasty ambushes laid on our anticipated withdrawal routes, but also hasty laying of EFPs, both on their own and as part of these ambushes. It is fortunate that the early success of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the JAM ceasefire meant that many obstacles in Basra were not covered by effective fire.

Insight. Insurgent tactics show the value of a manoeuvrist approach to defence in urban terrain, supported by hastily emplaced anti-armour mines. Simple and quickly laid anti-armour mines have a potential role as part of conventional tactics, especially in close country. An equivalent capability to the ██████████ would be valuable at company and platoon level.

458. **Insurgent Political and Social Programmes.** One of the main reasons why the tribes in Anbar and Sunni population of Baghdad rejected AQI was that their social agenda aroused popular revulsion. Executions, unrestrained brutality and a particularly savage interpretation of sharia law rapidly eroded popular support amongst the Sunni majority. In Basra, the imposition of sharia law and rampant criminality turned the Baswaris against both the main body of the JAM and the Iranian supported 'special groups'.

Insight. Insurgents or militias with a more moderate, less extreme and more popular social agenda would be harder to counter, both politically and militarily.



Fig 32. Wise advice. IDF damage to a jersey barrier.

CHAPTER 5 – THE TACTICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

"We need to clout not dribble. At present, we are dribbling and we are likely to fail"
"The Comprehensive Approach is not working"

"They are completely integrated down there, and that really is the future if we are going to support the Iraqis in the right way next year. Basra is the way forward" General Odierno, CG MNF-I 2008

501. These contrasting quotes suggest that the UK's efforts to achieve an integrated whole-of-government approach were inadequate for much of Op TELIC, but that in the end we got it right and that there were many positive as well as negative lessons to learn.



Fig 33. Basra, Five Mile Market, Jul 08. A broken economy, broken infrastructure and poor civic governance all required attention.

WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH?

502. In 2004, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) formed the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU). This subsequently evolved into the Stabilisation Unit. MOD adopted the doctrine of the Comprehensive Approach, formalised in Joint Discussion Note 3/05. This described the comprehensive approach as: “*commonly understood principles and collaborative processes that enhance the likelihood of favourable and enduring outcomes within a particular situation*”. It identified the principles of the comprehensive approach as:

- a. A proactive cross Whitehall approach.
- b. Shared understanding.
- c. Outcome based thinking.
- d. Collaborative working.

THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH IN IRAQ 2003-05

“The theme of trying to combine all of the instruments of national power in a single coherent and beneficial outcome is something which I think we have always done well. I think that what happened in 2003 was that there was a break in national consensus about the application and utility of force, and I think one of the consequences of that is that we did not have a unified nation, a unified Parliament or even a unified Cabinet. So there were all sorts of inferences that had a centrifugal effect of tending to separate the major functions of government.”

Lt Gen Sir Robert Fry evidence to the Chilcot Inquiry

503. From Mar 03 to Jan 05 both the Coalition and the UK sowed the seeds of subsequent difficulties. Iraqi governance was handicapped by the Coalition Provincial Authority’s (CPA) removal of Iraqi administrators. This was exacerbated by a political ‘free-for-all’ and a quest for power borne of many different motivations. Throughout the campaign these dynamics were difficult to understand, let alone influence, but many of them degraded security, thus making implementation of the comprehensive approach more difficult.

504. This was worsened by poor relations between Lt Gen Sanchez and the Head of the CPA; Paul Bremer. Some of the CPA’s work was successful, for example the issue of a new currency for Iraq, but much of the work done in Baghdad was executed by US political appointees [REDACTED] le [REDACTED]. By the end of 2004 some \$60 billion of Iraqi, international and US money had been allocated to reconstruction, much to be spent on large scale infrastructure projects. But the security problems and considerable friction surrounding the reconstruction effort meant that the improvements achieved were minimal.

505. One tactical success was the creation of the US Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP) *"to enable commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their AOR, by carrying out programmes that will immediately assist the Iraqi people"*¹²⁴. This programme was based on the chance find by US troops of \$700M cash in a hole in the wall of one of Saddam's palaces. It used simple procedures to allow tactical commanders to quickly identify local projects and get them funded. In a number of cases US commanders used this to employ large numbers of otherwise unemployed young men, thus giving them an incentive not to join the insurgency or militias. Co-ordinated tactical reconstruction efforts were an integral part of the US deliberate formation offensive operations against Shi'a insurgents in Najaf and Sunni and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) forces in Fallujah.

506. In Southern Iraq the CPA was neither staffed adequately nor capable of delivering the required degree of reconstruction. Deteriorating security reduced the effectiveness of civilian teams so MNDSE was drawn inexorably into reconstruction and governance. The lack of an effective civilian organisation and no Iraqi and little UK civilian leadership, expertise or financial assistance, forced additional responsibilities onto the shoulders of military officers who found themselves involved with civil projects and tasks, often operating well beyond their training and experience.

507. The combination of the parlous state of Southern Iraq's infrastructure, the expectations of the population for a rapid improvement in their living conditions and a significant failure to meet these expectations resulted in bewilderment and apathy, leading to rapidly growing disaffection with the Coalition. The limited CPA and UK funds available for reconstruction made little difference to the population and the combination of looting, lawlessness, tattered infrastructure, and electrical power shortages exacerbated discontent.

508. For much of this time relations between MNDSE and DFID were strained. MNDSE sought larger sums of development assistance and favoured short-term activities in the belief that these would buy consent. In contrast, DFID gave greater emphasis to the building of Iraqi capacity to develop and deliver their own plans to provide services using their own reviving oil wealth.

Insight. Ensuring the right balance between the military demands of short term projects for consent winning activity and civilian led longer term projects for sustainable development will be critical and commanders at all levels must play an active role in achieving the balance.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH IN MNDSE FROM JAN 05

509. The main UK Government institutions in Basra were MNDSE, the FCO-led Consulate and a DFID office. Under US pressure, a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was established in February 2006 to pool a range of UK and allied assets reporting both to the Consul General and the US in Baghdad. FCO diplomats staffed the Consulate and teams from international consultancy

¹²⁴ The Commander's Emergency Response Program by  Published by Joint Force Quarterly Issue 37.

firms provided most of the personnel for the DFID Office and PRT. All fell under the risk management arrangements of the FCO.

510. Responsibility for stabilisation spanned all the UK institutions, with all of J9 CIMIC, the Civil/Military Operations Centre (CMOC) and all remaining DFID programmes only joined together in the PRT by TELIC 13. Funding from the CERP channelled through MNDSE dwarfed the £315m from the tri-Departmental Conflict Pool and DFID's own programme budget.

511. The Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit provided the leadership of the Basra PRT from its establishment in February 2006 until April 2007 and subsequently managed programmes such as the airport consultancy; they also undertook a number of reviews of the effectiveness of inter-agency working.

512. A number of attempts were made to produce a government planning framework from the parallel civilian-led Better Basra Action Plan and Op Sinbad in 2006/07, the jointly signed Better Basra III of March 2007, and the military-led Operational Design in mid 2008. These were complemented at various stages by formal structures to bring together the key British and US bodies at principal and working group levels. In addition the Prime Minister appointed Michael Wareing, CEO of KPMG Europe, as Commissioner of the Basra Development Commission.

513. In practice, implementation of the Comprehensive Approach in MNDSE from Jan 05 to spring 08 varied from good to poor. It was not until security significantly improved in 2008 after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS that the potential of the comprehensive approach was realised in MNDSE. Once the PRT moved back to Basra from Kuwait it was possible for the 'Gang of Four' (GOC, Head PRT, Consul General and Head of US Regional Embassy Office (REO)) to act as a formal co-ordinating mechanism. By the latter part of 2008 this was complemented by joint working groups and, where relevant, joint delivery of joint projects. Many commentators, including US observers, consider that from mid 2008, the tactical execution of the comprehensive approach in Basra was as effective as that being achieved in the other MND areas, if not better.

Assessment. It is clear that the relatively effective tactical implementation of the comprehensive approach in MNDSE during Op TELIC 12-13 demonstrated that the principles of the comprehensive approach were valid. Had the principle of 'cross Whitehall approach' been implemented by an endorsed cross Whitehall strategy before Jan 09, the land component's ability to support delivery would have been greater.

General Insights. A full interagency Comprehensive Approach (CA) must combine security and governance. The CA is about much more than Reconstruction and Development (R&D). It is about having a profound understanding of the situation, especially politics, power and governance and about mobilizing all the instruments of power to shape politics, governance, security, rule of law, development and strategic communications. It needs to be implemented at all levels: strategic (Whitehall, international); operational (PJHQ, theatre); and tactical (division down to company). Local as well as national governance issues must be taken into account; governance needs to be considered bottom up for stabilisation operations. Other general observations from this period include:

- a. The natural tension between short term and long term perspectives.
- b. The value of Whitehall empowering the theatre and demonstrating joint leadership and joint working.
- c. The value of a single shared plan, ideally agreed with Whitehall and co-ordinated with key local actors.
- d. The value of developing and maintaining a shared understanding of the situation, desired outcomes, priorities and capabilities.
- e. The need for CIS interoperability across MOD, FCO and DFID both in theatre and across Whitehall.

INTEGRATED PLANNING

514. Initial efforts at integrated planning in Basra in 2006 failed because there was insufficient collaboration between the parallel military and civilian plans. A more comprehensive approach was tried in the spring of 2007 but its impact on coherence was short lived. It was only in the second half of 2008, when the PRT decided to align their plans to TELIC 12's Operational Design which morphed into a Joint Interagency Taskforce Campaign Plan, that a sustained inter-agency planning framework was adopted.

515. The lesson is that full effectiveness of the comprehensive approach at the tactical level can only be realised if there is a comprehensive approach and over-arching operational plan at the national strategic and operational levels, that sets the framework for individual Departmental planning. If this cannot be achieved, separate civilian and military operational plans should be developed collaboratively, starting with common assessments and joint planning from the outset. This needs to be translated into an enduring plan that does not change with every commander. This joint approach can be enabled by co-location of HQs and staffs and mutual embedding of staffs.

LEADERSHIP

The 'Whole of Governments Approach'

General Petraeus
RUSI 9 Jun 10

It was in Iraq that we learned how to achieve unity of effort as part of a comprehensive whole-of-governments approach. During my more than 19 months in command of the Multinational Force-Iraq, the endeavour we shared with Ambassador Crocker and the US Mission had to be a true team effort – military, civilian, coalition and Iraqi. And Ambassador Crocker and I wanted there to be no doubt that there was an unshakable commitment to teamwork at the top.

To achieve this unity of effort, shortly after we made an early and immediate change to the mission for our respective elements at the outset of our time together, we launched a Joint Strategic Assessment to ensure a common understanding of the tasks at hand, to refine goals and objectives, and to determine how to bring the tools our respective agencies possessed to bear on the problem.

We then used that assessment to refine our Joint Civil-Military Campaign Plan, which laid out the concrete steps we each had to take, and, more importantly, explained how actions in one area such as security or reconstruction, enabled and complemented efforts in other areas, such as political reconciliation. The media tended to emphasize troop levels and security operations, which were to be sure, the elements that produced the security foundation necessary for all other endeavours. Nonetheless, the Political Line of Operation was our main effort, the effort to which we subordinated our other activities when there were competing initiatives. If, for example, a military operation as assessed as likely to produce short-term gains in security, but to undermine our long-term political efforts, we didn't conduct it. This prioritization of our efforts to maximise our overall effectiveness could not have been achieved if we had not planned civil and military activities together.

Once our plan was complete, we had to execute it as one. We sought to establish a model for interagency cooperation, in which we linked arms, pursuing the same mission and objectives and jointly asking for the resources we needed. We always did our weekly video teleconference with the President and the National Security Council together. We always met with Prime Minister Maliki together, changing chairs during the meetings, in fact, as we shifted from predominantly diplomatic to predominantly security issues. We met with all congressional delegations and other important visitors together. We conducted campaign assessments together. And we created numerous civil-military fusion cells to address a variety of functional areas and to coordinate and synchronize our activities, thereby capitalizing on the collective information, skills, energy, and experience – civilian and military – that were available.

In any event, a few months into our tenure together in Baghdad, Ambassador Crocker and I were not really heading two separate organizations; rather, we were leading organizations that worked nearly as one, a joint civil military counter-insurgency organization made up of diplomats, soldiers, intelligence professionals, development experts and a host of others from across the US government and the governments of our Coalition partners.

516. **UK Leadership of the Comprehensive Approach.** UK military commanders in Basra often sensed a lack of unity of Civil/Military effort in Whitehall and a lack of top down leadership from the UK. Before Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS this was too often replicated in Basra. For much of this period the UK Consul General, DFID and the PRT were not collocated with HQ MNDSE increasing already extant friction. There was particular frustration in 2006/07 that DFID had declined to support Op SINBAD, which was however well supported by US CERP money. Relations worsened when the deteriorating security situation resulted in the PRT withdrawing to Kuwait. Although the PRT eventually returned after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, *“there was not a formally agreed integrated operational plan for Basra set in a strategic framework agreed*

across Whitehall'¹²⁵. No one person was ever formally in charge of the UK interagency effort, in Whitehall or in theatre. Success was too dependent on personal relationships, which varied in strength and effectiveness.

Role of the Tactical Commander and HQ

517. Recognition of the value of an inter-agency approach among both civilian and military leaders was the driving force behind improved coordination in Basra in late 2008. HQ AMPHIBFOR's perspective was that they could not use a conventional top directive military approach to get their three civilian partners working to achieve common effect. Instead the GOC felt that: *"The phrase 'Comprehensive Approach' sends shivers down FCO and DFID spines. It is a military term which they don't like. We used 'joined up, integrated, open and inclusive approach'. You must use a language that they understand and agree with; otherwise you will alienate them. You will not see the term 'Comprehensive Approach' in any of our documents. To set up a Joint Interagency Task Force approach, you need to use Joint Interagency Task Force language. Our Operational Design morphed into a Joint Interagency Task Force Campaign Plan, and the Consul General, who often led and chaired the Basra Steering Group, would go through it. The early buy-in we had elicited paid back in spades. We also gave both the PRT and the Consul General additional staffing horsepower by stripping people out of our own Headquarters and putting them into Joint Reconstruction Action Teams and planning teams. By the end of the tour, all of the C9 CIMIC elements and CMOC had joined together in the PRT. In retrospect, I wish that we had done that earlier. The lesson is that, the earlier you can have joined-up structures and procedures the better; even if you have to go through a lot of pain to get there. You need consensus to do that, and consensus takes time. I reckon that it took four months before we started to get coherence of delivery."*

518. This shows that no plan, or set of coordination structures, will succeed if civilian and military leaders do not believe in the importance of an integrated approach, understand each others' cultures and have the necessary inter-personal skills and commitment to team-working. High quality civilian and military leadership in theatre, which values an inter-agency approach, is the primary factor in ensuring effective coordination.

UNITY OF EFFORT IN EXECUTION

519. The lack of an integrated plan both exacerbated, and was caused by, the lack of clarity of division of responsibilities and ineffective coordination mechanisms in Basra for much of 2005-2008. This reflected many factors – including the strains of separate locations and some ambivalent attitudes towards the PRT which meant that most programmes were managed by individual Departments at its outset. In the absence of an integrated plan and clarity on responsibilities, attempts at inter-agency coordination mechanisms often floundered. These weaknesses unsurprisingly led to calls for unified command of all HMG assets in Basra under military leadership. This did not happen as Whitehall felt that the strength of the different departmental

¹²⁵ Maj Gen Salmon RM GOC MNDSE Operation TELIC |2-13

approaches and expertise might be diluted under a single command, and that constructive tension was an important part in ensuring that the sum was greater than the parts.

520. The experience of Basra over Ops TELIC 12-13 shows that greater unity of effort is possible without unity of command. This was achieved through a combination of an over-arching plan, co-location, a joint civil-military body that oversaw all civil effect activity, civilian actors better able to perform their role, and coordination structures that brought together the commander and senior civilian representatives supported by similar working level structures. Clarity of responsibilities and effective coordination was essential.

DELIVERING CIVIL EFFECT

Reconstruction – A Business Perspective

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

...to some extent we had to be very flexible in terms of not getting too tied to certain projects, given how difficult the situation was on the ground, particularly in political circles, to get some things across the line than others. I think the sort of the three really big ones were the youth employment programme... the airport at Basra, which was a really key opportunity and where we made enormous progress, and Umm Qasr, the port.

The real turning point on the airport and Umm Qasr was when General Andy Salmon and his team were deployed in August 2008 in a security environment that had changed a lot... and he actually deployed quite a number of his people to help work on those projects. So [REDACTED] on the airport, who was an RAF senior person in a team and [REDACTED] on Umm Qasr, who was a navy guy. So they understood airports, they understood ports. That made a huge difference in terms of working with the Iraqi local leadership, to really help move it forward... I think we made really material progress at the airport, and at Umm Qasr, by bringing together the military involvement and the DFID involvement and the local Iraqis at the same time.

The real key learning point, I think, is that, if you -- if you want to do these things, it actually slows you down a lot, working with the local people. So actually, rather than doing these things to them, actually doing them with them slows you down a lot. But the truth is that, if it is going to sustain, and if it is going to carry on after you've gone, you have to do it with them. So there is a lot of frustrations around that, but I think the reason why a lot of these things have carried on, like the youth employment programme, is because we put a massive amount of effort involving a lot of frustration and delay into getting the relevant ministry in Iraq to really get on side and support it: to the extent that actually they are now running it and have it as one of their flagship programmes. It would have been very easy to have pushed it on through and to have done it, but the truth is, when we left, it probably would have just fallen through the cracks and wouldn't have sustained.

I think for me that's one of the key learnings, and it is difficult and frustrating and it slows you down, but actually, to be really sustainable, you have to do these things with the local people and I think that's why the sort of DFID approach, if you like, in terms of capacity building, when we got to the end of the journey, became so clear that that was a really critical part of success, to a much greater extent than it maybe felt at the beginning of the journey.

521. US forces made effective use of CERP to 'buy consent' describing it as 'money as a weapon system' and delegating a considerable amount of authority to spend CERP to tactical commanders. Considerable sums of CERP were allocated to MNDSE, particularly for Op SINBAD and Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS. Until Op TELIC 12, there was great frustration amongst our commanders that UK money available to them was far less and managed by processes that were far less agile and responsive than those used by US forces. At times this was a source of great tension between HQ MNDSE and CIVSEC personnel, both deployed and at PJHQ. To many it seemed as if the doctrinal principles of mission command and delegation applied so successfully throughout Op TELIC were not being applied to money. For most of Op TELIC the processes employed appeared also less effective, flexible and responsive than the processes used by UK forces and the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) to deliver quick impact projects in Bosnia a decade earlier. This undermined our credibility in the eyes of both the Iraqis and the US and reduced the already limited effectiveness of our Information Operations. Introduction of the UK Commander's Contingency Fund during TELIC 12 met these concerns, but its effectiveness was limited by a lack of training.

Insight. UK and US experience shows that we need to explicitly seek balances between longer-term development and short-term consent-winning activities. These can achieve valuable effects, especially in relation to compensation and quick impact projects. This capability is required down to battlegroup level and must be supported by agile and responsive processes. Where military quick impact projects are successful they should be exploited by Info Ops. We also need processes for contracting that are not over-complex but also provide some degree of assurance. And authority to spend money for tactical effect needs to be delegated and managed in accordance with our doctrine for mission command.

522. The way in which so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIP) are developed and implemented can help to affect these changes as well improve force protection and consent. But a poorly designed QIP programme may achieve some short term objectives whilst undermining the achievement of more critical strategic objectives.

523. Ops SINBAD and CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS were to show that R&D can only contribute to stability with a sufficient military presence to both clear and then hold a populated area; a lesson that was learnt concurrently in Helmand over the same period. There is less consensus over the right mix of R&D effort. Most of this period was characterised by the tension between those, such as DFID, that prioritised the rebuilding of Iraq's civilian capability as the sustainable exit strategy for the international community and those, such as MNDSE, that argued for greater investment in QIPs and longer term international community provided iconic projects - to win the consent of Basrawis.

524. The initial experience of Basra did lead DFID to recognise the need to show some tangible momentum on the ground, whilst at the same time building host nation capacity. At the same time, military commanders recognised the need to identify projects that reflected local prioritisation. There has, however, to date been insufficient evidence of the impact of CERP programmes, and of money for security effect more generally, to fully resolve this debate.

525. An important tactical lesson is that in anything other than the most benign of security environments, the military needed to help the civilian effort with force protection, transport and other administrative/logistic support, without which civilians will be unable to have any effect.

INTEGRATED DELIVERY

526. A combination of factors led successive GOCs in Basra to express concerns about the effectiveness of civilians in delivering stabilisation; the lack of mobility caused by risk management, the discontinuity of short tours and breather breaks, the greater focus on local capacity-building projects which have limited short term tangible impact, and the long Whitehall screwdriver employed on some UK funding decisions. Together with the veneer of success associated with CERP activities, this led some to question the value of integrated civilian-military delivery and prefer a military led model of R&D. A number of these issues were only resolved, if at all, in Basra during Op TELIC 12-13.

527. The lessons is that the promotion of stability in highly insecure environments is best delivered in an integrated way. It requires collaboration between specialist civilians based in theatre that provide overarching direction, and specially trained military teams that can help to manage and monitor activities on the ground. Funding mechanisms need to be flexible and empower civilian and military leaders in theatre.

PEOPLE

528. The lesson from this and from the last year of Op TELIC is that DFID, FCO and MOD need to select compatible leaders to serve together, staff need to prepare together and tour lengths for key senior staff need to be synchronized. This area should be a high priority for military personnel on longer continuity tours.

529. **Civilians.** Initially, civilian postings were often driven by availability over suitability with limited pre-deployment preparation, particularly of working alongside the military. Many consultants owed a stronger allegiance to their parent company than to the PRT or DFID. The lesson is that a pool of civilians able to work in hostile stabilisation environments is required to produce a sufficient supply of suitable skills. Systematic training should include participation in military training like the PJHQ sponsored JOINT VENTURE series of exercises.

530. **Role of Military Personnel.** Military personnel often punched above their weight in this area, despite a paucity of training and recognition.

Insight. The military need to invest more in identifying and training specialist skills – language/culture, politics and governance, SSR and some technical areas. Training, incentives and career management of these skills is critical. More use of the Territorial Army (TA) and Reserves could be made to bring in people with relevant civilian skills, ensuring residual skills are identified, accessibly documented and then exploited. The military need to recognise that they should not attempt to replicate the depth of civilian expertise but rather work with the rest of government and the private sector to ensure that these civilian skills are available when needed.

Insight. Commanders need training to become both ‘deciders’ and intelligent customers of the ‘comprehensive approach’. Commanders and staffs, including CIVSEC, require appropriate training and as with every other weapon system, the capability needs exercising. This includes project management, accountancy, tendering, contracting and monitoring performance.

AFTERWORD

531. Some of the problems experienced at the tactical level seem to have reflected a UK predisposition to deliver effect more from top down than bottom up. A system that sought to achieve effect from the front line first, would be unlikely to have taken so long to have produced a capability to allow battlegroups to spend money to achieve civil effect. This is in striking contrast to the US CERPS which appear to have operated from the outset as a bottom up system.

532. Since the end of Op TELIC the UK has formed a 1,000-strong UK Civilian Standby Capacity including a Civil Service Stabilisation Cadre; both are managed by the Stabilisation Unit. There is tailored pre-deployment training for civilians, including participation in the pre-deployment training of each Brigade which deploys to Helmand as well as coordinates the civilian involvement in exercises. The Army’s CIMIC capability has been grouped in the Military Stabilisation Support Group. In Helmand the PRT and UK brigade HQ are both collocated and integrated and battlegroups have civilian stabilisation advisers as well as a military stabilisation support team. It is still neither clear whether this area receives its share of our brightest and best talent, nor whether we have fully leveraged the civilian skills sets of members of the TA, Regular Reserve and the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marine Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force. There may be lessons to learn from the US Army Civil Affairs capability.



Fig 34. Street cleaning project. These had an immediate impact in improving neighbourhoods and providing short term employment.



Fig 35. Renovating the 800 megawatt Al-Hartha powerplant 20km north of Basra was a much larger proposition.

CHAPTER 6 - SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

REBUILDING THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

601. Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Iraq was never going to be easy. In Saddam's regime the Iraqi police were not an independent modern accountable service, more a traffic control force and low level intelligence gathering arm of the state. De-Ba'athification and disbandment of the Iraqi Army made creating new security forces much more difficult than it had been in the Balkans. Once Iraq regained its sovereignty in 04, the Coalition had no power to dismiss any Iraqi officials. The effects of corruption and infiltration by militias led at times to elements of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) being simultaneously in friendly forces and enemy forces paragraphs.

602. In Jun 04 the Coalition had set up Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I), including UK personnel. Initially it was only responsible for building the capacity of the Iraqi Armed Forces but the US later transferred responsibility for Iraqi police capacity building from the State Department to the military. Considerable US resources were applied to military capacity building. MNSTC-I conducted basic training and sent battalions to divisions for 'unit set fielding'. Recruits had a short period of training and although some former Saddam regime officers were recruited, many officers and NCOs had little, if any training. In many ways the battalions arriving in MNDSE were at the same standard as one of Kitchener's New Army battalions after a few weeks under canvas in 1915. By the end of 2004, between 70,000 and 90,000 police were recruited and a start was made on recruiting a new Iraqi Army and National Guard. When both forces were faced with the Shi'a rebellions and the subsequent prospect of joining the US operation in Fallujah, many soldiers or police refused to take part, or even sided with the insurgents or militias.

603. For most of the campaign, MNSTC-I priorities were not in MNDSE and MNDSE's links to MNSTC-I were often assessed as being poor. It appears that blame for this went both ways. MNSTC-I managed 'Transition', but without a shared US/UK understanding of what transition (US term) and SSR (UK term) actually meant, there was a significant divergence in modus operandi and in expectation of progress. For example, [REDACTED] on measures of effectiveness for the ISF. But it is clear that the UK capacity building effort in the south became partly detached from the US led campaign approach. This was exacerbated when UK/US Strategy diverged from Jan 07 onwards, illustrating the [REDACTED]

604. Discussions with senior British Officers in MNSTC-I have stressed the need for an integrated approach between the overall capacity building organisation and MiTT providers working to a common doctrinal training template.

MNDSE APPROACH TO THE IRAQI ARMY

605. SSR requires not only capacity building in security forces but also reform and capacity building of a country's full security and justice systems, including judiciary and prisons. MNDSE principally conducted Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police service (IPS) training, not 'full spectrum'

SSR. MNDSE sought to organise, equip and train the ISF, in order to deliver capable ISF, to allow Coalition forces to transfer security to the Iraqi authorities and then leave. 'Transition' policy was executed in Southern Iraq through a five-step process; understand, enable indigenous forces, demonstrate, engage and a consequence management programme. This was sometimes referred to as 'Train – Equip – Overwatch'. A host of training and development activities were conducted by MNDSE and Shaibah was developed into a divisional training centre. As time went on both the Coalition and MNDSE tried to encourage IA self-reliance by refusing access to British resources (a policy of 'tough love').

606. At the beginning of this period, in Jan 05, the ISF played a major role, albeit under coalition mentoring, in supporting the Jan 05 elections. The Iraqi National Guard in MNDSE was being expanded to divisional size and incorporated into the new Iraqi army and the IPS were going through a programme of quality assurance. By mid 2005 the ISF were capable of policing major events such as elections and acting against Sunni extremists, but they had neither the will nor capability to take on Shi'a militias. Other than uniforms, a few vehicles and small arms they lacked much equipment, including body armour, helmets and belt fed machine guns. This eroded what little confidence they had to confront well armed and determined adversaries. Their selection and appointment systems were politicised and shambolic and they were assessed as having been infiltrated by extremists and criminals; a problem even worse in the police than the Army.

Joint Challenges

~~RRF~~
Op TELIC 8

The majority of our patrolling was in the vicinity of Abu Al Khasib, which involved working closely with elements of the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) to bring security to the mixed Sunni and Shi'a communities. The work, although rewarding, had its frustrations. Of the vast numbers of new vehicles brought for the IPS by the British Government, very few are used. The reason for this appears to be that the driver is automatically presented with the bill for repairs if there is an accident or fault with the vehicle. The Iraqi solution is therefore not to drive the vehicle outside of the police station.

Another challenge met at the Provincial Joint Coordination Centre was also to change the way the Iraqis conduct their business. Culturally to the Iraqis information is power and sharing it an anathema. It is therefore difficult to convince them that they want a centre where all Iraqi Security Force agencies can be informed of the current situation, coordinate their responses to serious incidents and plan together for deliberate operations.

607. For much of this period MNDSE had declared that SSR had to be main effort. It was not always clear that it was so in practice. From mid 05 the increasing IED threat diverted resources and effort from SSR to force protection. Between then and Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS in Mar 08, SSR struggled to compete with operations and force protection. The relationship between the British and the IA was further estranged when the shift in MNDSE Main Effort during Op SINBAD diverted training staff away from the IA. For example, Royal Engineer personnel were abruptly

withdrawn from working with the Iraq army, in order to generate combat engineer capability for Op SINBAD. And until Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS there was often great divergence in approach between different units and formations.



Fig 36. Basra, Jan 07. Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and British Forces; operating alongside each other but not yet together.

608. Weaknesses in the Iraqi army/MNDSE relationship may have been a contributory factor to elements of the IA aligning themselves within the inter-Shia power politics in South East Iraq. By 2007 IA desertion was high and they were avoiding joint patrolling with the British. This was made more difficult by the force protection challenges posed by the high threat in 2007. This meant that General Mohan and other Iraqi commanders were unwilling to accept permanent attachment or basing of UK advisors.

609. For most of the campaign MNDSE's efforts were focussed on 10 Division IA. The division was largely recruited from Basra province and highly vulnerable to infiltration by extremists and militias. In summer 07, 10 Division were deployed away from Basra province and replaced by 14 Division IA who came from outside Southern Iraq.

MILITARY TRANSITION TEAMS

610. The US planned to embed MiTTs with Iraq formations and units as they were generated. These were small teams of US troops embedded within the IA to provide planning advice, operational support and access to Coalition capabilities and joint fires. The US provided layered force protection, including personal beacons, Blue Force Tracker to team vehicles, and forces at high

readiness to extract teams from danger based on company sized armoured Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) and airmobile Air Reaction Forces (ARF) including Apache.

611. The UK approach to developing the ISF and transition to an ISF lead was discussed at length in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ). Although in 2004 MNDSE had proposed adopting the US approach by fielding MiTTs, the UK chose not to. Factors influencing this decision appear to have been force protection and the prospective resource cost of the US protective measures. This approach now strikes many commentators as sub-optimal, particularly as the UK had historically embedded personnel in colonial and indigenous forces, including in the Malaya, Kenya and Dhofar COIN campaigns, as well as helping the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) rebuild its capability and confidence in the 1970s. But this had not been common practice in the later stages of the Northern Ireland (NI) campaign, nor in Bosnia and Kosovo, where a more arms-length approach to SSR and capacity building applied and there was little genuine partnership.

612. When 10 Division IA detached two battalions to Baghdad in summer 06, MNDSE formed MiTTs. They were successful. But the capability was not more widely fielded in MNDSE. As the security situation deteriorated, the prospective force protection bill would have increased, at a time when UK force levels were decreasing. By the second half of 2007 the Iraqis were reluctant to accept such a UK presence at their bases.

MiTTing in Baghdad

SCOTS
Op TELIC 11

Being responsible for all G3 mentoring of 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade of 10 IA Division was a fantastic responsibility and the team responded to the challenge brilliantly. Initially, I assigned specific tasks to individuals. However, it became clear that building trusting relationships with the IA at all ranks was the most successful way of teaching and achieving results. So early on, we changed the approach and I assigned individual members of the team to specific Iraqi companies. This produced excellent results very quickly, as it became very clear that the IA responded much better if there is a significant level of trust and familiarity.

Having had first hand experience of the US brand of MiTTing on the streets of Iraq, I am convinced that it is the way forward in Iraq – but only when there is buy in from all sides. There is no doubt in my mind that mentoring is required at all levels within a unit, from Commanding Officer down to the most junior Iraqi soldier. Without this involvement at all levels, the Arab military mindset does not facilitate information cascading down the command structure and mentoring therefore becomes wasted time and effort.

At times MiTT tasks can appear less than glamorous, but the importance of forming relationships of trust with IA counterparts, although sometimes maddeningly frustrating and time consuming, cannot be underestimated. However, even if a MiTT is 100% committed to its task, it relies considerably on the assistance of the coalition ground holding unit that it works to. As General Odierno pointed out on his visit to JSS Black Lion; “MiTTing is now the war and it is the method through which we will give Iraq back to the Iraqis”.

613. Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS saw the deployment of IA units with integral US MiTTs that also integrated joint fires into Iraqi operations. The commitment of significant Iraq reinforcements to Basra, the visible welcome received by the US troops on the ground and the popular Baswari support to action against the JAM showed that the climate had changed significantly. General Mohan became prepared to accept UK MiTTs. MNDSE recognised that and quickly reconfigured to generate UK MiTTs with capabilities similar to those of the US. The swift adoption by 4 Armoured Brigade of the MiTT approach of active support and shared risk in Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS was very successful. This was complemented by the rapid deployment of UK staff officers from HQ ARRC to reinforce the Basra Operations Command HQ. This approach was used for the remainder of TELIC. The increasing capability and confidence of the IA required UK brigades to adjust their approaches, reducing profile, travelling in Iraqi vehicles and moving from MiTTing to partnering.

Insight. The fundamental military capacity building lesson is that we must embed and partner UK forces with indigenous troops if we are attempting to develop their capability whilst in contact with the enemy. Embedding also gives us greater leverage to shape their conduct of operations and provides greater situational awareness.

614. **Why Did MiTTs Work?** Both the US and UK experience showed that the empathy and example set by the MiTTs was essential, as was the credibility of being professional warfighters; Iraqi officers considered themselves professional war fighters. The fact that UK MiTT personnel had completed demanding all arms training such as BATUS commanded great respect. The conditions into which these MiTTs initially deployed were spartan, and imposed significant risks in terms of environmental health and force protection. The maintenance of professional standards, battle discipline and military routine had a positive effect on Iraqi officers and soldiers who sought to match our example.

615. **Wider Roles of MiTTs.** US forces found that MiTTs spent much of their time acting as shock absorbers in the battles for resources and *wasta* (prestige) between the Iraqi army and police. They also helped cajole the skeletal Iraqi bureaucracy into releasing resources. They also had to draw a fine line between mission success and using 'tough love'; being cruel to be kind to force the Iraqis to make their bureaucracy work.

616. **Energising the Comprehensive Approach.** The most effective MiTTs would improve not only our understanding of the situation, develop strong relationships with their Iraq hosts, and improve their military effectiveness, but would also energise reconstruction and development. In this way they achieved considerable influence not only with the Iraqi Army, but in the wider local community. Not all MiTTs achieved this wider effect, in part because their commanders lacked the necessary wider perspective, interpersonal skills or energy.

617. **Force Generation of MiTTs.** The approach used by 4 Armoured Brigade of using the chain of command to generate MiTTs was developed extremely rapidly. It was applied successfully by the two successor brigades. Although the UK campaign is over, there are many similarities between the work of UK and US MiTTs in Iraq and the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) fielded in Afghanistan. US Army MiTTs in Iraq benefited from bespoke training, but this was

limited by the teams being formed from ad-hoc assemblages of individuals. Although the UK MiTTs achieved remarkable results, many of those involved felt they could have been better prepared and that there were lessons to be learnt from the way the United States Marine Corps (USMC) generated and trained its MiTTs:

- a. USMC MiTTs were on 15 month tours.
- b. The USMC appeared to select top quality individuals for MiTT appointments, especially commanders.
- c. There was a considerable investment in language training and in training in CIMIC skills.

Insight. For most of the campaign, our approach to training the Iraqi Army (train and equip) was not as effective as the US approach (train, partner, MiTT and recognise that 'your fight is our fight'). Our approach failed to build an empathetic relationship between the British and the Iraqis. Indigenous security capacity can be built more effectively through empathy and active support than through passively promoting self-reliance and passive support.

Insight. Given the short notice at which MiTTs were generated in contact by 4 Armoured Brigade and in the latter stages of Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) by 7 Armoured Brigade, their success is remarkable. The rapidly improving security situation and capability of the IA in Basra meant that on Op TELIC 12 and 13, the MiTT role could be both reduced and handed over to US forces by 20 Armoured Brigade.

Insight. Our most successful MiTTs achieved considerable impact, not just with the IA, but also in energising local reconstruction and development. [REDACTED]. To maximise the chances of achieving this wider full spectrum effect MiTTs need to have an intelligent, adaptive leader with a broad set of skills and be manned by mature people.

Insight. Lessons from the most successful of our MiTTs and the more thorough approach of the USMC suggest that for an enduring campaign 'amateur' or ad hoc MiTTs may be less effective than teams generated by a more professional approach. This would retain the credibility of MiTTs/OMLTs being manned by credible warfighters, but could require more stringent selection process as well as an increased training burden and increased tour length.

OTHER ISSUES

618. **Iraqi C2 and Logistics.** Subsequent Iraqi operations in MNDSE and elsewhere in Iraq exposed weaknesses in operational and strategic level Iraqi Command and Control (C2) as well as combat service support. This suggests that 'full spectrum' SSR of an army requires government level C2 and deployable logistic capabilities to be generated in parallel with combat capability, not afterwards. After Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS we missed an opportunity to better mentor and

influence Iraqi C2 by not co-locating our HQ at the Basra Operations Centre. This need not have been the whole MNDSE/Brigade HQ, a forward HQ would have sufficed.

619.

[REDACTED]

Insight. Experience in Iraq demonstrates that SSR should be a holistic activity, a simultaneous and comprehensive action across government departments beyond the military to the police, justice and border security systems. It should also be holistic in achieving effect across the spectrum of G1-G9.

Insight. [REDACTED]

Unity of Command in SSR	Brig Everard Comd 20 Armd Bde Op TELIC 6
A critical weakness of SSR in MND-SE was the inbuilt weakness of the parallel chains of command established in order to 'recognise' Iraqi sovereignty. Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) reported to the Iraqi MOI or MOD, and these organisations controlled both the 'hire and fire' and 'postings' policies for ISF and the extent of their involvement in operations in MND-SE. Example: Good IPS commanders were removed and posted to Baghdad at no notice, at penalty to progress in Basra. The lesson? The importance of preserving unity of command of <u>all</u> forces during stabilisation.	

IRAQI POLICE SERVICE

The Ministry of the Interior	[REDACTED]
Op TELIC 12 and 13	
A number of key issues complicated attempts to produce coherent MOI plans:	
a. The MOI was and remains an institution characterised by deeply-engrained political and factional interests. The idea of a single coherent strategy ran counter to the imperative to establish political equilibrium in the organisation by ensuring that power was divided internally in a way acceptable to a number of elements;	

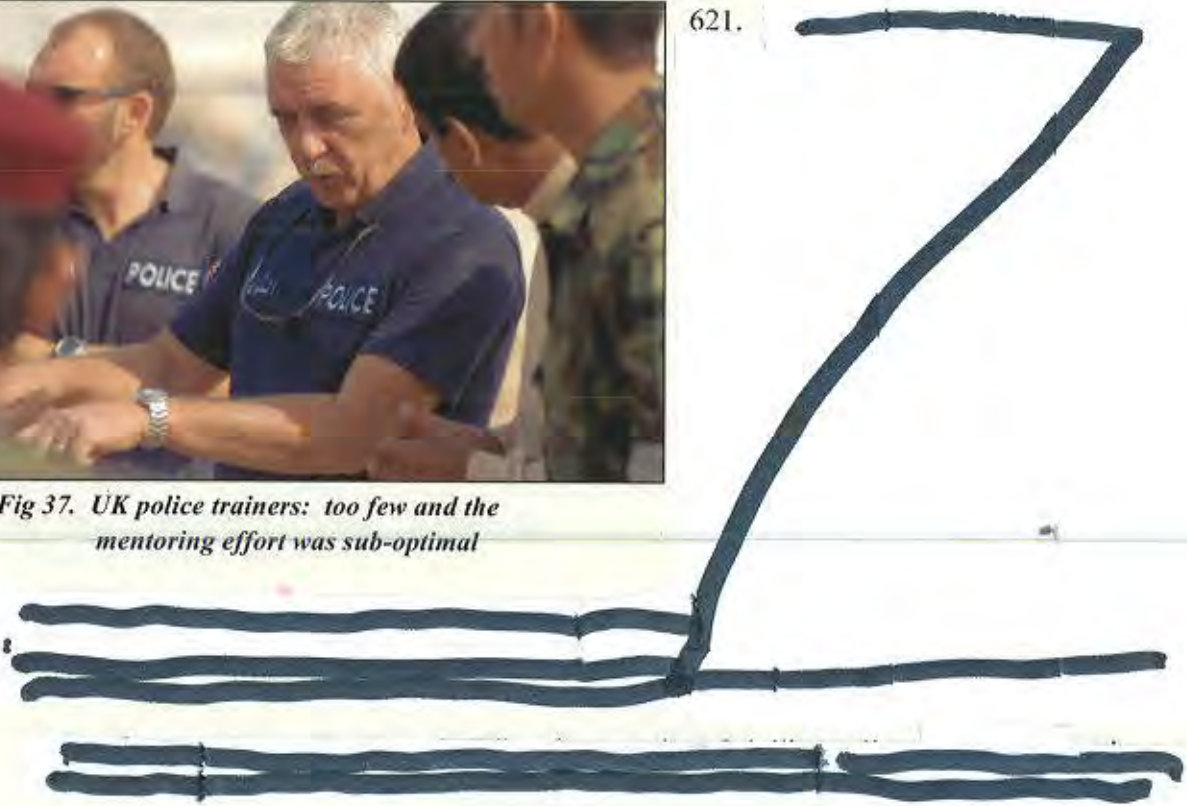
- b. The MOI is responsible for much more than policing. It also has responsibility for: border security, identity cards, traffic management, civil defence (e.g. fire service), tribal affairs, vehicle registration, and a host of other functions. MOI planning is therefore a highly complicated undertaking without any equivalent in the UK or US administrative systems;
- c. The general competence was low. There were some able technocrats, but years of isolation meant that systems, behaviours and attitudes were ineffective and the organisation was at times paralysed by an unwillingness to take responsibility for decisions. It had been run by five ministers in four years, and there was little or no continuity at policy level;
- d. The confusion between central and provincial authority and poor communication between the MOI and the provinces made any idea of a national policing plan unrealistic.

620. By Jan 05 it was clear that the initial civil led programme to build police capacity in Southern Iraq had failed. Reasons included use of contractors who were inadequately managed in theatre and the considerable cultural gap between the Iraqi approach to policing and those of serving and retired members of the UK constabulary. UK lead responsibility was passed to the MOD. The effectiveness of the training improved, but there has been widespread criticism of the UK police mentoring effort as 'sub-optimal'.



Fig 37. UK police trainers: too few and the mentoring effort was sub-optimal

621.



is essential. In this case, in the absence of an effective national approach to expeditionary civilian police capacity building, the UK military will have to take the lead, supported by appropriately trained and selected military personnel and civilian and paramilitary police trainers.

Insight. Experience suggests that the tactical effectiveness of UK efforts to build the capacity of civilian police forces is subject to powerful inhibitors:

- a. The great contrast between the sophisticated UK approach to the office of constable and policing by consent and the law enforcement cultures of Muslim and Third World countries.
- b. The lack of levers to compel the UK's independent police forces to generate police officers for expeditionary operations.

Paramilitary police such as Gendarmerie or Carabinieri, appear to be of greater value than UK civil police. Coalition partners with this capability can be invited to contribute, but this capability cannot be guaranteed.

Insight. Where police MiTTs/OMLTs or similar teams are formed, many of the lessons previously identified about generation and operation of MiTTs are likely to apply.

IPS Staff Issues

**Op TELIC 10 and 11
Iraq Inquiry Testimony**

The turnover of staff at all levels within the IPS was a major impediment to success. Trained officers were moved from the roles they had been prepared for without justification, staff due to be trained did not attend due to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Whilst it was accepted that some turnover was essential to ensure that militia influence was managed and that effective leadership was put in place, the continual churn of entire departments was a serious concern.

Initial poor practice in the vetting, equipping and training IPS officers in previous years returned to haunt the mission. The lack of credible training records or accurate identification and vetting credentials required a wholesale revisiting of persons employed in the IPS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and the need to tighten the grip on identifying such appointed officers was essential. Likewise an inability to check that materiel issued to the police was still in the hands of the police caused a major challenge for MNDSE.

IRAQI BORDER SECURITY

622. For most of the period it is not clear that UK forces ever made a significant effect on border security. This changed after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS, when the Iraqi Army deployed forces to the borders of Basra and Maysan provinces and the US deployed transition teams to the Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement and Customs. These were part of a major MNSTC-I programme which included; uplifting pay, a programme of construction and refurbishment of border forts, investment in technology and developing the legal border crossing points. This latter initiative included physical measures to reduce opportunities for corruption such as open bays for cross loading goods between lorries.

623. Deploying battlegroups to interdict cross border smuggling was not new to the Iraq campaign. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] i. And those smugglers who were crossing the border could afford to wait until UK troops moved on. Experience from Hong Kong, NI and the Balkans, suggests that whilst military land, sea and air forces can contribute to deterring and interdicting illegal border crossing, a full spectrum approach to border security is required, which also builds capability at legal crossing points and enlists co-operation of the local population. This is understood by the US military who make a major contribution to the security of the US border with Mexico, as well as interdicting drugs moving through the Caribbean.

Insight. A better understanding of the military contribution to border security is required. This should draw on the US experience both at home and in Iraq.

TACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RECONCILIATION – TURNING ENEMY FORCES INTO FRIENDLY FORCES

624. Early efforts by both sheikhs and U [REDACTED]) to create friendly Sunni militias were blocked by Iraqi insistence on a unified multi-ethnic Army. This was relaxed in 2006 and the US had remarkable success in forming auxiliary militias from reconciled Sunni insurgents. They provided local intelligence that the US could not gain and fought alongside them. Key to this was the ability of Battlegroup commanders to 'hire' them using CERP money. Taking biometric identification upon hiring appears to have been a very effective way of deterring such people from returning to the insurgency.

625. This bottom up tactical initiative was complemented by the activities of the Force Strategic Engagement Cell. Jointly led by a UK Major General and a US Ambassador, it conducted engagement at the strategic level. This reconciliation effort had greatest effect when it integrated the strategic efforts of the Force Engagement Cell with similar activity from corps to battlegroup level.

Insight. The turning of reconcilable opponents into friendly forces shifted the balance of forces in Anbar in 2006 and Baghdad in 2007. Although this approach was not applied in MNDSE, it is of great relevance to future conflict against both irregular and regular opponents. UK Forces need to have a similar capability to exploit enemies who wish to

change sides and the resources and freedoms (policy, legal, financial) to conduct similar operations elsewhere.



Fig 38. Successful SSR. Basra Jun 08 a UK MiTT discusses an Iraqi planned operation with an Iraqi officer.



Fig 39. Basra Jan 09. An Iraqi National Policeman on security duty at a Polling Station. When policemen look like this whose job is it to train and mentor them?



Fig 40. Civilian camera team interviewing a private soldier.

CHAPTER 7 - INFORMATION AND MEDIA OPERATIONS

BACKGROUND

"Info Ops were appalling. It is a subject that is treated like some form of magical pixie dust that can compensate for any holes in the tactical plan; but Info Ops consistently failed to deliver. There was hardly a single Info Ops product that was delivered to me throughout the tour that was not withdrawn because it proved to be inaccurate, offensive or was producing unforeseen and unintended consequences"

STAFFORDS

701. By 2005, the UK land component had considerable experience of using Information Operations (Info Ops) to support operations. This had been particularly successful in Bosnia, where the British led MND SW had developed a sophisticated capability, including its own radio station that had become the most popular in Bosnia. MND SE and deployed brigades and battlegroups made great efforts to use messaging to achieve influence, often in conjunction with Key Leader engagement (KLE) by commanders and staff officers; a major component of Op SINBAD for instance. But with the exception of Op TELIC 13, brigade commanders and GOCs considered our Info Ops and media in MND SE continually punched below the required weight. General Dutton summed this up when he stated that *"I still do not think that we have got Info Ops right. For a start, I was not aware of any overarching Info Ops Campaign, and there was certainly no Coalition Info Ops message. We have not got the same level of coordination as was demonstrated in the Balkans, when the system seemed to manage to ensure the same message came out at every level at the same time"*¹²⁶.



Fig 41. Maj Gen Dutton GOC MND SE:
"I still do not think we have got Info Ops right."

702. This view of Info Ops was not necessarily restricted to the UK efforts alone as the US was also struggling to give adequate weight to this important area. Lessons learnt¹²⁷ in the 03 – 05 period highlighted similar concerns within the US Army: the doctrine was not clear between Info Ops and

¹²⁶ Maj Gen J B Dutton CBE POI dated 15 Feb 06.

¹²⁷ On Point II Transition to the New Campaign; the United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom May 2003 – January 2005.

Public Affairs (PA)¹²⁸; army units at divisional and lower echelons lacked sufficient staff and resources to carry out Info Ops; there was insufficient intelligence support used in developing and carrying out Info Ops planning; and “*Commanders, staffs and Info Ops officers did not understand how to integrate Info Ops with all the tools (Civil Affairs, PA, maneuver, fire support, logistics etc) available to them to shape the information environment in which they would operate.*”¹²⁹

703. Throughout the period (2005 – 07) the perception persisted that the enemy were much better at Info Ops and getting their message to the people. They benefited from agility and responsiveness, coupled with a simplistic message that was couched within the cultural norms of the region. The UK lacked the cultural understanding of the region and was seemingly poorly structured to operate in the information domain across the force.

704. By 2009 the improved security resulting from Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS and the apparently unique presence by chance of a professional marketing specialist (Territorial Army (TA) Sergeant) in HQ MNDSE meant that the information operation for the first time appeared adequate as a tactical activity. This is the only reported instance of the Basra Info Ops staff having any professional advertising/marketing people. In contrast Multinational Force-Iraq had learnt the necessary lessons and invested significant resources through the US Department of Defense; for example employing a civilian firm of specialists on a \$120 million per annum contract to conduct strategic communications in Baghdad¹³⁰. The financial investment and employment of specialist marketing experts provides a telling contrast with the less professional UK efforts in the south.

705. One area of confusion throughout the period was the emerging doctrine concerning initially ‘influence’ and, latterly, ‘influence activity’. The term ‘influence’ has been used at various times to represent the ‘soft functions’ (civil military cooperation (CIMIC), psychological operations (PsyOps), security sector reform (SSR), Media and Info Ops) and, at other times, to represent the panoply of military activities conducted by UK forces which have an effect on the perceptions of the local population. Many people came to see ‘influence’ as merely messaging and an amalgam of Info Ops and media. From a UK perspective the net result was an inconsistent approach to Influence/Info Ops from each deployed formation with Gunners, Individual Augmentees (both Army and Royal Navy), and full time staff officers taking the reigns at different times. It was not until the publication of doctrine at the end of the campaign (Doctrine Note 09/02 *Influence Activity* and JDP3-40) that a degree of intellectual rigour was given to the issue. Whilst this chapter deals with Info Ops and media specifically, there are references to ‘influence activity’ as defined initially by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre

¹²⁸ Ibid: “Info Ops was focused on affecting the enemy’s decision making capacity while protecting one’s own; as such, it included the manipulation of enemy morale and public opinion. PA operations, on the other hand, focused on providing truthful information to the American people about their Army and its operations.”

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Bell Pottinger – Briefing to D Inf by ██████████, dated 22 Feb 10.

(DCDC)¹³¹ rather than the current definition which came into general circulation after the publication of Tactical Doctrine in 2009. At the time of writing we now consider 'influence activities' to embrace the disciplines of media operations and information operations amongst a number of other activities; although during much of TELIC UK thinking tended to see these as separate activities.

DOCTRINE

706. There was a perceptible lack of understanding of what 'influence' as defined by the DCDC (the focus of Influence Activity is in the information domain) was intended to achieve and required for success. Part of this was the potentially pejorative undertones of terms such as PsyOps, propaganda and deception. At the tactical and operational levels, the boundaries were seemingly not understood between these activities and also between what is covered by such terms as Strategic Communications, Information Operations, Public Affairs and Media Operations. Whilst there was existing doctrine for PsyOps and no shortage of guidance concerning media ops, there was at the time no doctrine for 'Influence Activities' and the definition, understanding, and the discipline of a lexicon of influence terminology became confusing and contradictory. There is now, but work is required to ensure that within the Army, Defence and Whitehall the terms are understood and uniform.

707. The distinction between the set boundaries of Info Ops and Media Ops has also become increasingly blurred at the tactical level. Existing doctrine highlights that 'there needs to be a clear distinction made between the two; this is particularly sensitive when dealing with the media themselves, as they will not accept it if they believe that they are merely being fed propaganda'¹³². While it is necessary to make clear the difference between certain PsyOps initiatives and the activities of Media Operations, such a literal division is not useful. Brigadier Marriott succinctly stated that "It was difficult to avoid putting the white art (of Media Ops) and the black art (of PsyOps) together, but it was important that, despite this, the Media themselves did not feel that they were being exploited"¹³³. Contemporary operations will now operate in a contested information environment and we must therefore have the requisite ability to deliver 'information effect' through various messaging channels in both an offensive (strategic narrative) and defensive (rebuttal) manner. The services offered by Media and Info Ops, together with the civilian component's activities to build and strengthen the indigenous local media, must now operate together in a holistic manner.

Comment. RC(S) provide the example to follow using the banner 'information effect' delivered in partnership with the Afghans, that offers a 'narrative' to counter that of the Taliban's armed propaganda.

¹³¹ "Influence Activities affect the character or behaviour of an individual, group or organisation; they realise cognitive effects. Whilst activities in the physical domain will undoubtedly have such effects (through expressive Fires, for example), the focus of Influence Activity is in the information domain". JDN 1/07 dated Feb 07.

¹³² Doctrine Note 09/02 Influence Activities.

¹³³ Comd 7 Armd Bde POI dated 14 Jul 06.

Insight. The need for an agreed doctrine has been recognised and rectified but it is relatively immature and still not well understood across Defence and the Land Component. There must be a concerted effort to ensure it is taught and understood by commanders at all levels and training opportunities must incorporate activity that spans the information domain.

Insight. Influence Activities staff should be reflected in the post-tour lessons exploitation system in order to allow critical evaluation of activities, wide dissemination of lessons and incorporate emerging ideas into doctrine.

2006: US Attitudes To The Media

Bing West *The Strongest Tribe*

A striking factor of the war was the openness of the U.S. military staffs. In Vietnam, General Westmoreland and his staff were accused of presenting only optimistic data and withholding the rest from both Washington and the press. In Iraq, reporters were routinely allowed to sit in on briefings.

UK STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE

708. In modern conflict a coherent narrative can both help sustain support for and contribute to tactical operations, particularly against the backdrop of an unpopular conflict where there is no depth of public support for the military action in the first place. Evidence from commanders in theatre and from the Iraq Inquiry suggests that this effect was absent for most of this period. The MOD-led Cross-Whitehall Iraq Information Strategy Group's (IISG) *Iraq Information Strategy* did not appear to guide Whitehall as centrally as had been the case previously. Commanders and staff complained that the

direction given by the IISG was as of no practical value to them on the ground; their focus seemed to be on the UK domestic audience and not the Iraqi population.



Fig 42. Strategic Messaging. Dr John Reid the then Secretary of State for Defence with a Combat Camera Team.

709. Indeed, after the Jan 07 US decision to surge, it appeared to many Iraqi, US and UK commentators that not only was UK policy at odds with US policy but also that Afghanistan appeared to be more important to the UK than Iraq. Coherent strategic communications is impossible therefore without strategic coherence, within Government and within the coalition. Although the first cross-Whitehall information strategy was produced in early

2006 and the first cross-Whitehall narrative was subsequently signed off in autumn 2006, it was not until the aftermath of Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS that clear evidence of effective cross-departmental and theatre buy-in and usage emerged. As Maj Gen Shaw noted, *“the lack of a unified agreed Coalition Info Ops campaign continues to be a crippling weakness to our global efforts in conflicts that are fundamentally about influence not kinetics”*¹³⁴.

710. The multiple target audiences confronting the UK staff included *“in order: the British Army, the British government and people, the US Army, the US government and people, the Iraqi government and people, the world of potential allies and adversaries”*¹³⁵. Throughout the successive deployments it was not clear to MNDSE how they were to get their message across to the wider region as a whole. The division of responsibility across the spectrum of the target audiences between MNDSE, MNC-I and the MOD was not clear. There seemed to be little coordination of the international press and there certainly was no clear Info Ops line that was signed up to by the Contributing Nations coming from London which could have been taken up. Formations did manage to make it function reasonably well at the tactical level where they had to work out their own messages for local consumption, but never nationally. All of these factors made coherence of Info Ops much more difficult.

Comment. Where harmony of message can be achieved it can become a significant force multiplier at the tactical level. It is essential therefore to get our narrative into the media outlets rather than remaining responsive to the shorter term and often politically motivated news headlines of the day (for example Iraq being an unpopular war). The effect of a negative media message to the domestic audience affects morale both internally and to external audiences. This must be driven from UK with respected journalists and commentators and not left to UK forces in Theatre whose focus, inevitably, will be on the Iraqi people.

Insight. From the outset there needs to be commitment for an agreed and clear Cross-Government Information Strategy to guide all of Whitehall. Where possible this must be agreed with international and coalition partners, although the complexity of agreeing a strategic narrative with partners is acknowledged. This falls outside the remit of this particular study; although without a strategic narrative the Land Component will find it more difficult to achieve tactical effect.

Insight. Cognisance must be taken of the different messages possible from the same information both within UK and in Theatre. Commanders in Theatre must therefore be aware of, and consider, the potential implication of their actions on domestic and international diaspora audiences. The forward deployment of suitable cultural advisors would go a long way to negate this problem.

¹³⁴ Maj Gen Shaw to All Souls Lecture dated 12 Nov 08.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

ORGANISATION

“We lacked expertise across the board. We were a bunch of enthusiastic amateurs and were extraordinarily fortunate that the characters who turned up into the individual augmentee slots happened to gel”. ~~_____~~

711. Influence activities need to be fully integrated into the work up and training phases of an operation and this means that those personnel assigned to conduct that activity must be embedded in the formation headquarter throughout the Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) period. It needs to be taken seriously as a core G3 function with a significant change of mindset and command push to attract the brightest and best people to cover this area. ‘Information effect’ should not be considered an activity that is purely linked to an operational theatre and specialists should be considered as core staff of the deployable contingent for all formations in peacetime locations (perhaps a role for an SO3 Operations Support (Ops Sp)). The relevant sub-sets of ‘influence’¹³⁶ must be the domain of specialists in their field and should be seen as a career stream in their own right. It might also be an attractive discipline for the TA to focus on and initiatives should be explored with industry to find a way of recruiting advertising and marketing experts to act as Subject Matter Experts and planners at the relevant levels.

712. Whilst the application of ‘Info Ops’ should be undertaken by specialists, Info Ops as a concept must underpin every activity in Theatre and be part of everyone’s job. It should never be perceived as a discrete function being conducted in isolation by a small specialist branch somewhere in the headquarters; it is an approach and not a branch. There was often a failure “to engage with” Info Ops by recognising that it was not a discrete activity but was all-pervading; sitting as it does from start to finish on the Operational Continuum.

Comment. British expertise in Info and Media Operations is inadequate for the current requirement; all officers need generalist training with a dedicated career stream of specialists in the key operational posts as subject matter experts. More effort, therefore, needs to be put into selecting the right individuals to fill Ops Sp appointments within formation headquarters and maximising their training opportunities prior to deployment. Paramount to this would be agreement on a uniform approach at formation and unit level.

Insight. ‘Information effect’ must be everyone’s business and it needs to be brought together by suitably trained and experienced staff. Correctly employed Info Ops can therefore be seen as ‘21st Century Combat Support’ with considerable potential in linking with Cross-Government work (both what already exists and also what is being developed under Cabinet Office lead). This should not be seen as a purely operational requirement and structures should ensure it is

¹³⁶ CIMIC, SSR, PsyOps, Info Ops, Media, operational security (OPSEC), electronic warfare, counter-network operations, special capabilities and key leader engagement.

included in peace time headquarters as well to cover the plethora of 'information' tasks that confront busy staff on a daily basis.

713. Throughout the period the capability of the Info and Media Ops staff was constrained by the incumbents being generalists who had done a short course. This fact was often compounded by their late arrival in the training progression (many were Individual Augmentees) and their exclusion from the core planning process. There were some better qualified specialists in defence, but these appear to never have been based in theatre apart from the TA sergeant who made such an impact on TELIC 13. Whilst the reasons for this are unclear, what is evident is that the Army has still not managed to fully reconcile the 21st Century advances in the information domain with structures and resources. This is a particular concern as they are likely to play a pivotal role in all military activity from major combat



Fig 43. Example of Info Ops handout.
Those handed out were in Arabic with further project details on the reverse.



Fig 44. Example of Info Ops handout.

operations to COIN and PSO. There appears to be no organisational champion for the complex task of operating in the information domain¹³⁷ and whilst other elements have a champion (15 (UK) Psychological Operations Group¹³⁸, Defence Media Operations Centre¹³⁹ etc), those operating in the information domain receive scant training (National Information Operations Course¹⁴⁰), are poorly structured (it is an extensive area covering radio and

television broadcast, print products, KLE and the internet) and have no obvious champion (capability development, force generation etc).

¹³⁷ The creation of the Influence Activity Branch at the LWC has given a doctrinal champion to cover all activities, of which Info Ops is a sub-set.

¹³⁸ 15 (UK) PSYOPS Group is responsible for the administration, training and readiness of PSYOPS personnel, both those organic to the Group and augmentees. It is a Land unit, and falls under the administrative command of 1 Military Intelligence Brigade.

¹³⁹ The DMOC aim is "to deliver an effective Defence media operations capability, trained and resourced in order to support our military operations and training".

¹⁴⁰ The NIOC is a Joint two week course run at Shrivenham which provides a basic understanding of Information Operations.

Comment. It may be possible to take an existing structure (15 POG) and re-brand to cover a more extensive tactical portfolio utilising regular and TA experts (it could also be utilised by OGDs to improve the Comprehensive Approach); a structure that would cover both PsyOps and the information domain (corporate communications and public relations experts, professional marketing specialists, Strategic Communications experts etc).

Insight. The optimal results in the information domain were created when specialists were employed. A database of UK specialists and professionals in the information domain must be created and the necessary skill sets matched to operational priorities. The TA might prove highly useful in this regard. Equally the utilisation of indigenous specialists ensures cultural sensitivities are maintained when communicating to a local Target Audience.

MNDSE Information Operations Cell

Op TELIC 13

As with many of the previous deployments, the Information Operations (Info Ops) cell on Op TELIC 13 was comprised of 'enthusiastic amateurs' who had little expertise in the complex information domain. There was seemingly no one organisation that had functional responsibility for information management and exploitation, and although there was a doctrine for the various components of it (Info Ops, Psychological Operations (PsyOps) and Media), there was nothing that seemed to fuse the various strands into a coordinated information strategy.

In one of the PsyOps Teams there was an acting Sergeant (Territorial Army) whose 'real life' job was as the Director, Communications for MTV Networks International. He had extensive communications and marketing experience. A small team was created around him in order to create momentum through a "marketing optimism" campaign. Using his experience and knowledge, coupled with the skills of a civilian graphic designer who 'just got it' they developed poster, radio and billboard activities, they upped production and pushed the message much harder than had been done before.

They also had an internal Info Ops campaign within the Headquarters in order to ensure that the activities taking place were given the necessary prominence. The issue was not just producing clear and unambiguous messages to the people of Basra, but informing our own side too; thereby generating a circle of effect. What they sought was a demonstration of effect on the ground with a poster campaign on SWET (Sewage, Water, Electricity and Trash) backed up by polling, which would prove to the Headquarters that it was moving in the right direction. Having gained the GOC's trust, and once people saw that he was seized by the whole Influence piece, anyone going out of Camp realised the magnifying effect that Influence could have.

The relatively unique circumstances of having had an expert in the organisation at that time were an added bonus to mission success. The comparison with the American team in Multinational Corps-Iraq which was largely made up of civilian communications specialist reservists was stark. They were not only enthusiastic advocates of the information domain, but they also had the background knowledge of advertising, marketing and polling. There seems little doubt that the Army needs to go out to industry to find a way of recruiting communications experts into the TA for example to act as Subject Matter Experts and communications planners at the relevant levels.

TARGETING

"We were to conduct operations because we wanted to, not because we could; that is they were to be conducted 'for a purpose and by design'". (Brig J R Free OBE)

714. Throughout the period commanders accepted that Info Ops must be command led as the campaign was increasingly being seen as an information operation in its broadest sense. ██████████, ██████████ concluded that: *"We typically design physical operations first, then craft supporting information operations to explain our actions. This is the reverse of al-Qaeda's approach. For all our professionalism, compared to the enemy's, our public information is an afterthought. In military terms, for al-Qaeda the "main effort" is information; for us, information is a supporting effort."*¹⁴¹ Whilst he is not stating that we should adopt the same approach as al-Qaeda, he implies that we should be conducting Info Ops differently from the current construct; namely an approach where we defined our desired outcome and designed an operation conceived from words and deeds. It was imperative therefore that all activity was G3 led and G2 informed with Info Ops considered as a critical part of the planning process and not left alone in its own vacuum; it was an important weapon in the COIN armoury.

715. To ensure the message got to the broadest audience at the right time and place, it was necessary to identify exactly who needed to be influenced (the various audiences), and then target them properly; Kitson called it 'the battle for men's minds'. The synchronisation of influence with physical activity, underpinned by manoeuvre, necessitated coordination and direction and the principal focus emerged through the targeting process. In the early stages of Op TELIC 7 there was friction between Info Ops and the core business of G3 as highlighted by SO1 Ops Sp in his POI: *"The geography of the headquarters pushed Info Ops a long way from J3/5 (Future Plans); which did not help. Things did improve as the targeting system developed and as we began to prove our worth. In the end, we became much more closely involved in the planning process."*¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ ; ██████████ Countering the Terrorist Mentality: New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict.

¹⁴² SO1 Ops Sp POI dated 11 Oct 06.

716. The principal targeting cycle used in Iraq ([REDACTED]). This cycle was deemed highly successful in synchronising targeting of physical activity at all levels. However, targeting was too heavily focussed on kinetic attack and the balance with psychological targeting through the exploitation of the information domain needed redressing. The need for Info Ops in targeting was complex and highly sensitive; particularly as it often involved indigenous and coalition target audiences. The implications of poorly targeted messaging therefore could be highly detrimental to campaign progress and the second and third order consequences of these activities must be planned in detail in order to achieve real effect in the information domain.

717. The targeting of Info Ops is only likely to be successful if there is a high level of understanding of the environment and the target audience. The difficulties of understanding the environment, enemy and other actors in MNDSE are described elsewhere in Chapter 1 and made successful Info Ops much more difficult, as did the lack of campaign continuity and consistent record keeping, for example the apparently deliberate deletion of records of MNDSE's Key Leader Engagement programme at some point in 2007/08. In order to ensure an Iraqi face is put on every message that goes out on indigenous broadcast facilities (TV, radio, web or poster), there needed to be culturally attuned people who could effectively calibrate the message. Reachback through organisations like TIO provided some capability in this respect; however the responsive nature of operating in the information domain and the local expertise required to understand individual customs and dialects, meant that forward deployed cultural experts would have improved our effectiveness. The use of interpreters for this task was sub optimal.

Insight. At all levels there is a need to impart that Info Ops should be included *ab initio* as part of the plan, recognised within the strategy and delivered by the appropriate individuals and mechanisms – including Media. And as with any other core activity, Info Ops must be delivered with a G3 lead and properly targeted.

Insight. It is important that too high an expectation is not put on Info Ops. It cannot be seen as a silver bullet or a cheap alternative to physical activity; it has to be nested in actual work. Similarly Info Ops is not a quick fix and commanders must understand the length of time required to achieve cognitive effect.

Insight. The necessity to focus scarce resources onto a specific person or target audience in order to change their perceptions in a psychological rather than physical way needs to be better understood and coordinated. Targeting courses need to be amended to focus equally on non-kinetic targeting.

ASSESSMENT

718. Overall our Info Ops were less successful than they had been in Bosnia a decade earlier. Despite the cultural, linguistic and political difficulties we limited our own effectiveness by largely failing to deploy professional Info Ops specialists into theatre. This points to the necessity of improving our

tactical Info Ops capability by leveraging the advertising and marketing industries and the people who work in them or by creating our own SMEs.

719. Op TELIC shows that influence activities need to be fully integrated into all aspects of PDT for an operation. Personnel assigned to conduct that activity must be embedded in the formation headquarter throughout the PDT period. It needs to be taken seriously as a core G3 function with a significant change of mindset and command push to professionalise this area. 'Information effect' must be everyone's business and it needs to be brought together by suitably trained and experienced staff. Correctly employed Info Ops and Media Ops can therefore be seen as '21st Century Combat Support' with considerable potential in linking with Cross-Government.

720. It also appears that we self limited our effectiveness by conducting Info Ops from a top down rather than bottom up approach. This was demonstrated by restrictive direction from MOD. And the way info ops experts were arranged in Defence, with priority given to populating UK posts with experts, rather than prioritising the deployment of experts to the front line suggests an inherent predisposition to top down push rather than bottom up pull. But the particular circumstances of Iraq meant that without the freedoms to execute locally at speed which matched the tempo of enemy info ops and expert capability being based in theatre MNDSE was going to be limited in its ability to achieve timely info ops effect.



Fig 45. 'Not what he had trained for.' ██████████ SCOTSDG and his Somali interpreter attempt to resolve local housing issues. Basra Sep 08.

RESTRICTED



Fig 46. REME vehicle mechanics at work. Basra Palace, Op TELIC 9.

7-12
RESTRICTED

CHAPTER 8 – EQUIPMENT AND LOGISTICS

EQUIPMENT

The Changes In Equipment

General Dannatt
CGS 2006 – 2009
Iraq Inquiry Jul 10

...if we were to put out in Parliament Square a dismounted close combat unit today, a company of soldiers taken out of Afghanistan, and compare them to the same company that crossed the line of departure in 2003, in terms of equipment it is incomparable. It has been said that the only items they would probably have now that they had then are a couple of felt tip pens to mark their maps. Everything from their clothing to their body armour, substantially to their weaponry, has changed, and that is good.

Introduction

801. Op TELIC went on for longer and required more adaptation of equipment than did Bosnia, Kosovo or Sierra Leone. These generated far fewer requirements for Urgent Operational Requirements (UOR) than did Op TELIC.

802. Warrior and Challenger were decisive in combat, as was our dismounted close combat capability. All were upgraded during Op TELIC. UOR enhancements to body armour, small arms, Bulldog and Mastiff all had significant effect, as did ECM protection and the fielding of the defensive C-RAM capability.

803. But the UK was much slower to field an adequate land tactical UAV capability than the majority of other Coalition contingents. And adequate basic G2 databases were never fielded. Although there had been much successful adaptation of land forces equipment in the Northern Ireland campaign, it appears in comparison that Defence found adapting the equipment line of development to the requirements of Op TELIC more difficult. This may in part be because it took the MOD itself time to adapt and put itself on a 'war footing'. It did achieve this by the turn of 2006/07. Often the UOR process did not produce enough equipment to meet the training requirement. As a result some troops first encountered new equipment in theatre and commanders assessed that casualties resulted, particularly in the period after a brigade relief in place.

804. **Fielding and Integration of UOR Equipment.** At the start of this period, standards of capability integration were highly variable. Some Integrated Planning Teams (IPT) performed much better than others. Synchronisation of lines of development improved constantly, helped by the formation in Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) of Chief of Materiel Land and his staff. But even on TELIC 13 some IPTs were delivering equipment to theatre with inadequate integration plans. Ideally equipment integration across lines of development should have been done outside

theatre, thus minimising the risk and planning burden placed upon the deployed force. But where this was not possible, deployment of fielding teams, including industry, to theatre was essential.

FORMULATING THE REQUIREMENT

805. There were very few new equipment capability requirements that could be identified in theatre and fielded in time for those who had identified the requirement to see it arrive in theatre. In most cases this was because even with the best processes and instant decision making, it was often impossible for industry to supply the product in under a year. For a number of important capabilities the MOD was in competition with other Coalition or NATO nations equipping their forces for Iraq and Afghanistan.

806. But it appears that at the start of this period the mechanism for formulating new capability requirements was sub-optimal. Where there was a strong coherent sponsor in the Army or MOD there was more chance of requirements being quickly identified and UORs attracting the necessary funding. This applied to AFVs, dismounted close combat equipment EOD and ECM equipment, but not to UAVs or ISTAR equipments, where there was no effective single land sponsor for ISTAR; a gap only rectified at the very end of the campaign.

807. Of the new or UOR equipments successfully fielded, some of these were the result of 'pull' from theatre, others the result of 'push' from equipment staff in the MOD. This was the case with MASTIFF, the requirement for which was formulated in London. But it is not clear that there was enough experimentation, either in theatre or out of it.

808. **Integration of Equipment Capability into Campaign Management.** At the start of this period there was inadequate equipment staff horsepower forward of the MOD. This was overcome to a certain extent by fielding equipment capability staff to PJHQ and Basra; although it is not clear that adequate campaign continuity was ever achieved in this area. Deployed scientists in the MNDSE Operational Analysis (OA) staff in Basra were invaluable. Throughout the period, the equipment and logistic staff at HQ LF worked hard to manage equipment fleets, so as to optimise the use of the limited amounts of special to theatre equipment available for training. But the lack of any top level MOD forum for managing the campaign, such as VCDS' Afghanistan Stock-take, meant that integration of equipment capability into the campaign as a whole was an essentially informal activity.

809. **Medium Term Capability Requirement.** Understandably the focus of getting new equipment into service was often the next brigade to rotate into theatre. This pragmatically reflected the requirement to train with the equipment prior to deployment. But senior personnel interviewed felt that it would have been an advantage to have a clear vision of the capabilities required by the force in theatre in about a year's time. This would have helped focus planning and the dialogue between UK and theatre. The lack of such a dialogue may be explained by the six month posting cycle of staff in theatre and the sheer intensity of work required there as well as the focus on reducing force levels.

Insight. Experience from Op TELIC suggests that in future enduring operations the full potential of the equipment line of development would be realised by:

- a. A clear vision of the capabilities required in theatre seeing at least a year into the future.
- b. An informed dialogue between the MOD, PJHQ and theatre, conducted by EC staffs at all three places.
- c. Complementing theatre requirement 'pull' with informed equipment capability 'push' from UK.
- d. Resourcing the required training pool of UOR equipments from the outset.
- e. Equipment fielding arrangements that minimise the integration effort required by the deployed force, ideally by integrating the equipment outside theatre, but if this is not possible deploying fielding teams to theatre.

Equipment for Op TELIC – A Personal View.

Lt Gen R Applegate

Chief of Materiel Land 2007-9

I would emphasise the need to conduct experimentation in and out of theatre and then to turn the results into practical reality quickly - a willingness to test, adapt, field, test etc. Getting an appropriate group in theatre to do this thinking was also difficult to achieve. I wonder where our Centre Army Lessons Learned (CALL) organisation was? Who provides the alternative view, acts as the Red Team and conducts the continuity thinking for slow burn issues such as eqpt, logistics, ISTAR and infrastructure?

There is still too much G3 snobbery over the importance of equipment in limiting an opponent's options and in developing opportunities for our own forces. At this stage we did not have coherent Army equipment plan (it's only now being developed). It must be remembered also that a rather formal contractual relationship between the provider - the DPA - and the User failed. As Drayson said as part of the acquisition reforms in late 2006/7, there was a general feeling that equipment was 'something done to the User'.

Equipment failings also became very important politically and the inadequacy in quality and numbers of satisfactory equipment was used to attack the effort in Iraq and Afghanistan. Importantly the relationship between the new DE&S and LAND developed rapidly to the mutual benefit of both, recognising that true capability is only delivered with the harmonisation of all the lines of development. The User was brought formally and early into the process and not excluded (remembering the old DPA had no performance metric related to User satisfaction and support to those on ops - the DE&S has both at the heart of its mission). Equipment and Logistics must also be considered carefully in the overall campaign design as both supporting and limiting factors and as lines of activity in their own right. We began to do better in Afghanistan from about 2008 onwards.

We must recognise that UORs were/are generally reactive and until about 2009 when I managed to convince people to think in campaign terms, there was a tendency to think only six months ahead: some of the solutions could not be delivered in that timescale and were refused, and of course the support solutions were too limited. UORs are not a replacement for adequate equipment in the standing force and until the systems are fielded the force accepts increased operational risk. PJHQ acted a constraining filter on staff action and of course our six-monthitis and lack of a campaign design limited sufficient forward thinking.

LOGISTICS

Background

810. By 2005, the logistic support for the theatre was well established and functioning successfully; *“the Supply Chain and Reverse Supply Chain to and from Iraq worked well. It was after all a mature theatre”*¹⁴³. Whilst criticism persisted of a fragile airbridge, it was considered that sustainment of the force and equipment availability was *“as good as I have come across on operations”*¹⁴⁴.



Fig 47. The airbridge in operation.

811. Whilst resupply from the UK was deemed successful, movement of materiel and supplies within Iraq was problematic. This was heightened by a lack of resources, the ever growing IED threat, and friction between national and coalition logistic responsibilities. The requirement for force protection of convoys necessitated amendments to the complex Command and Control (C2) arrangements, which often brought PJHQ into conflict with the coalition responsibilities of the in theatre formation headquarters; for example, producing the plan to assist the Japanese withdrawal from Al Muthanna.

812. There were never enough Support Helicopters (SH) to ameliorate the need for the majority of road movements. Large convoys along a small number of Main Supply Routes (MSR) were therefore required to move the significant array of stores in logistic vehicles whose only physical protection was armour that was improvised in theatre. Logistic installations, personnel, vehicles and convoys were exposed to the heightened threat as much as the rest of the force and it was necessary to dedicate combat troops for escort duties through the high threat areas as part of a battlegroup operation; particularly because of the poor protection afforded logistic and repair vehicles.

¹⁴³ POI [redacted] dated 10 Nov 08.

¹⁴⁴ POI Brig M W Poffley OBE dated 1 Mar 07.

Communications for logistic convoys was inadequate throughout and in some cases this was only overcome by transporting FFR Land Rovers on the back of logistic vehicles. [REDACTED]

DOCTRINE

813. The doctrine necessary for theatre entry and sustaining the force was comprehensive¹⁴⁵, although there was a sense that there was too much in some cases and it was not produced in a user friendly format. Where there was an omission in doctrine and reference material was in theatre closure; a fact that necessitated people "making it up as they went along"¹⁴⁶. Whilst the doctrine seemed adequate for the task, many commanders stated that they were logistically not operating to the prescribed norms; especially in the latter stages when the co-location of logistic HQs as the Joint Force Support Command in MNDSE was implemented. This was most noticeable on C2 where the friction of a purely national logistic chain through PJHQ to the national component in the NSE blurred with the operational demands of the in-place force as the framework division for a multinational coalition on a six month rotation. This was exacerbated by complex inter-service C2 arrangements which created a delicate balancing act for successive commanders of the Joint Force Support Command who had to deal with competing and often conflicting national and in theatre priorities. There was also a blurring of 1st to 3rd line support as successive commanders centralised functions (particularly Equipment Support) to force down the headcount and make savings in pinch point trades; this caused some friction in the logistic HQ with the less experienced staff officers.

COMMAND AND CONTROL OF CSS

814. The national logistic chain was commanded by the National Support Element (NSE) and reported direct to the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ). The operational requirements of the various coalition partners were planned and executed in the various 1 or 2* in-theatre formation headquarters. "There was no evidence of a comprehensive estimate (either up or down) having taken place covering the logistic support to the operation in the round"¹⁴⁷ and so to simplify the arrangements, successive commanders attempted to bring coherence to logistic C2. In the first instance, the Divisional Support Command (DSCOM) was created by Maj Gen Riley in order to improve the level of logistic planning within the divisional headquarters¹⁴⁸. It provided greater coherence to the supply chain through the subordination of combat units and RMP for convoy protection and rear area security. The structure of the enhanced UK NSE/DSCOM ensured greater freedom of manoeuvre and allowed it to dominate an area which was, arguably, the Centre of Gravity of UK Forces; namely their logistic centre. However, the new structure caused concern in PJHQ, who were opposed to the concept, as it sucked a purely national element into a multinational role. The increased responsibility of the headquarters also meant that it struggled with the

¹⁴⁵ JDP 4-00 Logistics for Joint Operations and AFM Vol 1, Part 6.

¹⁴⁶ POI [REDACTED] dated 10 Nov 08.

¹⁴⁷ POI Brig M W Poffley OBE dated 1 Mar 07.

¹⁴⁸ This did not sit easily with the logistic chain of command as [REDACTED] stated in his POI: "I had become not double, but quadruple hatted, as Commander NSE, Commander DSCOM, Commander Shaiba Log Base and DCOMBRITFOR (Deputy Commander British Forces)".

complexities of an expanded command as it was largely composed of augmentees, had no international staff, and was not structured and trained to plan and execute Battlegroup operations. This latter point was reinforced by vagaries in the trawling system which meant that a number of people were either not good enough or just unsuitable¹⁴⁹.

815. Towards the end the complex C2 arrangements were simplified when the NSE/DSCOM was subsumed into MNDSE and renamed Joint Force Support Command. Within the new integrated headquarters the Commander worked to Commander British Forces (COMBRITFOR) on national and operational logistics. He provided the delivery of logistic support across Iraq as well as supporting the other components in the Area of Operation; the Maritime Component in the Gulf (CTF-58), the Air Component in Qatar and the British staff in Baghdad. The joint functionality spread far wider than the original DSCOM construct (ship engines, ammunition and bombs for aircraft) and, as logistics were done nationally, there were multinational elements within the Division that they did not support. Despite the attempt to standardise the C2 arrangements in a joint manner, inter service friction remained evident between the Army and RAF logistic chains as they were working to differing headquarters (Basra and Al Udeid) and on different SOPs. The Air RV and the Log RV were located only a matter of yards from each other, but they were physically separated. This caused friction over who ran the priority list for the movement of stores in and out of theatre. Attempts to rectify this problem through the creation of a Joint Movements Unit were unsuccessful as 903 EAW were only TACON to the GOC in his capacity as COMBRITFOR and Commander Force Support had no formal C2 relationship with them.¹⁵⁰

Insight. In complex multinational operations where the UK has coalition partners under command, the optimal C2 arrangement is for a Multinational Joint Logistic Coordination Cell in the in-theatre formation headquarters to cater for logistic support to the deployed forces, and a NSE that links back to the UK through PJHQ for purely national sustainment. If there are not enough assets in theatre to create two independent headquarters, then the best solution would be to co-locate the formation headquarters and the NSE under one commander.

816. In Iraq *“the key to success with the Americans was to fully understand the way in which the documented American system operated, but you do need to know exactly how their bureaucracy and process works to make anything happen”*¹⁵¹. To overcome the possibility of confusion, the deployment of high grade liaison officers or embedded staff officers into the higher headquarters provided significant benefit to the UK. Brig Free stated that *“a proper staff exchange (was) required to fully link the two HQs, spread understanding and best practice, and build a genuine sense of ‘one team’”*¹⁵². After Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS the brigade *“began to work with the Corps like*

¹⁴⁹ For example, one rotation had *“a J3 Watchkeeper who was a dental hygienist and a key post (SO2 Materiel) who was an ex-Master Driver, with no supply experience, or training. My SO2 J1 (Discipline), dealing with key issues and briefing at the highest level, was a schoolteacher, and I was offered a Lieutenant as his replacement”*. POI [REDACTED] dated 18 Jul 05.

¹⁵⁰ A Theatre Joint RV was eventually created in the COB shortly before drawdown. The lessons of integrated logistic supply movement into and out of theatre was learnt and has been overcome in Afghanistan where they have created a Joint Movements Unit to improve efficiencies and clarify the C2 arrangements.

¹⁵¹ POI Brig P W Jaques dated 29 Oct 07.

¹⁵² POI Brig J R Free OBE dated 5 Jun 08.

never before, and was amazed at the support and power they could bring to bear. At one stage, we were concerned about bread supplies in Basra, and they promised 100,000 packets of bread a day, starting the next day. They provided us with 250,000 Halaal meals for the Iraqi Army at the drop of a hat. We had not learned to use American terminology and we had not known which buttons to press to get this sort of support before"¹⁵³.

Insight. One of the most important factors to understand within a coalition is the doctrine and operating procedures of the senior coalition partner. In the case of the UK it is likely that future operations will be conducted in support of the US and so it is incumbent on us to understand the US and to 'speak American'. This point is covered in more detail in Chapter 3 Command and Control.

CSS UNIT TRAINING

817. Formal training of Combat Service Support (CSS) units appeared inconsistent. The Special to Arm technical and tactical training for CSS units was usually good; particularly for sub-unit and below. This was especially the case where units trained within a framework brigade with the increased emphasis placed on individual and collective training. However, this was often compounded by the requirement of CSS units to support other brigade training opportunities with Real Life Support (RLS) in the form of camp administration, fire marker teams and personnel support, as well as having to train themselves. In the preparation for Op TELIC 13, for instance, the "*Brigade had to provide 301 of its own personnel for the MRX; a large proportion were from the CSS units*"¹⁵⁴. CSS elements must also plan and execute convoys whilst on the MRX and during PDT and they must have the same access to the correct equipment (SUSAT sights, OSPREY etc), J2 feeds, ISTAR and Joint Fires assets while conducting training. For many CSS units the lack of an Operational Training Equipment Pack (OTEP) and training time meant that RSOI was used for introductory or top up training rather than acclimatisation and currency training.

Insight. The current practice of utilising CSS units to provide RLS whilst they should be training should be reviewed. RLS must be provided by an external organisation that will not deploy in order to allow the CSS elements to train effectively at both their Special to Arm technical and tactical trades for the level of threat they will face in theatre.

818. Where a unit or formation headquarters was concerned, the training was less impressive and, occasionally, was not provided to a satisfactory standard at all. There certainly seemed to be no formal mechanism to train an enabling Brigade and this needs urgent review; certainly "*the best people to train a Logistics Brigade are another Logistics Brigade*"¹⁵⁵. Equally, a training gap existed in the command and control elements of the regimental headquarters. There was no CAST (Command and Staff Trainer) or formal validation process for CSS Special to Arm collective and headquarters training and HQs were not put under the sorts of pressures during training that they would discover on operations; this was compounded by the lack of flexibility in releasing Individual

¹⁵³ POI [REDACTED] dated 5 Jun 08.

¹⁵⁴ POI [REDACTED]: REME dated 8 Jun 09.

¹⁵⁵ POI Brig M W Poffley OBE dated 1 Mar 07.

Augmentees (IA) early enough to conduct the training (especially medical personnel). Invariably this meant that they ended up learning on the job which was sub-optimal considering the complex situation they found themselves dealing with.

Insight. The Combat Arms (and to a degree Combat Support) have a structured approach to headquarters and collective training which is articulated in campaign FORM. With the increased responsibility currently being placed on CSS headquarters on operations, CSS units require a more formalised approach to collective training that is validated by CSS commanders¹⁵⁶.

FORCE PROTECTION OF LOGISTICS

819. The distinction between the front line and rear areas became increasingly blurred and the threat posed to convoys from IEDs has increased exponentially throughout the period. Force protection of convoys was an enduring theme throughout the period, particularly in the light of their poor protection and communications¹⁵⁷. The force protection bill was significant and the availability of assets (ECM, troop availability, up-armoured vehicles), constrained everything that could be done. Concern existed in the CSS units that they were not afforded the same degree of protection as the Combat Arms. Whilst Warrior and Challenger were up-armoured, the same could not be said for the repair variants that supported them. B Vehicle protection was inadequate with Webley Eagle armour still in use on TELIC 13¹⁵⁸. As a result, various options for force protection were considered in an attempt to deal with the problem of fighting logistics through.

REME Recovery

 CO 4 RIFLES
Op TELIC 10

Our REME recovery mechanics have been simply outstanding and demonstrate a particularly special sort of bravery in calmly working on ditched vehicles while others deal with the small arms and RPG fire. This has been a feature of almost every Strike Operation that we have conducted; a function of the very limited routes and poor going within some areas of the city.

820. The obvious solution was to give CSS units sufficient weapons, protection and training to provide the force protection themselves. Whilst this would free up much needed 'boots on the ground', it did come with a number of disadvantages. Although popular with the people assigned to force protection duties from the Logistic Regiment, it was not the best use of scarce specialists; especially as there were enduring problems filling many trades in other theatres.

¹⁵⁶ The training of CSS HQs has been improved significantly for Afghanistan as a result of lessons learnt in Iraq.

¹⁵⁷ Situational awareness of convoys was raised as a repeated failing in the early phases although this did seem to improve with US support.

¹⁵⁸ Many units resorted to Webley Eagle armour which was the B Vehicle cab protection system created by inserting body armour plates into specially-tailored cotton sheets of material and then bolted onto the doors.

821. The option to avoid high risk areas was always going to be problematic when considering the blurring of the front line in a complex COIN environment. The utilisation of Support Helicopters (SH) and air resupply to conduct the heavy lift in the high risk areas would have reduced the logistic traffic on some routes completely. However, every GOC stated that he lacked the necessary SH lift to conduct sustainable resupply and so had to rely on inherently vulnerable convoys of between five-to-twelve hours' duration on predictable routes. The necessity to conduct convoys also placed an even greater strain on manpower and CSS manning. The Cold War legacy of a ratio of 1.5 *drivers* per vehicle was unsustainable in Iraq and the figure rose to 2 *personnel* per vehicle. This figure provided a more realistic manning ratio when top sentry and driving duties are considered.

822. The chosen option was to assign infantry to conduct the force protection of the convoys and this proved to be the best solution. In the early stages of the deployment this meant bidding to the brigade headquarters for assets to be assigned in accordance with G3 priorities. This resulted in different units arriving for nearly each convoy with different SOPs as well as differing views on



Fig 48. Recovering a Mastiff. Bulldog and Mastiff provide protection while a Challenger Recovery variant and Foden Recovery work.

which actions to take or indeed the C2 arrangements. The preferred option that was eventually adopted was the allocation of the Rear Operations Battlegroup to the Logistic HQ. This enabled the Logistic HQ to plan and execute G3 Rear Operations missions on behalf of the Division, including its own Force Protection. It also provided the necessary link to G2, G3, ISTAR and Air.¹⁵⁹

Insight. The complex nature of contemporary operations combined with a lack of SH for sustainable logistic resupply for the force, indicates that the Logistic HQ having a Rear Operations Battlegroup under command for convoy force protection is a necessity for the foreseeable

future. This must be a SOP for operational theatres as it provides flexibility and freedom of manoeuvre for Rear Operations.

¹⁵⁹ The result of lessons learnt from both Iraq and Afghanistan indicates that the preferred means of providing force protection comes from an amalgam of both specially trained RLC personnel to provide the intimate protection of the convoy. Current 'best practice' in Afghanistan is the Command Support Troop which conducts the preparation and administration of the Combat Logistic Patrol as well as the intimate force protection role. The combat arms provide the satellite protection which includes all the necessary feeds into the Joint Fires, G2 and ISTAR capabilities.



Fig 49. Logistics convoy moving south on the MSR towards Kuwait. Note the Webley Scott improvised armour on the vehicles and the Mastiff and Warrior force protection element.

CONTRACTORS

823. Extensive use was made of contractors for logistic, infrastructure and static CIS systems in order to reduce the military headcount. The contractors provided vital capabilities that the military either did not have or were unable to provide on an enduring basis; particularly in the latter stages of the campaign with the expanding deployment to Afghanistan. Whilst beneficial to the manning cap and campaign continuity (many had been there since 2003), there were problems associated with their employment. In many cases there was a lack of flexibility written into the contracts and in an ever changing environment this often proved problematic. The contractors also diluted the ability to provide a military reserve in camp and, in the non-benign environment found in Iraq, they required significant force protection both in camp and on the convoys in line with their entitlement. Finally, contractors deployed with their own Terms and Conditions of Service which were not always understood by the in place force.

Comment. Somewhat unsurprisingly there is a growing realisation that the utility of contractors is greatest within a benign or secure environment. Where a threat remains then reliance upon contracted solutions may lead to less certain outcomes. This is especially so in hostile environments where logistics needs to be 'fought through'. Clearly a balance

therefore needs to be struck between the benefits accrued from contractors and the level of risk they are exposed to, coming as it does with the increased force protection bill.

824. The Rules of Entitlement for Contractors on Deployed Operations (CONDO) were clear and well understood for UK-based contractors. However, some variations did exist depending on who had written the contract. For instance, most of the major contracts were written and managed in the UK with no supervision or oversight from within theatre: some contracts were let and managed by PJHQ, yet they delivered direct support to the operation (KBR providing the hardened accommodation); others were let and managed by Defence Estates covering sewage and electricity. This caused friction on two accounts:

- a. **Entitlement.** Every CONDO was entitled to body armour and a helmet; some contractors provided them for their staff and the military provided them for others. This was problematic as there seemed to be no record in theatre of which contractors were entitled to what (in terms of protection, communications, medical support, fuel, access to the NAAFI, food and so on).
- b. **Management.** The contractors tended to have poor in theatre management teams and this was compounded by the military not managing contractors well themselves. The contracts themselves were insufficiently taut and the requirement for the contractor was changed too often. Much of this improved with the creation of the Theatre Contractor Management Cell (TCMC) towards the end of the campaign.

825. Locally Employed Civilians (LECs) were employed as a form of 'consent winning activity' and because they were critical to the maintenance of many logistic contracts. However, there was no logistic intelligence database containing the information necessary for sub-contractors and it was apparent that the military were investing too much in too few organisations. There was need to spread risk and foster competition in the local work force in order to improve service and reduce unnecessary favouritism within the local population. The LECs also provided a major OPSEC risk as there was no form of working off-the shelf identification system to monitor the work force; a biometric system was required rather than locally generated paperwork.

Insight. Logistic planners in a theatre of operation must have closer involvement in the drafting and supervision of contracts and their delivery. This is particularly pertinent as many of the UK contracts offered little incentive (or penalty) to improve performance.

Insight. Young Officers (logisticians, signallers and engineers) must be aware of the fundamentals of basic contracts and those personnel who will be involved in overseeing contracts in theatre must receive specific training on PDT. The creation of the TCMC highlighted the benefits to be accrued of developing contract specialists (military or civil) who could ensure the best use of contractors on operations¹⁶⁰.

¹⁶⁰ HQ DRLC has acknowledged this problem and are working on a study regarding the future contract monitoring role to be carried out by the military.

~~ASSET TRACKING~~

826. The Joint Supply Chain concept was problematic throughout the TELIC deployments. The initial deployment on TELIC 1 had highlighted an inability to asset track vital logistical supplies, leading to a loss of confidence in the system by many units and the re-demanding of items. The principal CIS tools for asset tracking throughout the period were VITAL (Visibility in Transit Asset Logging) and TAV(-) (Total Asset Visibility). These systems had the ability to track a consignment from the UK to the theatre of operation but were unable to track the individual items once they were in theatre; it was this factor that led to a loss of confidence in the system. The key logistical question of where the part is and whether it has arrived on time were unable to be answered. ACM Sir Jock Stirrup, the CDS at the time, stated: *"I think it was clear that lack of visibility on what was actually happening in theatre was hampering us, but, of course, even if you have that visibility, you have got to identify what are the real substantive problems, and the real substantive problems were very much to do with asset tracking with knowing where things were, so you could get them to the right place at the right time. In a number of instances, the necessary equipment was in theatre, it just wasn't in the right place, and in some instances, people didn't know where it was in theatre"*.

Comment. [REDACTED] on Op TELIC 12 summed up the problem when he stated that: *"VITAL has proved good enough but it has not been sufficiently robust both physically and procedurally as it offered poor integration between Army and the RAF"*. The challenge for the future is best summed up by [REDACTED]: who highlighted on Op TELIC 11: *"that logistics is not purely about physical movement, accounting and provisioning, but more importantly about information. Knowledge and confirmation of where a requirement may be within the system and its arrival date in theatre is almost as useful as receipt of the item itself"*.¹⁶¹

~~EQUIPMENT CARE~~

827. Unit G4 responsibilities to Equipment Care (EC) were not given the priority they required as many commanders deferred to their operational comfort zone. Many 1st line checks were not done well due to units operating in dispersed locations and at challenging times. Equally, logistic inspections were not conducted as far forward or as consistently in their approach as they should have been. People also intuitively thought single service and not Joint Force with single service stove pipes operating through their respective Logistic RVs. This was exacerbated by the problems encountered by the lack of campaign continuity within the G4 chain. The tempo and mind set of a six month tour often meant that small errors were compounded over successive deployments with people cutting corners during periods of high operational tempo which were not resolved later in the tour. Whilst attempts were made by units to put their G4 house back in order during lulls in operational activity, in many cases manpower and time limitations constrained activity. One such example was the expeditious departure from Basra Palace where ammunition accounting played secondary priority to the operational imperative. The integrity of the ammunition accounts suffered in the immediate aftermath.

¹⁶¹ [REDACTED] MBE RLC, CO 12-LSR, Operation TELIC 11, POI dated 13 Jun 08.

Insight. Command engagement in unit G4 is critical as CO QRL stated on Op TELIC 9: “equipment care is essential and needs frequent maintenance days to sustain it”.¹⁶² The process of inspections through Logistic Support Inspections (LSI) and Equipment Care Inspections (ECI) is right; it is just the level of engagement within the unit that will dictate the effectiveness of the inspection regime.

WITHDRAWAL

“I was surprised that, after five years, we were not as advanced logistically as we should have been. I was also surprised that after ten TELICs, with ten associated logistic inspections, there was such a staggering scale of losses.”¹⁶³

828. CDS had directed that UK forces should be seen to withdraw “in good order” and avoid the problems that had bedevilled previous drawdowns. This was successfully delivered by operation BROCKDALE despite the lack of formal doctrine on the subject. The principal reason for its success was early and thorough planning, including lessons learned from the withdrawal from previous theatres (for



example Bosnia). Other reasons included the early forward deployment of specialist teams from the UK like the deployed Defence Storage and Distribution Agency who made a significant difference, particularly to the standards required for backloading; the extensive support received from the US for taking over the COB, stores and equipment, ammunition disposal and convoy space; and the authority vested in the CIVSEC and local logistic commanders to sell equipment and stores in theatre. This latter point was particularly necessary for ISO containers which had been poorly

¹⁶² POI dated 3 Jul 07.

¹⁶³ POI dated 15 Apr 08.

managed throughout the period¹⁶⁴. Finally the drawdown plan benefited from a relatively low threat at the time, combined with a full spectrum C-IED operation to protect the convoy routes and ability to access US airborne ISTAR as men and materiel were moved down to the bases, posts and airheads in Kuwait.



Fig 51. RAF and Army medics prepare a wounded soldier for evacuation.

¹⁶⁴ At the time of extraction there were around 4000 ISO containers (one for every deployed soldier) of which around 2000 were serviceable (a problem for the military who track this low cost multiple use (armoury, OHP etc) item with a service life of 5 years as opposed to civilian firms who treat them as disposable). The In-Theatre Container Management post had been gapped or inappropriately staffed for extended periods over the preceding years making the tracking of containers almost impossible. Fortunately Iraq was one of the few countries in the world with a market for unserviceable containers.

CHAPTER 9 - PEOPLE AND MEDICAL

BACKGROUND

901. By 2005 Iraq saw the fifth rotation of UK forces. The political constraint on force levels remained but in late 2005 the UK was preparing to enlarge the commitment to Afghanistan. This had the effect of increasing competition for resources, particularly for niche skills.

MANNING THE OPERATION

902. Trawling of individuals by Headquarters Land Command (LAND) did not always deliver the right person to the operation. The process by which units nominate individuals along with a penalty statement, encouraged donor units to offer an individual whose temporary loss was manageable. Individuals were selected (or not) on the quality of their penalty statement. This resulted in a perception by some that the operation was being manned on the basis of the weakest penalty statements. This problem was particularly acute when HQ MNDSE in 2004-2005 was constituted from many augmentees. *“My Headquarters suffered a constant 20-30% gapping of posts, and contained some unsuitably-qualified key appointment holders (my SO2 Ops was a TA Battalion Training Major and my SO1 Plans was the Curator of the Royal Artillery Museum¹⁶⁵.”*

Comment. The shortfalls in LAND trawling became very obvious in 2006, and a number of mitigating steps were taken. An SO1 was placed in LF Cts in 2007 to improve the links between APC and LF, and Army Augmentation policy was changed to move the onus on augmentee selection to Glasgow. APC MS Op Cts was formed out of the small OCE cell and was resourced properly. All augmentee selections for Sgt and above for six month tours are now passed through the APC boards. The net result has been far less trawling, far more suitable selections (where the MS consequences are far better considered) and an APC which has far better situational awareness of operations.

Insight. The new system has proved popular with the chain of command, delivers better results for operations, and should endure. Inevitably the size of APC MS Op Cts will flex in accordance with operational demand but the central lesson is that in periods of significant operational augmentation, APC (and not LF Cts) should be the lead.

RESERVES

903. The Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre (RTMC) procedures worked well. Throughout the period the reliance on Regular, Territorial and other reservists continued. Not less than 10% of the

¹⁶⁵ Maj Gen JP Riley DSO, CG MND(SE), Operation TELIC 5 Nov 04-Jun 05.

force was made up of reserves personnel and at times the figure approached 20%. This percentage of reserves was much higher in the medical services¹⁶⁶. The problems created by the scale of mobilisation encountered by the RTMC during the early years of the operation did not reappear as the mobilisation operation settled down to steady state.

904. Most unit commanders commented adversely that the arrival date of Territorial Army (TA) soldiers, at the D-3 month point, was too late. Comments centred on the lack of integration and pre-deployment (mostly collective) training before the unit deployed.

Comment. A reservist will arrive at the unit at about three months prior to a six month deployment. This is a consequence of a 12-month¹⁶⁷ mobilisation period, imposed by Section 54 of the Reserves Forces Act 96. Nearly two months is spent on Pre-Deployment Training (PDT¹⁶⁸) attendance at OPTAG and mobilisation through the RTMC. A further 2 -3 months can be consumed by Post Operational Tour Leave (POTL) and accumulated Annual Leave¹⁶⁹.

Comment. Longer mobilisation periods are not a likely option, as there is political reluctance to change the RFA. The lesson from Iraq, therefore, is that peacetime integration and collective training between the Regular Army, the Territorial Army and other reserves must improve.

G1 PREPARATION

905. G1 preparation was rarely smooth particularly in units without high readiness experience. The routine gapping of administrative staff such as AGC(SPS) personnel and a shortage of regimental medical and dental officers came home to roost as units began to prepare personnel for deployment. The reliance on centralised Primary Health Centres (as opposed to decentralised Unit Medical Officers) slowed down decisions on the employment of downgraded personnel. The cumulative effect was unwelcome friction during the pre-deployment phase. As the campaign progressed, units learnt to begin G1 preparation much earlier in the training cycle and the advice of one Deputy Chief of Staff was well founded; *“Don’t underestimate the G1 preparation that is required for a deployment like this and the lack of understanding (and knowledge) that exists about it at unit level. Engage in things like dental hygiene, medical procedures and checking passports and documentation early: then monitor progress ruthlessly”¹⁷⁰.*

Comment. Experience has shown that when a unit has insufficient time to complete its pre-deployment training, one of the first lines of activity that is dropped is G1 preparation. The

¹⁶⁶ Three Territorial Field Hospitals deployed to Iraq in the period.

¹⁶⁷ Extendable by Her Majesty to 24 months.

¹⁶⁸ Mostly this is done at unit level.

¹⁶⁹ 30 days annual leave entitlement plus 8 Public Holidays. A further 3 days privilege could also be added.

¹⁷⁰ POR DCOS Operation TELIC 7.

temptation to relegate G1 to a low priority and not allocate sufficient time or resources will almost certainly ricochet on the unit the moment a casualty is taken. A command-led, expeditionary mindset to G1 preparation must be encouraged and resourced and pre-deployment G1 preparation improved. Many of these issues have now been identified and addressed by DSPS(A)¹⁷¹.

MS ISSUES

906. The lack of campaign continuity featured in many reports in a number of guises. The frequent replacement of personnel, particularly during the summer posting period, undermined campaign continuity. The situation did improve and manning priorities were directed by the operation chain of command but there remained a strong sense that MS needs took higher priority than the needs of the operation.

907. Not everyone needed to deploy for longer but lessons from Northern Ireland (NI) appear not to have been applied in the way key appointments were manned. Most obviously, formation commanders should undertake longer tours as should most, if not all, of their staff. The G2 staff (following the practise of Continuity Non-Commissioned Officer (CONCO) in NI) and military training teams (MiTT) should have been on longer tours as should some 'enablers', for example those with responsibility for long-term contracts.

Comment. The issue of key post turnover was recognised in 2008 and measures put in place to improve continuity. Deploying brigades now construct an MS plan which balances the need for key post continuity with individuals' circumstances. Tour continuity must be balanced against other factors such as maintaining command continuity to care for (recently traumatised) soldiers and ensuring the reinvestment of hard won training lessons. Equally, junior commanders of today are tomorrow's senior commanders, and career fouling them runs counter to longer term 'campaign continuity'. In addition to key post turnover, MOD also established a formal 'continuity tours' list, which outlined which posts should be for longer than six months. The list is strictly controlled, and the posts now attract specific campaign continuity allowances.

Insight. The lesson is that brigade and unit commanders should visit APC prior to deployment and have a clear plan for key post turnover when tour lengths are known. They should be able to balance the benefits of continuity on the ground with longer term considerations outlined above. In addition, a clear view of which tours should be longer than the norm is necessary, and needs careful control.

¹⁷¹ The introduction of mandatory G1 management checks, the development of a JPA Management Information G1 Readiness Report, and active steps to reduce the gapping of administrative staff through the quarterly manning estimate.

THE HOME FRONT

908. Some unit commanders conceived their rear party activities as a 'sustaining' or a 'Rear Operation'¹⁷² and conducted 'rock-drills' to rehearse casualty procedures. This mindset improved the gearing between deployed and not deployed elements. Casualty notification through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) received almost universal praise and the more proactive commander paid the JCCC a visit during preparation in order to understand how the system worked. Having sufficient Visiting Officers (VO) is vital as is having strong links into the Notification Authority¹⁷³.

909. In the autumn of 2007 rear party establishments were uplifted by nine temporary posts¹⁷⁴ and given other additional unit minibuses and mobile telephones. In TA units, Regimental Operations Support/Employer Support Officers (ROSO) were established to provide a focus for deployed cohorts. Both initiatives were well received. A few unit commanders commented that the rear party uplift posts were removed too soon after the unit came home just at a point when they were needed most.

Comment. The policy that was extant at the time provided for flexibility but may not have been sufficiently clear to commanders. Commanders could choose when the additional posts became 'live' at the unit and thus were able to surge them during the preparation or recovery phases.

910. A number of units developed initiatives that sought to improve coordination and the passage of information to families. An example was 7 Armoured Brigade's 'Home Rat' initiative. Other units generated similar ideas and most made excellent use of innovative technologies to augment newsletters and briefings. ArmyNet and the Short Message Service (SMS) were excellent methods of ensuring an 'all informed net'. There were some early glitches (for example it was not straightforward for members of a family to be issued a login and password) but on the whole these service helped keep a widely dispersed network – including Foreign and Commonwealth and the TA and other reservists – informed.



Fig 52. Operation Home Rat logo.

911. The Sickness Absence Management Information System (SAMIS) was deemed difficult to use but improved when dedicated clerical support was allocated to the task. Units with

¹⁷² The Rear Operations Group was another expression.

¹⁷³ Regional Force Divisions.

¹⁷⁴ Unit Rear Operations 2IC (FTRS), UWO JNCO (FTRS) x 2, SAM Support Officer (Civ), RI (Civ), Drivers (Civ) x 4, 14 Seat Minibus, 7 Seat Minibus, x 2 Mobile Phones x 8, Satellite Navigation systems x 6.

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significant casualties had to be proactive in tracking those admitted to the NHS¹⁷⁵. Where it was possible, Commanding Officers augmented the rear parties but manning the deployment, with high quality people, was often the first priority. The uplift in strength certainly improved the effectiveness of rear parties but comments indicated that many still found contending with day to day business as well as dealing with issues that arose from the deployment¹⁷⁶ stretched them.

Insight. The need for an appropriate commander, usually an experienced field officer, as well as a good quality welfare team was reinforced. Units with a high proportion of individual reinforcements, TA or other reservists, must forge links with donor units or families who will almost certainly not be housed nearby. A sufficient quantity of Visiting Officer trained personnel in the rear party is also vital.

Comment. A 21st century expeditionary army requires a 'Rear Operations (Home)' doctrine to articulate principles for 'Rear Operations (Home)'. Appropriate policy to direct rear party activity supported by structures¹⁷⁷ and resources are necessary. The doctrine could contain guidance on roles and responsibilities of Field Army and Regional Forces, signpost sources of public and non-public funds for welfare as well as provide a guide to military and non-military welfare organisations.

WELFARE SUPPORT TO THE DEPLOYED FORCE

912. Rest and Recuperation (R&R) was necessary in Iraq. There was a high expectation that the package remained in place despite the overheads.

913. Despite some early reservations, the decompression phase of Post Operational Stress Management (POSM)¹⁷⁸ was viewed as a success. Many units reported how individual reinforcements and members of the TA could fall between the cracks and not carry out decompression. This would appear to be the case where a unit was formed by a high proportion of individual reinforcements, for example, medical units or at a point in time when a brigade was being relieved in place.

¹⁷⁵ POR Commanding Officer of a medical unit Operation TELIC 8: "*some (casualties) went straight into the NHS. However, by this time they were outside the Medical chain and had to be tracked by unit rear parties, and this meant that these rear parties needed to be pretty robust at times, in order to influence the patient's care plan. This is something that unit commanders need to take account of when considering their rear party manning and policy*".

¹⁷⁶ POR Commanding Officer Operation TELIC 10: "*In retrospect (looking back on both TELIC 3 and 8) we do not have a sufficiently robust Rear Party to cope with the demands placed upon it. 1LI failed to supervise its finances (TELIC 3) and its discipline (TELIC 8) satisfactorily. A suitably qualified Adjutant forward and rear is needed to manage the responsibility and workload*".

¹⁷⁷ By way of example, a RM Commando now has a Base Company. This OF 3 command includes physiotherapists, medical personnel, MPGS, catering, stores, civilian driver and clerical staff.

¹⁷⁸ LANDSO 3209.

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914. There were a few negative remarks on the lack of chaplains in theatre and a suggestion that WRVS volunteers could have deployed to the contingent operating base (COB) to improve the delivery of welfare, especially to younger soldiers, the majority of whom had had an uneventful tour.

Comment. What appeared to be missing in Iraq was second line welfare support that could reach back to the Home Base.

915. When a unit's normalisation phase of POSM took place in-barracks, prior to POTL, some units commented that members of the TA were unable to remain with the unit and therefore went home¹⁷⁹. Clearly with a twelve month mobilisation period there is a trade off to be achieved between the amount of training time received by the TA prior to the operation and the normalisation time available after. Whatever the outcome, a debate remains to be had about whether the main effort for reservists should be to return them to civilian life as quickly as possible or extend their period in mobilised service to effect full normalisation or at least match that provided for Regulars. What is vital is to ensure that all TA personnel are given adequate transition back to civilian life, and this includes important information on where to get assistance should he/she need it. POSM must continue through their chain of command.

916. Some unit commanders remarked on the absence of a structured pre-R&R decompression although it is not clear from the post operational reports whether the absence created any particular problems. There was a suggestion that contractors should also attend the decompression and, where appropriate, injured personnel might be able to rejoin their unit during the decompression phase.

917. The 'move and track' (Operational Location or OPLOC) function on JPA did not work well and still does not work; although this is largely due to user error and a lack of rigour in ensuring all personnel are recorded rather than a failure of JPA *per se*. Move and track functionality inter and intra theatre should include other friendly forces (including contractors) who are part of the environment¹⁸⁰.

Comment. The lack of pre-R&R decompression was seen more as a contradiction in policy rather than one that generated specific problems by those that raised it.

Insight. More effort must be applied to ensure everyone decompresses at the end of the tour¹⁸¹. Decompression is a command led activity and leadership in this regard is vital.

918. There was an inconsistent approach to the policy on alcohol consumption. It was more acutely felt when troops were corralled in the COB¹⁸² but this was not the only example. Where a unit was 'dry'

¹⁷⁹ POR Commanding Officer Operation TELIC 5 *"My big concern was the TA, as they wanted to go back to their homes and jobs (and most of them came from Scotland). We spoke to each individually, and offered them the chance to stay with us: most did not since they wanted to get back to their families and resume their job, or look for one."*

¹⁸⁰ This functionality was considered for JPA but not implemented due to Data Protection issues.

¹⁸¹ PJHQ are currently conducting a trial on decompression for Individual Augmentees.

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there were very few disciplinary problems. The principle should be that a national policy is developed and implemented uniformly across the force and theatre.

919. As the UK footprint reduced there was a higher ratio of Operational Welfare Packages (OWP). Overall the OWP was seen as excellent. Operational Allowance (OA) was also another positive initiative and the decision to give it to those injured and repatriated as a result of enemy action was seen as a good one.

920. From Aug 05 ETS officers deployed in support of the Force manning a Theatre Education Centre, initially at Shaibah, which was subsequently relocated to the COB in 2007. This facility and the ability for soldiers to continue both mandatory and elective professional education and development was highly valued and extremely well received by units albeit dependent upon the operational tempo. HQ DETS(A) was also able to prove the concept of deploying Operational Unit Education Officers in support of the manoeuvre battlegroups to provide intimate educational support as well as being able to facilitate unit language and culture training and other operationally focussed tasks.

921. The opinion of a few, albeit more senior, officers is that our standard of battlefield discipline dipped. Citing as evidence poor OPSEC (such as the appearance of photographs on social networking sites), increases in theft, scruffiness (particularly when in PT kit) and reluctance to replace worn out and stressed clothing. Battlefield discipline also extends to the pre-patrol checks – such as ensuring electronic counter measures (ECM) equipment is functioning correctly – and the avoidance of pattern setting. It remains as important as ever to understand the effect on our reputation, particularly when working alongside allies, that comes with poor battlefield discipline.

922. The Honours and Awards system appears to reward those who genuinely deserved it. Deputy Chiefs of Staff remarked on the need to intimately understand the system, issue guidance early in the tour but also provide education in writing citations so that it was not a 'black art'.

MEDICAL

"The CASEVAC system was first class. The very serious casualties went back to the UK and were well looked after; the others went to Germany. We had set up an Ops Room in Germany and employed two travel and movement clerks in it to track people on postings, R and R and CASEVAC, so that we wouldn't "lose" anyone." [REDACTED] RE, DCOS 20 Armd Bde, Op TELIC 8

¹⁸² POR RMP Officer Operation TELIC 10. Most of the COB was 'dry', though the staff, contractors and RAF were not. Personally, I am not convinced of the wisdom of allowing personnel on operations carrying weapons to have access to alcohol. Units could, and did, apply for 'licences' for certain events.

██████████ – Royal Army Medical Corps – Military Cross

At just 19 years of age and having only recently completed basic training, ██████████ was deployed as a medical orderly with The Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group in Al Amarah, Southern Iraq. 11 June 2006 saw the largest and most intense battle in Iraq since 2004. A search operation in Al Amarah turned into a war-fighting engagement when her Company Group came under heavy, accurate and sustained attack from a well-organised enemy force of over 200.

During the heaviest of the fighting the company commander's group came under accurate sniper fire and the commander of the Warrior carrying ██████████ was shot in the face and seriously injured. ██████████ realised the severity of the situation immediately and without thought or care for her own personal safety, she dismounted and climbed onto the top of the Warrior to administer life-saving first aid to the casualty. On seeing her on the top of the Warrior the sniper opened fire again, firing a further three rounds at her, one hitting the radio mounted on the side of the turret inches from her leg. Despite this she continued to administer first aid through the commander's hatch to the casualty until the gunner pulled her into the turret for her own safety.

Context

923. The concurrency of operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq and the casualties drove a significant number of Operational Policy developments¹⁸³ and new medical capabilities for both. In early 2007 the Role 2 Enhanced medical facility moved from Shaibah Logistic Base (SLB) to the COB.

924. The systematic approach to the treatment of injured soldiers developed significantly over the period of Op TELIC. This has led to the improved Force Preparation of medical staff, their equipment and the management of casualties. During the early period of Op TELIC it was identified that if catastrophic haemorrhage could be identified and controlled within the first 10 minutes of injury (known as the 'Platinum 10' minutes) and then support provided by the most efficient and timely evacuation platform from Role 1 direct to a Role 2E/3 facility within two hours from time of injury, casualty mortality and morbidity rates significantly improved.

Comment. The major developments in the delivery of deployed medical support have now been incorporated in medical procedure on current operations and received praise from unit commanders, but the standard of treatment in the NHS is perceived as variable¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸³ Nearly 20 Surgeon General Policy Letters (SGPL) were issued between 2006 and 2009.

¹⁸⁴ Commanding Officer Operation TELIC 8. *"The Army Medical Services is being held together by the quality of the individuals in it. The standard of care in theatre is first-rate. However, the care once soldiers leave theatre is disappointingly variable. The polytraumas get treated well but many others get lost to the system and their units lose sight of them for a significant length of time."*



Fig 53. Role 2 Enhanced facility in the COB.

925. A number of new haemostatic techniques were introduced during Op TELIC. The Combat Application Tourniquet (CAT) and two novel haemostatic treatment products were added to the Team Medic's kit. Hemcon® and QuikClot® enabled immediate and effective treatment by rapidly arresting high-volume blood loss in traumatic injuries, particularly of the limbs. Team Medic training was revised to include the use of these products. The ratio of 1:4 of Combat Arms who are trained as Team Medics^{185 186} is now the norm.

Insight. These innovations are now used extensively on operations and, in conjunction with the Massive Transfusion Protocol (MTP)¹⁸⁷ which arrived in late 2007, have greatly improved the outcomes for the severely injured.

¹⁸⁵ Annex B to D/AMD/705/3 dated 08 Jun 07.

¹⁸⁶ POR Commanding Officer Operation TELIC 7: "There is a good Team Medic (Army) course which trains one-in-four Infanteers, one-in-six CS (Combat Support) and one-in-eight CSS (Combat Service Support) on techniques on keeping casualties alive until trained medics arrive. They do have standards to reach, and the course qualification has a sell-by date."

¹⁸⁷ SGOOPERATIONL 08/09 dated 10 Jun 09.

Medical Lessons of Iraq

**Lt Gen Lois Lilywhite DGAMS 2003-5
DG Op Medical Capability 2005-6,
Surgeon General 2006-9
Iraq Inquiry**

You could have a complete symposium or multi-day conference on what we are learning from Iraq and it covers an increasing number of areas. Clearly we have learnt how we can save life at the point of injury. That is new. The contribution that technology can make: haemostatic dressings, for example, are based on a byproduct of the shrimping industry and someone discovering that zeolite, which is from volcanic rock, can react with blood. So that's the first point.

The second point has been that our data collection has increasingly allowed us to analyse variation in survival, which has pointed to what is important in ensuring survival, so resuscitation and protocols like the massive transfusion protocols that have actually led to us using blood, but plus plasma and plus platelets, contribute significantly to ongoing survival; something which has clear relevance worldwide and not just in the military. So the whole of ensuring individuals' survival has grown from that and increasingly massive transfusion protocols will be seen within the civilian system.

We are also learning how to actually sustain the quality of life of individuals subsequent to evacuation. So as a result of what we are seeing on operations, as one example, a lot of research is going on in what's called -- I use it as an example -- something called heterotrophic ossification.....if you have lost a limb, for example, you get a lot of new bone formation which interferes with stumps. So there is a lot of research going into actually how that minimises and actual identifying what are the factors that are associated with that. Plastic surgery is again starting to learn a lot about how you can actually identify viable tissue from non-viable tissue and that will actually have, again, a relevance elsewhere.

Pain management has been a particular success. ...when you talk to soldiers they would say as a generalisation they were very happy with their care but they had pain, and it was almost the universal adverse comment in the early part that pain was not addressed. We are introducing techniques such as continuous infusion of local anaesthetics via catheters that we can now sustain from the field hospital through the air bridge into what was Selly Oak but which is now Queen Elizabeth, as the new ward is open. Again it is something that we have learned and we have also learned the means to actually support that. If you have a limb that is mashed, you can no longer assume that the vein is where the nerve is because they get separated, which is what you would do in civilian life. So one has developed things like ultrasound guidance to actually identify where the nerve is to put in the local anaesthetic, which means that you can actually abolish pain due to severely damaged limbs. Again, it is but another example of where one has learned.

There is a lot of research being undertaken by the United States -- I think it is about £3 billion worth a year -- into regenerative medicine, which clearly will actually have benefits for medicine as a

whole. We are looking at noise-induced hearing loss in the United Kingdom. There was a major symposium in December which brought together civilian, academic and military practitioners. Noise-induced hearing loss is an issue for the civilian community as well as the military community, and indeed one of the civilian charities, Deafness Research United Kingdom, co-hosted that conference. So there are numerous areas where there will be spin-offs for civilian medicine. That is not to say that I endorse a view that you go to war to actually enhance medicine, but it is a spin-off from war, regrettably.

The length of the campaign has...allowed the collection of data over time that has enabled variation to be analysed against survival. So you have a data set and you see that some die and some live and you explore that data set and you see that the ones who die, there is a greater number of people who had low body temperatures, for example. You can only do that if your campaign is -- if the campaign is sufficiently long. So the first thing is the duration of the campaign. The second thing is, I think, the enquiring mind of those clinicians on the ground who, as a matter of professional respect, integrity, bring that to the battlefield from their civilian practice, where one is always looking for ways of actually improving the care you give. The third thing latterly has been the systematisation of that, in that we have introduced, you know, more and more systems that actually identify what leads to survival and what does not. So the weekly conferences from Birmingham to Iraq initially, and Iraq and Afghanistan lately, provides feedback to theatre of where treatments have not worked properly, where things have been missed, and therefore educates the clinicians on the ground as to where to improve their performance. Fourthly, there has been the money in the United States and the UK that has been put into specific research.

926. The employment of MEDEVAC from Role 1 direct to Role 2E/3 during Op TELIC led to the development of the Immediate Response Team (IRT) which consisted of a medical component principally deployed by a rotary wing aircraft. During Op TELIC the casualty could rapidly move from close to the point of wounding directly to the Role 2 Enhanced hospital at Basra, greatly improving the clinical outcomes

Comment. The success of this capability has led to all Medical Regiments being established with Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) personnel. The capability may be delivered in the littoral, ground or air environments and is used when there is a need for Pre-Hospital Emergency Care (PHEC) interventions at any point of the medical evacuation chain.

927. The threats encountered on Op TELIC overmatched the platforms in use which led to the development of a bespoke protected mobility medical treatment platform, the Mastiff Ambulance. These were designed specifically for enabling continuity of care whilst in transit. The Army Medical Services (AMS) were able to engage the IPT during development stages of the Mastiff programme at an early stage, a first for a UOR platform.

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Comment. The AMS now have a design team which works with UORs to ensure the delivery of medical specific platform variants. This considerably enhances medical capabilities in current operations allowing transport and treatment to be conducted concurrently.

928. The number and severity of casualties arriving at the Field Hospital during the early stages of Op TELIC highlighted the requirement for fast and accurate diagnoses to enable the immediate analysis required for life and limb saving intervention.

929. In 2006 the CT scanner¹⁸⁸ was introduced. This capability provided surgeons with a highly detailed 3-D image supported by 'reachback' to specialists in the UK and allowed rapid consultation between specialists in different locations and the development of case management plans. The digital imaging network eliminates the requirement for X-ray film, with its associated storage, handling, chemical stores and shelf-life problems. This supports the reduced footprint and minimises the logistic burden.

Comment. The technology of electronic imaging has become an essential requirement for the Deployed Hospital on enduring operations. The enhancement provided by CT technology supports the improved clinical outcomes of those suffering complex injuries.

930. Operational Emergency Department Register (OpEDAR), was a clinical tool which focussed on the needs of the emergency department in theatre. It now informs manning, equipment and training requirements and is a comprehensive electronic register. This provides information on effectiveness of drugs and predictions of stock consumption but also helps to identify standardised treatment for individual conditions and data on casualty demographics.

931. Another tool which was developed during Op TELIC is the Joint Trauma Casualty and Compassionate Cell (JTCCC) weekly Case Conference at the Royal College of Defence Medicine (RCDM). Here, information is exchanged between operational theatres and RCDM, providing consultants and Subject Matter Experts (SME) with an interface to discuss casualty medical management and review working practices¹⁸⁹. This information can then be used to reinforce the clinical treatment regimes and protocols in theatre with immediate effect and is a vital component to healthcare quality assurance and the continuing improvement in the delivery of care. Information is also sent to the Defence Analysis and Statistics Agency (DASA), Director Equipment Capability Ground Manoeuvre (DEC GM) and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) where it is collated and analysed to inform future procurements and deployments.

¹⁸⁸ Computed Tomography.

¹⁸⁹ Unexpected Survivors and Unavoidable Deaths. MACE report for Operation TELIC Iraq 2003. Published 2005 by ADMEM.

Comment. The benefits of capturing medical data from all elements of the operational medical chain to inform casualty care and treatment regimes was reinforced from lessons at the start of the campaign.

932. Comments noted the high rate of heat injuries, but statistically the numbers were within the estimates. The Commanders guide to heat, heat injury and how to prevent it has been available throughout the operation. Physical fitness and graduated acclimatisation remain important preventative factors.

933. The philosophy of Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) includes the monitoring of potential problems from within the peer group. TRiM practitioners are trained to recognise ongoing problems but some feel more needed to be done, particularly to the longer term monitoring of Territorial and reserves. TRiM was only delivered to TELIC 12 in a rush and had little impact on TELIC 13.

Comment. TRiM has been used extensively on recent HERRICK deployments and has been considered extremely effective. 12 Brigade's adoption of TRiM was seen as a huge success and it proved to be an essential part of the brigade's efforts to mitigate the effects of combat on its soldiers.¹⁹⁰

Mental Health Lessons of Iraq

**Lt Gen Lois Lilywhite
Iraq Inquiry**

The perennial problem for mental health, whether it be civilian or military, British military or any other nation's military, or indeed any other civilian society, is of course stigma. So the challenge has always been to actually overcome the stigma of mental health. A lot of effort has gone into educating both commanders and individuals that psychological adverse effects is not something that needs to be hidden. We have not fully succeeded, nor has any other nation, and neither has the civilian population. Mental health continues to have a stigma amongst many that actually inhibits its presenting for care early.

We have, over time, looked at ways of actually minimising blatant psychological ill-health. There was a period of time when we introduced critical incident stress debriefing, before evidence emerged that it was actually probably doing harm rather than good, and certainly wasn't doing significant good; a lesson for me that we need to be careful about introducing without evidence procedures or processes or treatments just because someone says they are appropriate.

We have startedintroducing something called TRiM, which was a form of debriefing any after incident but done by peer groups not by an external counsellor but trauma risk management, which was actually just to do a debrief about what had actually happened. The person who was doing the

¹⁹⁰ Defence Lessons Identified Management System.

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debriefing, we just took people through it, taught to actually identify whether somebody was under stress and might need referral elsewhere. ...it was during -- later part of Iraq, when we introduced third-area decompression; that is stopping off in Cyprus on the way home.

I don't think we have actually found anything that has surprised us. What we have, though, now is evidence to support what perhaps we innately thought. Post-traumatic stress disorder is not common; it can be very severe in those who have it, but it is not common. Common mental health diseases are common, and are common amongst those in operations, and is the most common manifestation, much more so than post-traumatic stress disorder. It has been demonstrated that alcohol misuse is an issue, over and above that which you will find in non-deployed troops, and evidence from around the world has demonstrated that risk-taking behaviour increases after you have been on a deployment. You can understand that from a common-sense perspective. You actually expect troops to take risk. You can't suddenly say, "We have trained you and you have taken risks; now you must take no risk". So there is a period of acclimatisation back in the UK, I think, before that risk -- lack of risk business disappears.

I see no difference between the type of events that we are exposed to now, compared to the events that people were exposed in Korea or in the early years of Northern Ireland. Indeed, there were more people killed I think in 1973 than the whole of the Iraqi campaign. So I see no historical support for the claim that there is likely to be a hidden tidal wave.

I think the 14-year point, it is increasingly recognised, my experts tell me, that it is not 14 years to PTSD occurring; it is 14 years during which the individual has not come forward. In other words, it is not 14 years, I have suddenly got PTSD; it is 14 years and I have had it all the time but I have not been prepared to come forward with it. Hopefully the reduction -- the normalising of psychological disability, the removal of stigma, which although not successful, is occurring, will actually result in people coming forward for care much earlier, which would actually mitigate against that wait for 14 years. Again, as I said, the issue that -- the psychological disability we see tends to be in depression, anxiety, alcoholism, rather than in PTSD.

Royal Centre for Defence Medicine

934. Since 2007 much has changed at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM). There has been substantial investment in infrastructure (especially accommodation) but the overall situation has turned around due largely to three things:

- Clear direction on the effect to be achieved by all members of the multi-disciplinary, civilian and military team;
- An uplift in military personnel who have brought with them a Service ethos, desire and willingness to go the extra yard for battle casualties;
- A much improved understanding and awareness amongst civilian staff of the particular needs of battle casualties.

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935. There is also clear recognition that the support offered must embrace the next-of-kin every bit as much as it does the patient. This and the sudden and frequently unexpected, rapid transfer from an operational environment to an NHS bed means that the support for the patient must somehow be 'cushioned' in order to mitigate for the removal from one's comrades, alongside whom such intense experiences have been gained when fighting an enemy in a complicated and foreign setting.

936. As a result of the casualties from Op HERRICK there was a great deal of bad publicity about the welfare and administrative arrangements at Selly Oak Hospital. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) implemented a number of measures to improve the support to soldiers and their families in late 2007. Improvements to the 'military bubble'¹⁹¹ included the employment of Military Liaison Officers (MLO) from deploying brigades and the provision of accommodation for the families of injured servicemen. The Defence Welfare Unit and the Military Patient Welfare Cell were reinforced. The focus of the military medical staff¹⁹² at Selly Oak was adjusted towards the military patients.

937. The concept is simple: to generate an imaginary, virtual 'military bubble' around every casualty and their family so that they feel properly supported whilst the patient receives the level and standard of care that can only be achieved in a large UK teaching hospital. It is worth noting the level of clinical care now afforded. Thanks to improvements throughout the treatment and evacuation chain our men and women are surviving injuries that a few years ago would undoubtedly have killed them. Our old military hospitals could never have provided the large number of highly specialised staff that the casualties need to care for their extensive and highly complex and contaminated wounds. The model that now exists combines the excellence of a major UK teaching hospital with all the necessary military support and ethos.

Comment. Selly Oak was a significant issue but, once mobilised, the additional resources the MOD secured have received consistent praise.

¹⁹¹ 'Military Bubble' was the expression coined that related to the support and welfare activities around the soldier patient.

¹⁹² The NHS hospital at Selly Oak was used to improve and maintain the skills of military medical clinicians.

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Fig 54. The intensity of some of the fighting may have come as a surprise, but high intensity training in BATUS and elsewhere had prepared units well. A platoon forces entry to a building.

CHAPTER 10 - PREPARE

CONTEXT

Background

1001. From 2005-08, force levels in Iraq continually exceeded planning assumptions made concerning drawdown. The decision to increase from small to medium scale in Afghanistan meant that for three years, from mid 2006 to mid 2009, the Land Component was operating beyond planning assumptions by sustaining two medium scale enduring operations. Both of these were at an intensity that had not been anticipated by planning assumptions. This resulted in a need to balance capability between two concurrent campaigns. As time went on Afghanistan increasingly took priority.

1002. At the same time the Army was reorganising to implement Future Army Structures and Whole Fleet Management, as well as fielding Bowman. Defence change programmes continued, including combining the logistics and procurement organisations. The Army was also undermanned, providing most of its training support for itself and having to centrally manage a limited pool of special to theatre and Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) equipment.

1003. From 2007 Defence took risk against contingency, including reducing the Joint Rapid Reaction Force (JRRF) requirements and the readiness of ground manoeuvre, air assault and commando brigades. Another strategic response was to employ units out of role (for example air defence artillery) and to create new brigade and divisional HQs for Afghanistan. The Territorial Army (TA) and reserves were used extensively both to generate individuals, sub units, such as force protection companies and as the framework for the Basra hospital.

Insight. Successfully generating forces for Iraq in this period was a major achievement. In the context of Op ENTIRETY, the question is not 'what went wrong' but 'how could we do better for Afghanistan and other enduring land operations'?

FORCE GENERATION

1004. LAND considered political decision-making was secretive and non-committal, while the lead time for military preparation demanded early decisions (usually 12 months). This affected delivery of equipment by industry and PDT. The result was perpetual crisis management and permanently reactive, rather than predictive, LAND planning: dubbed 'force generating in contact'. It was essential for LAND to conduct 'worst case' contingency planning.

1005. A level of misunderstanding existed in the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) over the degree to which land force generation was limited by equipment, people and training lines of development. To those in Wilton it seemed that London thought that LAND would overstate the difficulties, but would produce an operationally capable

package when pushed. LAND did often meet short notice operational demand, but with increasing levels of risk. The risk was felt in training people for operations without the right equipment and reducing tour intervals whilst increasing unit and individual turbulence.

Insight. Successful force generation of the land component requires a shared understanding of requirements, timelines and risk between MOD, PJHQ and HQ LF.

1006. A consistent theme was the changes to the deployment plans or adjustments to the Operational Establishment Table (OET). When these were promulgated late in the day or when they required additional skills or training (individual or collective) unit commanders were forced to make hard choices. *"In fact we didn't have that much time to prepare: we had only finished our conversion to the Armoured Infantry role in January and had had to be Bowmanised as well as completing the full brigade training year. We had a great plan for our training which was screwed up completely by the decision to place the up-armouring of our vehicles smack in the middle of our PDT. That effectively wiped out our in-barracks training and meant that the OPTAG became a confirmatory exercise."*¹⁹³

PRE DEPLOYMENT UNDERSTANDING AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

1007. As in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Balkans, commanders' recess of theatre proved invaluable as did participation of mentors and advisors from theatre in pre-tour training. But even at the end of the campaign, situational awareness of the context and current events in theatre was inadequate.

1008. The ability of HQs, units and key individuals to understand the situation was greatly constrained by a lack of secure voice and data communications to most Army barracks. This was an especial problem when the situation changed or units and individuals were deployed or re-rolled at short notice. Division HQs preparing to deploy considered access to US Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNet) was inadequate. These problems were compounded by the complex Communications Information Services (CIS) architecture used to transfer information between systems in theatre. Towards the end of the campaign, HQ Amphibious Force (AMPHIBFOR) were able to join the regular Video Tele-Conferences (VTC) between PJHQ and MNDSE three months before assuming command, which greatly enhanced situational awareness.

Insight. To minimise disruption on unit and HQ roulement, the incoming force needs to maximise its situational understanding. Lack of secure communications to units in UK and Germany inhibited this, increasing operational discontinuity and risk

1009. Throughout the period the whole force received insufficient cultural training. Commanders and staff officers deploying to Basra or Baghdad considered themselves inadequately prepared to understand the impact of tribal, cultural and historical factors on operations. Farnham Castle¹⁹⁴ was

¹⁹³ POI Commanding Officer Op TELIC 7.

¹⁹⁴ Farnham Castle is a privately run intercultural training establishment.

used by some commanders, but throughout the campaign there was neither a central repository nor a database of theatre and cultural information.

Insight. The Land Component requires higher standards of cultural awareness than were achieved in Iraq.

AUGMENTATION

1010. Peacetime manoeuvre brigade HQ structures did not match those of the brigade headquarters deployed on operations. Project BOB attempted to address some of these anomalies in 2007 for the manoeuvre brigades. Logistic brigade HQs were particularly mismatched and did not enjoy the same Supported and Supporting relationship of the manoeuvre brigades.

1011. Even at the end of the campaign, the use of individual augmentees in deployed HQs was considered to be sub-optimal. Augmentees joined their new unit at D-3 months. Those deployed often did not understand the formation ethos, the commander's intent or the general '*modus operandi*' of the organisation and often missed key training events. These posts were often in CIMIC, Info Ops and Media Ops which were often criticised for poor performance. This was exacerbated by certain CS and CSS specialist skill sets becoming 'pinch points' where demand exceeded supply because of under manning, overstretch or both. The requirement to preserve tour intervals made early augmentation impractical. Even at the end of the campaign, training for staff involved in ISTAR, Media and Info Ops, CIMIC and SSR was considered inadequate varying from poor to non-existent.

Insight. CIMIC, Info Ops and Media, along with SSR have become CS functions. Experience in Iraq, as well as experience in the Balkans and Afghanistan suggests that these '21st Century Combat Support' functions are now as important for success as traditional artillery and engineer combat support were in the last century. These functions not only need to be understood by commanders and generalist staff, but need to be carried out by people with an equivalent degree of professionalism to that found in the artillery and engineers.

FOUNDATION TRAINING

1012. Brigade commanders considered that foundation training, including the British Army Training Unit in Suffield (BATUS) was essential to tactical success as it provided the demanding battle space to rehearse, test and evaluate units and troops in core war fighting skills. Success at this level gave all-ranks confidence, agility and cohesion.

Staff Officers

1013. The quality and performance of most of our staff officers was often praised. Many in Baghdad punched well above their weight and were praised by senior US officers. But most formation commanders and senior staff officers serving in MNDSE considered our SO3s under trained in staff duties on operations. The transition phase of the Review of Officer Career Courses

(ROCC) coincided with the early part of the period but even towards the end in 2009 most felt the decision to remove a residential course (as was the Junior Command and Staff Course and the Army Junior Division) and rely on e-learning (access to IT has been problematic) under ROCC was a mistake. Moreover, the training of personnel to undertake the 'soft effects' appointments – what some refer to as the 'Combat Support for the 21st Century' – was generally unsatisfactory. On a number of occasions formation HQs had to run bespoke training uplift packages in theatre. Part of the reason was officers being unable to attend specific employment training, but there appears to be a significant gap between formation commanders' requirements and the training received by SO3s.

PRE DEPLOYMENT TRAINING

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I think that the Operational Training and Advisory Group, the OPTAG process we put our people through, went to great lengths to keep current with what was going on in Iraq and make sure that every sequential six-month package of troops was trained in the most up-to-date skills.

That said – I visited 2 RIFLES and 4 RIFLES when they were in Basra Palace in 2007 – pretty hard to replicate the circumstances that they found themselves in training. We always say that we train for the worst case and then the actual operation is a little easier. I think although we trained pretty hard, the worst case was a lot more difficult than perhaps we had imagined.

1014. In 2004 battlegroup and brigade commanders considered PDT for Iraq to be the poor relation of Pre Deployment Training for Northern Ireland (NI), to not reflect best practice from training for the Balkans and to be inconsistent between UK and Germany based forces. From 2005 improvements were made to PDT. Although its effectiveness was constrained by under manning, resource shortages and the conflicting demands of Afghanistan, considerable improvement was made. Even so, PDT for Iraq was more compressed than commanders would have liked. This meant that there was too much last minute training, increased nights out of bed and increased pressure on Reception, Staging and Onward Integration (RSOI) where too many new types of equipment were introduced for the first time.

1015. **Individual Training.** The individual training received by our people in their core war fighting skills provided the bedrock that was essential to tactical success, particularly during periods of fighting or high operational tempo. But throughout the period the synchronisation of special to theatre individual training was problematic resulting in people missing other training, including Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MRX). The quality of some training was also inadequate.

- a. **Driver Training.** The sequencing and burden of driver training had a severe impact on collective training. Classification of the Urgent Operational Requirements (UOR) fleet as

'C' vehicles rather than 'A' vehicles unnecessarily raised the training burden. In turn the driver training burden significantly increased the lead time required for force generation. Compressed force generation time, shifting ORBATs, a lack of vehicle types on the OTEP and additional licence acquisition converged perilously to place commanders on the horns of a dilemma; they had to choose between conducting individual, collective or mission specific training. There was a reluctance to use the specific MOD exemptions in law for operational military vehicles and wheeled armoured vehicles, which could have significantly reduced the licence acquisition burden on units.

b. **ROE Training.** Rules of Engagement (ROE) training by the Royal Military Police (RMP) was poorly received. Using all-arms commanders and staff officers to deliver the training improved its effectiveness.

Insight. There were a number of training authorities involved in armoured platform training that had different and sometimes conflicting policies, which led to misunderstanding and a lack of standardisation in training as well as sub-optimal (partial) crew training solutions. In many cases crews were deployed on operations without essential training in manoeuvre, live fire or tactics. A single supporting authority for all crew served armoured platforms would have resolved these issues. There appears to be a case for a single supporting (training) Defence Authority and Competent Army Authority and Inspectorate (CAA&I) to direct training on all crew served armoured platforms.

1016. **Collective Training.** The unit and brigade cohesion achieved through collective training should not be underestimated; it was extremely important for integration of augmentees, including multinational staff and the moral preparation of units and formation staffs. It was vindicated by operational success, but areas that could have been improved included:

a. **Training Support.** At the beginning of the period brigades had to provide much of their own training support for themselves. The most effective MST was conducted when training support for deploying units and headquarters was furnished externally by non-deploying units and contractors.

b. **CSS Training.** CSS units usually found themselves both sustaining units whilst training themselves. Given that the threat increased the training requirement for CSS troops, this increased risk. In addition, collective training for deploying logistic brigades was less coherent and more ad hoc than that for manoeuvre formations.

c. **CAST.** The Combined Arms Staff Trainer (CAST) was an invaluable tool for headquarters' staff cohesion and team building, but there was insufficient participation by Iraqis, multinational officers and Other Government Departments.

d. **Air-Land Training.** Air-land training for the theatre requirement was sometimes inadequate.

Insight. Mission specific training for future enduring operations needs to minimise the training support burden on the deploying formation and provide better opportunities for CSS units to train, for commanders to work with the indigenous forces and to practice the air-land interface.



*Fig 55. 7 Armd Bde MRX, Hohenfels, Germany, Apr 08.
A joint training serial with US National Guard troops (in berets) acting as Iraqi Army.*

CHAPTER 11 - FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF THE UK LAND COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

1101. It has often been claimed that between 2003 and 2009 the Army 'transformed in contact'. This is in part true, for example the fielding of dismounted close combat and protected mobility UORs resulting in considerable improvements in battlegroup capability. And there was considerable adaptation in theatre at unit and formation level. But the previous chapters have identified a number of important areas where change was too slow or did not happen before the end of Op TELIC. There is evidence that in a number of key areas US ground forces in Iraq changed and adapted faster than we did. **The aim of this chapter is to assess the overall flexibility and adaptability of the UK land component during Op TELIC.**

1102. **Definition.** The Draft ADP 'Operations in the Land Environment 2010' describes flexibility as *"the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances – comprises versatility, responsiveness, resilience, acuity and adaptability. Flexibility has both mental and physical dimensions. To lead to success, it needs to be associated with an organisation and culture that encourages people to think creatively, and to be resourceful and imaginative – especially in the face of the unexpected.*

Versatility is the physical and structural ability that allows forces to adjust rapidly and decisively, especially when operating in complex situations, or in the face of new or unforeseen circumstances.

Responsiveness is a measure not only of speed of action and reaction, but also how quickly a commander seizes or regains the initiative.

Resilience is the degree to which people and their equipment remain effective under arduous conditions or in the face of hostile action.

Acuity is sharpness of thought, characterised by intellectual and analytical rigour, enabling intuitive understanding of complex and changing circumstances.

Adaptability embraces the need to learn quickly, to adjust to changes in a dynamic situation, and to amend plans that, in the light of experience, seem unlikely to lead to a suitable outcome".

Versatility

1103. This was demonstrated by:

- a. Units and formations re-rolling from warfighting ORBATs, through re-organisation and Pre-Deployment Training to bespoke ORBATs and with relevant TTPs, a capability that had been extensively practiced in the NI and Balkan campaigns.

b. Re-roling of units further out of role, including artillery manning UAVs and C-RAM capabilities and RAC manning Warrior and Mastiff.

c. Much successful tactical adaptation and learning by troops in contact, for example the conduct of strike operations.

1104. But there was insufficient versatility demonstrated in the following areas:

a. Weaknesses in our approach to SSR, including its importance to commanders and our failure to field MiTTs from the outset.

b. The failure to field the expanded and decentralised tactical intelligence capability that was central to the NI campaign.

c. Failure to grow the airborne ISTAR capability as quickly as the US, Australians and Romanians did.

Responsiveness

1105. This was demonstrated by:

a. Much, but not all, of the adaptation to the unexpected challenges posed by the rise in the IED and IDF threat.

b. The rapid response to Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

c. Adjusting the Army's force generation capability to meet the unforeseen requirement of concurrent operations in Afghanistan.

1106. But there was insufficient responsiveness demonstrated in the following areas:

a. Influence Operations – for the whole of this period.

b. Until mid 2008, the tactical implementation of the Comprehensive Approach and use of money by commanders to promote consent.

c. Minimal participation in the MNF-I COIN centre.

Resilience

1107. This was demonstrated by:

a. Maintenance of morale and fighting spirit in the face of ever increasing casualties and the unpopularity of the war.

- b. The Army's ability to sustain double medium commitments well outside DPAs, albeit with the outflow reduced from 2008 because of deteriorating civilian employment prospects.
- c. The resilience and morale of many of our casualties and families.

Acuity

1108. This was demonstrated by:

- a. The value that senior US officers placed on the contribution of our embedded staff in Baghdad and the particular contribution of Lt Gen Lamb.
- b. The intellectual effort that went into both Op SINBAD and the Basra Accommodation.
- c. The planning and execution of the endgame after Op CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS.

1109. But there was insufficient acuity demonstrated in the following areas:

- a. Failure to field the tactical intelligence capabilities required.
- b. The campaign perspective being insufficiently understood in the UK and the UK operations in MNDSE being insufficiently understood in Baghdad.
- c. COIN blindness, it being almost completely eliminated from teaching at AJD for a decade, the failure to increase COIN teaching at Staff College until 2008 and new COIN doctrine only being approved after the Iraq campaign ended.
- d. Compared to the US Army and USMC, an apparent lack of discussion and debate about Iraq in the *British Army Review*, our professional military journal.

Adaptability

1110. This was demonstrated by:

- a. Many examples of innovative and adaptive tactics.
- b. Rapid adjustment of tactics to take advantage of new equipment. Notable examples include ISTAR, protected mobility and CIDF capabilities.

1111. But there was insufficient adaptability identified in:

- a. Consistent failure to properly resource, train, and prepare people for specialist roles of SSR, Influence Operations, CIMIC and ISTAR.
- b. Consistent failure to produce adequate language or cultural awareness capabilities.

- c. Failure to produce adequate campaign continuity. And an apparent 'business as usual' approach to Army manning and posting regimes.

Historic Comparisons

1112. Of necessity this is a simplistic analysis. Many of these successes and failures can be described under more than one of these five characteristics. But overall **it appears that for every successful adaptation for Op TELIC there was an equivalent significant failure to adapt.** This is in comparison to more successful adaptations by the British Army in the previous century:

- a. In the First World War, the Army went from being able to stage unsophisticated attritional attacks with the Kitchener armies in 1916 to mounting the 'hundred days' offensives from August to November 1918, a sustained operational level counter offensive against the German army. It had evolved not only the tank and integration of airpower, but also the principles of modern combined arms tactics that have endured to this day.
- b. The first two years of the Second World War saw the Army outfought by German and Japanese troops. But it reconstituted the combined arms approach of the Hundred Days and used it to win at Alamein and in the remainder of the war. It also worked with the RAF to develop intimate air/land cooperation and jointly fielded a completely new airborne capability, took amphibious operations with the RN to new levels, and invented the SAS.
- c. In the early years of the Northern Ireland campaign, the Army engaged in 'embedded partnering' with the RUC, evolved a sophisticated approach to tactical intelligence as well as covert intelligence gathering, and established a world lead in public order, EOD, C-IED and ██████████
- d. Between the 1970s and 90s, the Army did very little peace-keeping, save a static and undemanding operation in Cyprus. But from 1992 to 1996, it took a leading role in the much more challenging environment of Bosnia. Not only did individuals, units and commanders play a leading role in that campaign and in subsequent NATO operations, but we also developed a new doctrine of 'Wider Peacekeeping', which was influential and rapidly adopted by many armies.

In all these examples, the Army had control of all its lines of development and the General Staff exercised many of the functions now exercised by MOD and PJHQ. Until late 1996 the joint command of UK forces in Bosnia was CinC Land Command, exercising the functions now exercised by CJO.

Comparison with US Army and USMC Adaptation in Iraq

1113. Comparisons with US capabilities occur throughout this report and current US Army conceptual work seeks to institutionalise agility. In some respects, the US Army and USMC have been too busy adapting to meet the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan to be able to analyse the reasons for their success.

1114. The popular view is that the combination of revised COIN doctrine, the arrival of Gen Petraeus, the doctrine's sponsor and the reinforcements of the Surge were the decisive factors. In fact the tactical success of USMC and US Army formations in Anbar in 2005/6, notably at Tal Affar and Ramadi, which energised the Anbar Awakening were not only decisive, but were also executed *before the Surge by forces that had not had the benefit of the new COIN doctrine* to inform their preparation or their operations.

1115. Examination of contemporary US Army and USMC accounts is complemented by 'Innovation in the Crucible of War'¹⁹⁵ by ██████████, a DOD civilian. This analysis of USMC and US Army battalion and brigade operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces in 2005/6 provides convincing evidence of tactical adaptation by these forces, pre-dating the surge and despite a lack of tactical guidance from Baghdad; but evolving the tactical approaches that would be decisive in Baghdad and central Iraq in 2007/8. This includes the clearance of Ramadi described in the Narrative History. ██████████ assesses that:

"The evidence..... shows that a disparate series of units in a diverse set of operational environments clearly improved their military response to the insurgency over the period. The units adapted by constructing integrated COIN campaigns using a tailored mix of kinetic and non-kinetic tools. The units constructed these campaigns empirically and, as it were, on the fly, based upon experience, and despite the absence of governing joint military COIN doctrine..."

All the units in this study realized that their primary conventional war-fighting skills would form only one of a variegated set of competencies that would be needed for the Iraq COIN environment. All consciously searched for an appropriate mix of kinetic and non-kinetic tools suggested by COIN theorists, and sought to build the new organizational competencies required by their diverse array of missions. These missions included such activities as: military operations against the insurgents; local political and leader engagement; building host nation military capacities virtually from scratch through training and exercises; building governance capacities through elections and assisting in the establishment of local civic institutions; helping build local infrastructure through coordinated civil-military operations; using IO, ranging from radio broadcasts and television to posters and flyers to shape their battle with the insurgents for the local population.

The units analyzed in this book built new organizational capacities iteratively over time that changed the way the units fought the insurgency. This book's case studies detail a process of wartime innovation that manifested itself as a series of organic, bottom-up procedures developed within the battalions and brigades fighting the insurgents.....Innovation occurred within the units through the fusion of the information and enabling processes that ultimately produced new organizational outputs. Basic capstone doctrinal grounding in military operations proved to be a fundamental building block for the innovation process. Previous experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan helped shape the innovation. Non-institutionally blessed sources of information on COIN theory and history were consciously drawn upon by units as they intellectually reoriented themselves towards full spectrum operations. A variety of digital domain platforms helped units freely pass information and lessons learned back and forth that helped the process and

¹⁹⁵ PHD thesis Kings College London 2009. To be published in by Stanford in 2010.

adaptation and innovation. The innovation produced new organizational capacities that shaped successful military operations across the spectrum of kinetic and non-kinetic operations to reduce insurgent-generated violence. Wartime innovation in the cases studied here flowed from agile, flexible, decentralized organizations that featured flattened and informal hierarchical structures. Throughout their deployments, each of the units covered in the following case studies demonstrated significant learning capacities that proved central to the innovation process."

1116. Russell identifies that innovation was enabled by

- a. Leadership that delegated and apportioned authority and responsibility to different sectors of the organization, with particular emphasis on empowering tactical-level leadership.
- b. Rapid and frank feedback between commanders and the lowest tactical level.
- c. Flexibility in creating sub-organizational structures that were either completely new, or which enhanced the capabilities of existing, doctrinally accepted organizational structures.
- d. A marked willingness to partner with a wide variety of agencies, including intelligence agencies, Iraqi formations and contractors.
- e. Exploiting ISTAR and CIS technology, including improvising G2 databases from standard civilian software tools. The advanced technology in Stryker brigades gave them a particular edge in this area, but conventional US Army and USMC units appear to have shown as much adaptation in this area, albeit from a lower baseline.

1117. All of these factors apply to successful UK tactical adaptation, but Russell's account and many other accounts of US Army operations during the surge are notable for their lack of criticism of the capabilities fielded, in striking contrast to the majority of contemporary UK post-operation reports and interviews. There is an impression that whilst UK units and formations in Iraq often displayed similar adaptive characteristics, as the organisational distance from Iraq increased, sometimes the adaptability displayed by organisations supporting the UK land component decreased.

1118. This study has also identified that US Army and USMC adaptation before, during and after the surge was enabled by:

- a. US formation HQs supporting and encouraging experimentation and innovation in the field.
- b. Wide dissemination of lessons from current operations through a wide variety of formal and informal, including the *Small Wars Journal* and *companycommander.com* websites.
- c. Full secure CIS connectivity between deployed units and formations and those preparing to replace them, allowing immediate and secure dialogue. This applied at multiple levels from battalion to four star level, with the daily Baghdad BUA being viewed at high level Army HQs in the US.

1119. It appears that at unit level tour lengths were not a factor in this, with both USMC units on 7 month tours adapting as well as US Army units on 12 or 15 month tours. The longer tour length of both Army and USMC formation HQs may have been a factor.

DISCUSSION

1120. **Doctrine.** There are many examples of successful adaptation by armies having been led by doctrine. This has been the case with US Army, which attributes much of its agility to TRADOC unifying, doctrine, training and experimentation. Such an approach depends on the doctrine being widely understood. Chapter 1 concludes that although adequate British COIN tactical doctrine existed before Op TELIC, it was neither widely taught nor understood. So the majority of our adaptation was being conducted without being informed by doctrine, which was not given the chance to play the leading role it did with the US Army and USMC from 2007 onwards.

1121. **Dependence on Defence and Joint Organisations.** The Army's ability to adapt was constrained by Defence as a whole being highly centralised and not on a war footing. Even after 2006 when the new CDS and PUS gave clear direction to the MOD that "*we are in two wars and we have got to win them both*" there were parts of defence, including the parts of MOD, where there was little sense of urgency. The US Army and USMC receive most of their funds direct from Congress. They control their own doctrine, equipment requirements, acquisition, logistics, people and training. This means that when they decide to change, they can adjust their lines of development for themselves, without having to co-ordinate or negotiate with other agencies. This reduces friction and increases the speed at which they can adapt. This applied to the British Army for most of the NI campaign and for the UNPROFOR and IFOR operations in Bosnia. Since then the increasing centralisation of Defence has resulted in the Army controlling far less of its lines of development than the US ground forces do. So in order to change the British Army must negotiate agreement to resource and action the change with the Centre, DE&S and other joint and defence organisations. This has the advantage of greater efficiency for defence as a whole, but can also impose barriers, frictions and constraints. These factors appear to have delayed the production of relevant joint doctrine, the teaching of COIN at the JSCSC and the fielding of adequate G2 and ISTAR capabilities. These examples may also illustrate weaknesses in the Army's ability to state its case in the Centre and act as a customer for the outputs of joint organisations.

1122. **Sponsorship and Management of Capabilities.** A reason for the sub-optimal fielding of intelligence, SSR, CIMIC, language and cultural capabilities may be the arrangement for the sponsorship and management of these capabilities. Such sponsors or champions as there were appear to have been less able to influence Army and Defence decision making than capability areas with strong management and sponsorship, such as the infantry, RAC, RE and RA. And the fielding of improved airborne surveillance capability seems to have been delayed by differences of view between the Army and RAF, the lack of a single authoritative focus for ISTAR in the Army and an apparent inability of the Army to make the case strongly enough within the MOD's Equipment Capability area. The evidence suggests that the more effective the sponsorship and management of a capability, the more likely that capability can quickly adapt to new circumstances.

1123. **Attitudes to Operation TELIC.** Many of those consulted commented that the US military considered themselves ‘*at war*’ whilst we were ‘*on operations*’. There was no doubting the commitment of the US forces, the DoD or the President. However the assumption that UK force levels would quickly reduce, combined with the increasing unpopularity of the war meant that many in Defence and the Army seemed to struggle to find enthusiasm for the campaign. This increased considerably once troops in Helmand became engaged in heavy fighting. It is likely that these factors inhibited people and organisations in the Army and Defence from making a psychological commitment to success in Iraq, acting as a disincentive against changing organisation, process or capability. This is not saying that units and formations who served in Iraq were not committed to the operation. The opposite is true, as demonstrated by the fighting spirit exhibited by units in the war against the JAM. But there is a powerful sense that the further away from the front line some parts of the Army and Defence were, the less likely they were to suggest or support adaptations or resources necessary for success in Iraq. And there was no equivalent of the current Op ENTIRETY to both provide a unifying focus and sense of urgency.

1124. **Re-roling.** The Army may have taken the ability of units and formations to change role for granted. For NI and the Balkans the combination of reconnaissance and PDT had been adequate. But it had been an essentially informal adaptation. Defence and the Army had neither formally placed a requirement on its force elements to adapt to roles other than warfighting, nor analysed the requirements placed on the lines of development to ensure that the required capabilities could be generated as effectively as possible.

1125. **Learning of Lessons.** For most of this period a proportion of lessons could be ‘learned’ by adjusting TTPs. This was implemented by the force in theatre or by OPTAG or both. Other lessons were handled by the staff in HQ LF as part of the Army Lessons Process. It was not until Sep 2009 that the Army lessons staffs were unified as part of the LWC. The lessons effort often gained little if any traction on capabilities that the Army did not control. The LWC’s lessons capability has proved invaluable in the compilation of this report, particularly the archive of post operational reports and in interview programme. All facets of operations in MNDSE are well covered. But there is a gap at Warminster, PJHQ and MOD of material covering higher level perspectives from MNC-I, MNSTC-I and MNF-I, where there are very few post operational reports or interviews with British senior officers serving in Baghdad.

1126. **Education.** There is considerable evidence that the ability of commanders and staff to analyse new situations, generate new options and lead the adaptation of their subordinates can be promoted by education. And it is much cheaper to invest in than many of the lines of development. The lack of education in COIN has already been described. It also appears that many of our middle ranking and senior commanders and staff had less formal higher educational qualifications than their US counterparts. This cultural propensity to broader and deeper education and a pervading ethos of learning and development throughout their officer corps may in part explain why Generals Petraeus and Odierno were so keen to employ civilian and academic expert advisors such as ██████████ and ██████████. And the US forces seem to have been more able to generate more language and cultural experts more quickly than we did.

1127. **Professional Journals.** Examination of official professional journals of the US Army, USMC and British Army suggests that the US ground forces were much more willing to share experience and

debate solutions to the tactical problems of Iraq. This is noticeable in special to arm journals, but is most pronounced in comparison between the US Army's *Military Review* and the *British Army Review*. From the outset of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM *Military Review* is full of articles about US land operations in Iraq. Many of these are a useful analysis of the successes and failures of US operations. These were of sufficient quality that two excellent *Military Review* COIN Readers were subsequently published. The *British Army Review* had very few articles about Iraq published before the end of Op TELIC. This contrasts with the content of the journal during the 1970s and 1980s when there was a lively discussion of ways we could improve our ability to prepare for and fight World War Three, followed by an equally lively dialogue in the 1990s about peace support operations. This evidence suggests that during Op TELIC we did not leverage our professional journal as an aid to learning and adaptation as well as the US Army and USMC did. The US Army was also quicker to leverage the power of the Internet to assist with training and adaptation, for example the "companycommander.com" website.

1128. **An Example of Compound Failure to Adapt; Tactical Intelligence and ISTAR.** The failure to provide adequate tactical G2 and ISTAR capabilities is an example of many, if not all of these factors. That the Army had less understanding of COIN than it thought it had has been discussed earlier. In 2004/5 the Army had planned to ensure that capabilities then employed mainly in NI would be run on after Op BANNER ended. Some of this was successful, including EOD, [REDACTED] and search, all capabilities with effective Army sponsors. But the ability to field an expanded decentralised tactical intelligence organisation down to sub-unit level was not successfully exported from NI. This may be in part due to a lack of widespread understanding of the role of tactical intelligence in COIN resulting from inadequate coverage of COIN at Staff College, and the lack of an effective single Army focus and interlocutor with the Centre. But even in 2009, battlegroup intelligence training at Chicksands (a defence school) was less effective than that training delivered at Ashford for the NI campaign. And our land component appears to have been less well served by the ISTAR area than other parts of the MOD equipment capability staff. So multiple failings meant that the hard won lesson of colonial campaigns and NI, authoritatively described by General Sir Frank Kitson, had not been successfully institutionalised.

Applying Northern Ireland Lessons

General Dannatt
CGS 2006 – 2009
Iraq Inquiry Jul 10

... over the many years of the Northern Ireland campaign when, like any insurgency, it is dynamic and the threat changed, from a bit of a flat footed start I think in the 1970s we became quite sophisticated at, in the context of IEDs, analysing the material of what had been an IED, or dismantling IEDs we had prevented from going off, very rapidly assessing what the technology was that the enemy was using, devising counters to that, bringing in new bits of equipment, changing our training procedures, changing our operational techniques, and responding to the threat. We had a pretty sophisticated mechanism for that.

But by the time we went into Iraq in 2003 frankly the situation ... in Northern Ireland had significantly quietened down. Much of our capability to do that had either slowed down,

because it (sic) didn't need it so much, or indeed as the peace process took hold in Northern Ireland, we dismantled quite a lot of that capability.

Now we said at the time some of the Northern Ireland –specific techniques we needed to make sure that we did retain, and this was one of them. Human intelligence and how we handled human intelligence, that was another. The extent to which we did that and how well we did that, as opposed to how much we said we must do it, I think remains a moot point.

1129. **The UK Land Component as a Learning Organisation.** Although not explicitly stated in doctrine, there is good evidence from modern operations, military history and management science that the flexibility and agility of large organisations, including armed forces, depends on that organisation's ability to learn. The evidence suggests that the ability of our units and people to learn and adapt in contact is good and is well supported by our arrangements for reconnaissance and PDT. **But the overall ability of the UK Land component (the Army plus the resources and support it is given by Defence and joint organisations) to learn and adapt was slower than that of the US Army and USMC.** This may be a reflection not only of military culture, but also of national characteristics, the US being a more open and agile society. This is not new. There was certainly a sense amongst senior British officers in World War Two that US forces came from behind us in 1941, learned faster and during 1944/5 overtook us. This is reflected in many diaries and personal accounts and is a recurring theme in Andrew Roberts' recent book on UK/US coalition dynamics '*Masters and Commanders*'. This suggests that there is a requirement for the Army, and those defence and joint organisations that support it to improve their ability to learn and implement lessons. An understanding of how successful organisations and armies learn and adapt, including the US Army and USMC, would be a core part of this.

1130. **Engine of Change.** Adaptation in the US Army benefited greatly from TRADOC's¹⁹⁶ role as its 'engine of change'. During this period it was unclear what organisation exercised this responsibility and authority for the Army.

BOTTOM UP VERSUS TOP DOWN

1131. It is striking that a number of our significant capability weaknesses appear to have arisen because of a default setting of top down being applied to a tactical problem that actually required the capability to be applied and prioritised from the bottom up. The most striking examples of this are:

- a. **Intelligence.** We should have known from our previous COIN successes that an enduring principle of intelligence in COIN is that by expanding and decentralising tactical intelligence right down to sub-unit level, bottom-up intelligence can be generated to equal tactical effect. The multiple weaknesses of our tactical intelligence on Op TELIC suggest that this was not the default setting for much of the campaign. The evidence suggests a strong case for inverting the land component intelligence pyramid, rebalancing from top down to bottom up, in order to best generate integrated intelligence at the tactical level.

¹⁹⁶ US Army Training and Doctrine Command "develops the Army's Soldiers and Civilian leaders and designs, develops and integrates capabilities, concepts and doctrine in order to build a campaign-capable, expeditionary Army in support of joint warfighting capability through Army Force Generation".

b. **Tactical Implementation of the Comprehensive Approach.** A comprehensive approach that sought to achieve effect from the front line first, would have been unlikely to have taken so long to have produced a capability to allow battlegroups to spend money to achieve tactical civil effect. This was in striking contrast to the US CERPS which operated from the outset as a bottom up system.

c. **Info Ops.** This also seems to apply to our largely unsuccessful Info Ops efforts, where some of the problems experienced at the tactical level seem to have reflected a UK predisposition to deliver effect more from top down than from the bottom up. This was demonstrated by restrictive direction from MOD. The way Info Ops experts were arranged in Defence, with priority given to populating UK posts with experts, rather than prioritising the deployment of experts to the front line, suggests an inherent predisposition to top down push rather than bottom up pull. But the particular circumstances of Iraq meant that without the freedoms and professional capability to execute locally at speed which matched the tempo of enemy info ops and expert capability being based in theatre, MNDSE was going to be limited in its ability to achieve timely info ops effect.

1132. **So What?** There is no doubt that our tactical commanders were very successful at achieving tactical effect and doing so by applying mission command in a decentralised fashion. Indeed had the top down approach that appears to have applied in part in ISTAR, Info Ops and the comprehensive approach been applied to tactical operations at battlegroup and below, it is doubtful whether we would have had much tactical success. There appears to have been a significant gap between mission command and the manoeuvrist approach as articulated in Army and Joint doctrine, and significant elements of the approach used for implementing and developing ISTAR, Info Ops and the comprehensive approach. For example the inability of most commanders to use money as a weapon system. Bridging this gap could require these capability areas to rearrange their approach, processes and capabilities in favour of the front line. It may be worth examining other capability areas that proved problematic in Iraq to see if the same factor applies.

1133. **Dialogue Inside the Army.** Much of the dialogue within the US Army and USMC is striking in its candour, the more so as much of it is in relatively open fora. It is often self-critical and highly reflective – about what was working in Iraq and what was not. There is also evidence of a healthy exchange of ideas, not just between tactical practitioners, but also flowing from senior officers, through company commanders and including enlisted ranks. The impression is that some key individuals at high leadership levels in the US Army and USMC were confident enough to take critical feedback from their subordinates and also to back good ideas with resources and influence. This is a notable part of James Russell's analysis and is a recurring theme in US accounts of Tal Affar, Ramadi and the Surge. Some UK senior officers who served in Baghdad have commented in a similar vein, one describing the US approach as one of "brutal frankness". Both military history and management studies strongly suggest that an honest dialogue between front line, middle management and senior leadership can make organisations significantly more agile and effective, by better integrating top down direction with bottom up lessons from the front-line. The overall impression is that during the same period this happened less in the British Army than in the US Army and USMC.

A Personal Perspective

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COS PJHQ 03-04
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In my view the organization of Defence led to many disconnects that TELIC suffered: manning, equipment, training, education, casualty handling all had problems at some point. There was a lack of clarity as to who led. And in most cases the expertise and action lay with the Service/Front Line Command. There was no shortage of reports but they did not get to the right place.

The mistakes (no WMD, body armour, prisoner abuse) and unpopularity of the operation led to a perception that the UK strategic level desire was to minimize exposure. This led to some negative thinking and a sense of control from the top. An example: the concept of MiTTs caused worry in MOD; what would have happened if an Iraqi unit with UK MiTTs was deployed out of MNDSE was unknown

These factors led to a top down default setting for many Iraq capabilities and issues. For example at various stages there was a danger that a check list approach to training was going to dominate over understanding and agility. Further I do not think that Other Government Departments can operate bottom up in the way the Services do. We need to factor this in from the outset, and conduct more training with players from across Government.

There may well have been a psychological impact of UK being on operations rather than war. As I recall this was a consequence of the legal framework (ROE, proportionality etc) in which we operated, and will operate again. I am not sure we can just change the language; but the effect is something that we need to address.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

1134. It appears that for much of Op TELIC some parts of the Army tried hard not to bend themselves out of shape; for example, retaining the default setting for individual operational tours at six months may have enhanced resilience, but it led to sub-optimal campaign continuity. The Army only partially 'transformed in combat'. Although its flexibility and agility was constrained by factors outside its control, such as equipment acquisition, campaign management and media strategy, it could have pulled harder and at more of the levers it controlled.

1135. Op TELIC indicates that maximising the flexibility and adaptability of the UK land component to meet the unforeseen challenges of future operations requires improvements in the following areas:

- a. Being prepared to bend the Army out of shape across the lines of development to maximise the chances of campaign success. This includes applying the Op ENTIRETY approach to unify whole Army adaptation to future campaigns and having an Army 'engine of change'.

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- b. Minimising internal and external obstructions to the land component's ability to learn as a whole. A shared understanding of how successful organisations and armies learn and adapt would be a core part of this. As would confident and frank dialogue between senior leadership and the front line.
- c. Ensuring that capabilities required for 21st Century operations all have an Army sponsor with adequate authority and influence. And that these capabilities receive the necessary share of the brightest and best.
- d. Encouraging discussion and debate on current and recent operations in our professional journals. And publishing RESTRICTED lessons material on the Army intranet, including the archive of post operation reports and interviews.
- e. Improving the breadth and depth of officer education.
- f. Ensuring that doctrine is up to date and widely understood.
- g. Ensuring that land capability and our tactical approach allows the execution of mission command and the manoeuvrist approach, if necessary by rebalancing from top down, in favour of bottom up.
- h. Improving the current lessons system by capturing land environment lessons at the corps and theatre level, including the experience of senior British officers employed in higher HQs.
- i. Fielding secure CIS between deployed units and those preparing to relieve them.

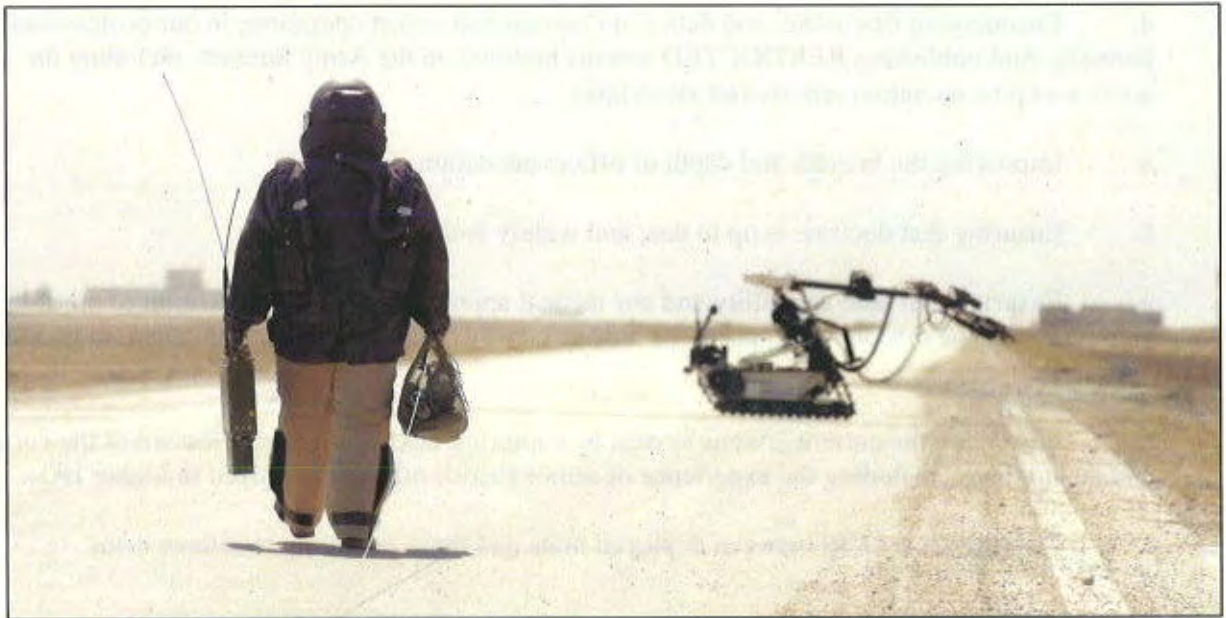


Fig 46. An IEDD Operator starts the 'long walk'.

LEXICON OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the purpose of this document:

AA	Anbar Awakening
ACR	Armored Cavalry Regiment
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
AH	Attach Helicopter
AJD	Army Junior Division (Staff College)
AMPHIBFOR	Amphibious Force
AO	Area of Operations
APC	Army Personnel Centre
APLNR	Automatic Position Location, Navigation and Reporting
AQ	al-Qaeda
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
ARF	Air Reaction Force
ARRC	Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps
BaOC	Basra Operations Centre
BATUS	British Army Training Unit Suffield
BCT	Brigade Combat Team (US Army)
BXP	Border Crossing Point
C2	Command and Control
CA	Comprehensive Approach
CAA&I	Competent Army Authority and Inspectors
CALL	Centre Army Lessons Learned (US Army)
CASB	Combined Assessment and Strategy Board
CAST	Command and Staff Trainer
CAT	Combat Application Tourniquet
CERP	Commanders Emergency Response Programme
CG	Commanding General
CIDF	Counter Indirect Fire
CIED	Counter Improvised Explosive Device
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CIS	Communications Information Services
CJO	Commander Joint Operations
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CLC	Concerned Local Citizens
CMOC	Civil Military Operations Centre
COB	Contingent Operating Base
COIN	Counter Insurgency
COMBRITFOR	Commander British Forces
CONCO	Continuity Non-Commissioned Officer

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CONDO	Contractors Deployed Overseas
COTK	Charge of the Knights
CPA	Coalition Provincial Authority
CRAM	Counter Rockets and Mortars
CS	Combat Support
CSS	Combat Service Support
CT	Counter Terrorism
DASA	Defence Analysis and Statistics Agency
DBE	Department of Border Enforcement
DCDC	Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre
DCG	Deputy Commanding General
DCOM	Deputy Commander
DEC GM	defence Equipment Capability Ground Manoeuvre
DE&S	Defence Equipment & Support
DFID	Department for International Development
DLOD	Defence Lines of Development
DPA	Defence Procurement Agency
DSCOM	Divisional Support Command
DSTL	Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
DTC	Divisional Training Centre
DV	Developed Vetting
EC	Equipment Care
ECI	Equipment Care Inspection
ECM	Electronic Counter Measures
EFP	Explosively Formed Projectile
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Device
EU	European Union
F3EA	Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyse
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FF	Foreign Fighters
FFR	Fitted for Radio
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FORM	Formation Operational Readiness Model
FRL	Former Regime Loyalists
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOI	Government of Iraq
HCSC	Higher Command and Staff College
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
HQ	Headquarter

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IA	Individual Augmentee or Iraqi Army
ID	Identification
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IEDD	Improvised Explosive Device Disposal
IDF	Indirect Fire
IFOR	International Force
IISG	Iraq Information Strategy Group
IM	Information Management
Info Ops	Information Operations
IO	Intelligence Officer
IP	Iraqi Police
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
IPLO	Iraqi Police Liaison Officer
IPS	Iraqi Police Service
IPT	Integrated Planning Team
IR	Intelligence Requirement
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRT	Immediate Response Team
ISAF	International Stabilisation and Assistance Force
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISOF	Iraqi Special Operations Force
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
IT	Information Technology
IX	Information Exploitation
JAM	Jaysh al-Mahdi
JCCC	Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre
JCP	Joint Campaign Plan
JDCC	Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre
JDSC	Junior Division of the Staff College
JDN	Joint Doctrine Note
JOPC	Joint Operational Planning Course
JRAT	Joint Reconstruction Action Team
JRRF	Joint Rapid Reaction Force
JSAT	Joint Strategic Assessment Team
JSCSC	Joint Services Command and Staff Course
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command (US)
JTCCC	Joint Trauma Casualty and Compassionate Cell
KLE	Key Leader Engagement
LEC	Locally Employed Civilians
LF	Land Forces
LOO	Line of Operation

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LSI	Logistic Support Inspection
M2T	Monitoring, Mentoring and Training
MASD	Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development
ME	Main Effort
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MERT	Medical Emergency Response Team
MITT	Military Transition Team
MJDI	Management of the Joint Deployable Inventory
MLO	Military Liaison Officer
MNC-I	Multinational Corps-Iraq
MND	Multinational Division
MNDCS	Multinational Division Centre South
MNDSE	Multinational Division South East
MNF-I	Multinational Force-Iraq
MNF(W)	Multinational Force (West)
MNSTC-I	Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
MRX	Mission Rehearsal Exercise
MSR	Main Supply Route
MST	Mission Specific Training
MTP	Massive Transfusion Protocol
NCC	National Contingent Command
NI	Northern Ireland
NIOC	National Information Operations Course
NSE	National Support Element
OA	Operational Allowance and Operational Analysis
ODA	Overseas Development Agency
OET	Operational Establishment Table
OIF	Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
OISG	Operational Intelligence Support Group
OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team
OpEDAR	Operational Emergency Department Register
OPLOC	Operational Location (G/JI term)
OPSEC	Operational Security
Ops Sp	Operations Support
OTEP	Operational Training Equipment Pack
OWP	Operational Welfare Package
PA	Public Affairs
PC	Provincial Council
PCRU	Post Conflict Resolution Unit

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PDT	Pre-Deployment Training
PE	Peace Enforcement
PHEC	Pre-Hospital Emergency Care
PIC	Provincial Iraqi Control
PIR	Passive Infra Red
PJCC	Permanent Joint Coordination Centre
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters
PK	Peace Keeping
PM	Prime Minister
PMSC	Private Military and Security Company
POG	Psychological Operations Group
POI	Post Operational Interview
POR	Post Operational Report
POSM	Post Operational Stress Management
POTL	Post Operational Tour Leave
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSC	Private Security Company
PSO	Peace Support Operations
PsyOps	Psychological Operations
QIP	Quick Impact Project
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
R&D	Reconstruction and Development
R&R	Rest and Recuperation
RA	Royal Artillery
RAC	Royal Armoured Corps
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCDM	Royal College of Defence Medicine
RCT	Regimental Combat Team (US Army)
RE	Royal Engineers
REME	Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
REO	Regional Embassy Office (US Term)
RLS	Real Life Support
RMP	Royal Military Police
RN	Royal Navy
RLC	Royal Logistic Corps
ROCC	Review of Officer Career Courses
ROE	Rules of Engagement
ROSO	Regimental Operations Support Officer
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
R SIGNALS	Royal Signals
RSOI	Reception, Staging and Onward Integration
RTMC	Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary

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SAMIS	Sickness Absence Management Information System
SBMRI	Senior British Military Representative in Iraq
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
SF	Special Forces
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SFSG	Special Forces Support Group
SGC	Special Group Command
SH	Support Helicopter
SIPRNet	Secret Internet Protocol Router Network
SLB	Shaibah Logistic Base
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SMS	Short Message Service
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFA	Status of Forces Act
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TA	Territorial Army
TAG	Threat Assessment Group
TCG	Tasking Coordination Group
TCMC	Theatre Contractor Management Cell
TF	Task Force
TI	Thermal Imaging
TOC	Tactical Operations Center
TQ	Tactical Questioning
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
TRiM	Trauma Management
TTP	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UGL	Underslung Grenade Launcher
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UOR	Urgent Operational Requirement
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USUR	Urgent Statement of User Requirement
VCP	Vehicle Check Point
VO	Visiting Officer
VTC	Video Tele-Conference
WIS	Weapons Intelligence Staff
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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