House of Commons

Defence Committee

Lessons of Iraq

Third Report of Session 2003–04

Volume I: Report

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Volume I

Report, together with formal minutes

Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 3 March 2004

The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mark Hutton (Clerk), Steven Mark (Second Clerk), Ian Rogers (Audit Adviser), Dr John Gearson (Committee Specialist), Lis McCracken (Committee Assistant), Sheryl Dinsdale (Secretary) and James McQuade (Senior Office Clerk).

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Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1.   The men and women of the Armed Forces deserve the highest praise for their conduct and performance in Iraq. The commitment required of them not only during the combat operations but also in the subsequent peacekeeping and peace support roles is of a very high order. (Paragraph 1)

2.   We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives. (Paragraph 1)

3.   We welcome the openness of MoD and the Armed Forces in publishing its 'lessons learned' reports on operations in Iraq and we commend them for the efforts they made to do so promptly after the major combat phase had concluded. (Paragraph 6)

4.   We regret that MoD has failed to provide us with certain documents which we have requested and has demonstrated on occasion less co-operation and openness than we have the right to expect as a select committee of the House of Commons. (Paragraph 21)

Special Forces

5.   The 'increasing role' of Special Forces was demonstrated in operations in Afghanistan, and has now been emphatically reinforced by the crucial role which they played in Iraq. Their skills and professionalism provide a unique capability to the total British military effort. (Paragraph 23)

Planning and Strategy

The debate within the Pentagon

6.   The British, who had had embedded staff officers at Centcom from September 2001, were the first foreigners to be brought into the American planning process and appear to have been influential in the overall shape of the plan. In this the British-American relationship also drew on more than 10 years of close collaboration between the RAF and USAF in enforcing the northern and southern no-fly zones over Iraq. We are not, however, able to define the areas in which the British made specific contribution to what was essentially an American campaign plan, other than in the consideration of the northern option and in niche capabilities such as special forces operations. (Paragraph 43)

Effect of Operation Fresco

7.   Although the Armed Forces commitment to Operation Fresco did not prevent them from putting together an effective force package for the operation in Iraq, it did limit the total numbers. It also adversely affected some elements of the force (by for example requiring high readiness units to move at short notice from fire-

fighting to deploying to Iraq). In the longer term it could have undermined the Armed Forces' ability to sustain combat operations. (Paragraph 56)

8.   **Overall, the demands that Operation Telic placed on UK Armed Forces in the context of other operational requirements were very close to the maximum that they could sustain.** (Paragraph 57)

Planning Assumptions

9.   **We believe that MoD should consider whether for major equipment and capabilities the planning assumptions process is sufficiently flexible to match the very wide range of types and scales of operations which our Armed Forces may be required to undertake in the future.** (Paragraph 59)

The Northern Option to the Southern Option

10.   **From the evidence we have seen it appears that the late decision to move from the north to the south led to a requirement for the UK to deploy a significantly larger force—at least one brigade, something over 5,000 troops. This may well have been a contributory factor in complicating the various logistical problems that were later faced.** (Paragraph 69)

The force balance

11.   **MoD needs to urgently re-examine the mechanisms, including the use of reserves, by which units are brought to war establishment with minimal disruption in all important preparatory phases of the operations.** (Paragraph 71)

12.   **Overall, however, the signs are that, above Brigade level (i.e. at Division level), UK Armed Forces have become a one operation force—one operation which must be followed by a lengthy period of recovery before they can be in position to mount another similar operation, even within a coalition.** (Paragraph 74)

13.   **We are pleased to learn that according to *Lessons for the Future*, MoD intends to review the generation of force elements at readiness and the implications for notice to move times. But we feel that MoD should be more explicit in articulating what scale of forces can be offered for expeditionary operations of choice in the future, while ensuring adequate resources, equipment and training time.** (Paragraph 75)

Command and control

Higher Command Levels

14.   **The appointment of a deployed UK National Contingent Commander worked effectively in Operation Telic.** (Paragraph 82)

15.   **We expect MoD to revisit the question of the deployability of PJHQ, raised in the SDR, in the light of recent operations, and we look forward to their conclusions.** (Paragraph 82)

Command relations with the Americans

16. We recommend that MoD considers whether the highest levels of British command structures might be made more adaptable so as to be able to operate more closely in parallel with their American counterparts, when UK and US forces are operating together. (Paragraph 84)

The Maritime Component

17. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary made a vital contribution to the operation. MoD should ensure that the shortcomings which were highlighted are addressed. (Paragraph 88)

Targeting

18. There is clear evidence of UK influence on the air targeting operations of the coalition. Principally this influence seems to have been applied to issues of perception, specifically how attacking particular targets would be received by European allies. The extent to which the UK persuaded the US out of attacking certain targets on grounds of principle is less clear. We asked MoD for specific examples of UK influence but they failed to provide any, even on a classified basis. (Paragraph 98)

19. We feel that the shortcomings in the practice and training of close air support by the RAF and land forces which have emerged in recent operations must be urgently addressed. This will require a reassessment of the numbers of and equipment for Forward Air Controllers, both on the ground and in the air, the provision of adequate targeting pods for individual aircraft and significantly greater exercising of these capabilities in a joint environment. Such exercises are likely to have to take place overseas since, as we understand it, no UK based facility exists for such training. (Paragraph 104)

20. Effective and timely arrangements for assessing battle damage are crucial for continuously informing the campaign plan and for establishing whether the aim of minimising damage to civilians and civilian infrastructure has been achieved. We look to MoD to exploit the latest technological advances to further improve the speed and accuracy of battle damage assessment. (Paragraph 106)

Use of Reserves

Call-out and mobilisation

21. While we are pleased to learn that for Operations Telic 2 and 3, MoD has been able to give most reservists 21 days notice to report, we are concerned that for Telic 1 reservists were given 14 days notice to report, and in some cases considerably less. We expect MoD to ensure that the appropriate lessons are learned to avoid the need for such short notice to report, and to recognise the impact of this on reservists, their families and their employers. (Paragraph 116)

22.   **We expect MoD and the reserve organisations to take appropriate action to ensure that reservists are made fully aware of their liability for call out.** (Paragraph 117)

23.   **We recommend that MoD consider what action can be taken to ensure that the substantial proportion of regular reservists who failed their medicals return to being 'fit for role'.** (Paragraph 119)

24.   **Overall, it appears that the majority of reservists mobilising through Chilwell considered that they had received adequate training before being deployed. However, we are concerned about the non-alignment of TA and Regular shooting standards and expect MoD to address this issue as soon as possible.** (Paragraph 122)

Finance and compensation issues

25.   **We are concerned to learn that some TA reservists experienced problems regarding their pay. We understand that for future operations, where significant numbers of reservists are deployed, PJHQ have agreed to the deployment of a Reserves Cell whose role will include issues such as pay and allowances. We expect MoD to ensure that this lesson is implemented in full.** (Paragraph 125)

26.   **It is clearly wrong that reservists who are compulsorily mobilised for combat operations should lose out financially. We note that to date only a small number of appeals have been made by reservists dissatisfied with their individual financial arrangements. We recommend that these be considered sympathetically and that MoD monitor closely the numbers and outcomes of such appeals over the coming months.** (Paragraph 126)

27.   **We expect MoD to ensure that the procedures for reservists claiming financial assistance are streamlined and less intrusive.** (Paragraph 127)

Employment issues

28.   **We note that MoD has commissioned a study to measure the degree of employer support for the mobilisation of the Reserve and look forward to seeing the findings and the lessons that MoD identify. But we consider that MoD needs to adopt a more proactive approach to identifying cases where reservists have experienced employment problems following a period of mobilisation. Reservists need to be assured that they will not lose their jobs, as a result of being mobilised, and that support will be available if they encounter such problems.** (Paragraph 129)

29.   **We are very concerned to learn that 11 members of the TA in Germany (over a quarter of the TA in Germany deployed to Operation Telic), who form part of a key squadron (the Amphibious Engineer Squadron), lost their jobs with civilian employers on returning from deployment on Operation Telic. We expect MoD and the reserve organisations to raise these matters with the relevant authorities within Germany and with the civilian employers of the TA reservists in Germany.** (Paragraph 131)

30. **We are concerned that the requirement on reservists to inform their employers of their reserve status seems to have been announced ahead of the findings of MoD's own study on employer support. There does not seem to have been prior consultation with members of the Reserve. We recommend that MoD set out why it chose to make this change at this time.** (Paragraph 132)

Impact on the reserves

31. **It is unreasonable that reserve personnel deployed on Operation Telic should have to do additional service, on top of the six to nine months taken up by that tour, to qualify for their annual bounty and we recommend that MoD waives this requirement.** (Paragraph 134)

32. **MoD has identified a number of lessons relating to the Reserve from the experience of Operation Telic. We look to MoD to implement these lessons in full. We welcome the announcement that, following Operation Telic, MoD is adjusting the arrangements for the higher management of the Reserve and that the Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets will come under the direct command of the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, which reflects the importance of this key part of our Armed Forces.** (Paragraph 135)

33. **Throughout our inquiry we have come into contact with a range of reservists who served on Operation Telic. As with the Regular service personnel, we have been impressed with their dedication and the invaluable contribution they made. We concur with MoD's conclusion that reservists 'showed the highest quality and commitment… their value in all phases of an operation has again been demonstrated.'** (Paragraph 136)

Defence Medical Services

Manning

34. **We find it worrying that some five years after the Strategic Defence Review the problems in the DMS, in particular the problem of under manning, appear to be as bad as they ever have been. We were alarmed to learn that for the major specialties for war MoD had 'emptied the boxes' for Operation Telic. Further deployments in the near future are only likely to exacerbate the problems.** (Paragraph 143)

35. **We acknowledge that the manning issue is not an easy one to address quickly, but we look to MoD, the Department of Health, the NHS and the medical profession to support the DMS in its efforts to find new and innovative solutions.** (Paragraph 144)

36. **We recommend that MoD bring together the Department of Health, the NHS and the medical profession with the DMS in order urgently to identify solutions to the problem of increasing specialism among surgeons in the NHS.** (Paragraph 146)

37.   **We are most concerned to learn that 47 medical reservists have resigned on returning from Operation Telic, and that MoD is aware of further resignations from Army medical reservists. The number of resignations represents some six per cent of the 760 medical reservists deployed. We expect MoD to monitor this issue closely, to identify the reasons behind the resignations, and to take account of these in its recruitment and retention efforts.** (Paragraph 147)

Impact on the NHS

38.   **This was the first operation where all the medical personnel deployed came almost exclusively from the NHS and it appears that the arrangements, such as the liaison between MoD, the Department of Health, and NHS Trusts worked well. However, thankfully, the number of casualties was low and the arrangements for treating casualties in NHS hospitals were not fully tested.** (Paragraph 149)

Medical equipment and supplies

39.   **We are pleased to learn that lessons about the need to have more medical supplies on the shelves rather than over-relying on UORs have been recognised. We expect MoD to identify the appropriate balance between holding items and relying on UORs. We also expect MoD to review any cases from Operation Telic where inadequate or insufficient equipment may have disadvantaged clinical outcomes and, if any such cases are identified, to take appropriate action to avoid such situations occurring in the future.** (Paragraph 152)

Deployment

Sea Lift and Air Lift

40.   **We conclude that deploying such a large force to the Gulf in the time available was a significant achievement.** (Paragraph 155)

41.   **MoD should identify how the challenges of limited landing slots for aircraft and small sea ports could be addressed in the future.** (Paragraph 158)

42.   **We recognise the achievement of the DTMA in securing the sea lift for Operation Telic. We recommend that, drawing on the experience from Operation Telic, MoD should undertake a review of ro-ro shipping to inform its future planning.** (Paragraph 162)

43.   **The action taken by MoD ensured that the UK had sufficient lift, but the outcome could well have been different. For any future operations, MoD needs to avoid competing directly with the US for outsize lift and co-ordinate its efforts to secure such assets.** (Paragraph 163)

44.   **Recent operations have highlighted the need for sufficient sea and air lift. We look to MoD to ensure that those assets that have performed their task well are available to our Armed Forces in the future. We regret that the A400M programme, which is intended to meet the UK's Future Transport Aircraft**

requirement, has experienced delays to its planned in-service date. We expect MoD to ensure that the current forecast in-service date is met and that any capability gaps from delays already experienced are filled. (Paragraph 167)

Urgent Operational Requirements

45.   **We acknowledge that there were constraints on when the UOR process could begin, but it is of real concern that in some cases this resulted in Armed Forces personnel not having access to the full complement of equipment, such as Minimi machine guns and Underslung Grenade Launchers.** (Paragraph 177)

46.   **Much of the equipment procured as UORs made a significant contribution to the success of the campaign and, in most cases, industry supplied equipment at very short notice. However UORs are not the solution in every case. MoD needs to be better informed of which types of equipment and capabilities can be delivered in UOR timescales—there were a number of cases where equipment was not delivered by the time required or where users did not have a full complement. We do not consider that MoD planning properly recognised that the delivery date for a piece of equipment and the date by which a capability is achieved are not the same. If personnel are to be confident and fully efficient with their equipment there must be adequate time for familiarisation, training and integration. Furthermore, given the desire stated in the recent White Paper to be able to intervene anywhere in the world at short notice, we believe that the risks of relying on UORs instead of holding adequate stocks, are not sufficiently well analysed or understood in MoD's risk assessment processes.** (Paragraph 181)

47.   **There are likely to be positive lessons from the UOR process which have applicability to MoD's normal equipment acquisition processes: for example, where UORs were used to accelerate existing programmes. We expect MoD to identify and implement these and reflect on the appropriateness of UOR procurement becoming institutionalised.** (Paragraph 183)

48.   **We expect MoD to evaluate fully the performance of the equipment procured as UORs and the specific enhancements they provided to the UK's military capabilities. This evaluation must also take full account of the views of those members of the Armed Forces who used the equipment in action. Disposing of useful equipment cannot represent good value for money if it then has to be re-acquired in the future.** (Paragraph 184)

The start of operations

From planning to operations—what was found

49.   **The Committee congratulates the Royal Navy for the success of the complex and demanding operation to clear mines from the waterway to Umm Qasr and urges the MoD to review, as a matter of urgency, the capability of the Royal Navy to undertake mine clearance operations in shallow and very shallow waters, given the likely need for increasing amphibious operations in the littoral.** (Paragraph 195)

The Approach to Basra

50.   **The operation to take Basra was a significant military achievement. One measure of its success—and in the context of an effects-based operation an important one—was that just one week later there were joint UK/Iraqi patrols.** (Paragraph 202)

Major defence equipment

Overall performance

51.   **We are pleased to learn that in most cases the major defence equipments performed well in the difficult conditions encountered in Iraq although, given the nature of the enemy, many equipments were not tested to the full.** (Paragraph 209)

Availability of equipment

52.   **The availability of most defence equipment was generally high during Operation Telic. However, it is disappointing that an impressive capability such as HMS Ocean is let down by unreliable landing craft and 'that there are difficulties with the acceptance of the new landing craft.' We expect MoD to remedy this issue as soon as possible to ensure that the capabilities of HMS Ocean are maximised.** (Paragraph 213)

Communication and Information Systems

53.   **It concerns us that for the next four to five years we will continue to be dependent upon Skynet 4 which has recognised limitations and which let us down on this occasion.** (Paragraph 215)

54.   **Operation Telic highlighted serious shortcomings in the reliability, capacity and redundancy of the UK's communications and information systems, which to a large extent are a consequence of under-investment in the past. While we acknowledge that work is in hand to address these shortcomings, we find it very worrying that it will be some time before any real improvements will be seen, particularly given the frequency with which UK Armed Forces are now involved in operations, and the increased need to communicate effectively not only within UK forces but also with our allies.** (Paragraph 218)

Combat identification

55.   **We welcome the overall finding of the National Audit Office that on Operation Telic, the measures, procedures and training relating to combat identification were largely effective. We are disappointed that a copy of the review of combat identification undertaken by the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, which was provided to the National Audit Office, was not made available to the Defence Committee during its inquiry.** (Paragraph 222)

56. **We expect MoD to make available to Parliament and the Committee the summaries of the conclusions of the reports of the Boards of Inquiry into individual blue on blue incidents as soon as possible and for the summaries to provide sufficient information on the causes of the incidents and the lessons learned in order to reassure the Armed Forces and ourselves that everything practicable was done to minimise the possibility of such incidents.** (Paragraph 229)

57. **We expect MoD to implement the lessons from Operation Telic relating to combat identification. MoD should push forward with the work with its allies to agree on a single system. The latter is particularly important given that future UK military action is most likely to be as part of a coalition. We note MoD's view that the opportunities for fratricide in an increasingly complex battle space are likely to increase, but look to MoD to identify the required action and make the necessary investment to ensure that such incidents are reduced to a minimum.** (Paragraph 233)

UAVs

58. **We are pleased to hear that, despite its chequered past, Phoenix made a valuable contribution to the operation. We support the robust approach being adopted in relation to the Watchkeeper UAV programme, which aims to 'nail the… requirement and to make sure that the companies deliver that which we have asked for' although we continue to be concerned that the accelerated in-service date for the programme may not be met. We will continue to monitor the progress of this key programme.** (Paragraph 236)

59. **We consider it well worthwhile that MoD is assessing the usefulness of man-portable UAVs for current operations in Iraq. We expect MoD to reflect the results of this assessment when deciding on the overall mix of UAVs for the future.** (Paragraph 237)

Apache

60. **We conclude that there are key lessons from the United States' experience in Iraq which MoD needs to take into account when developing its tactics, techniques and procedures for its Apache helicopters. We expect MoD to take the required action to ensure that UK Apache helicopters are as capable as they can be, given the new sorts of environments and operations they are likely to be operating in.** (Paragraph 240)

Sea King

61. **The Sea King helicopter made a significant contribution to the operation and highlighted the benefit of acquiring equipment that is sufficiently adaptable. However, we are concerned to learn that, at times, the Sea King provided the only dedicated stand-off sensor coverage for 3 Commando Brigade's operations on the Al Faw peninsula. We expect MoD to ensure that the Astor programme meets its in-service date to fill the current capability gap.** (Paragraph 241)

62.   **We expect MoD to ensure that the lessons identified to minimise the Sea King's vulnerability are fully implemented.** (Paragraph 242)

The Defence White Paper

63.   **We have announced our intention to undertake an inquiry into the Defence White Paper. We will also continue to monitor the progress of the FRES programme as part of our annual inquiry into defence procurement.** (Paragraph 246)

Personal equipment and protection

64.   **We are pleased to note that, following its initial rejection of the concerns about personal equipment and protection, MoD now acknowledges that there was a problem which had a detrimental impact on service personnel. Robust arrangements should now be introduced to gauge the views of more junior ranks and specialists whose widespread concerns do not seem to be properly understood, reflected and acted upon by more senior commanders and officials further up the chain.** (Paragraph 249)

Desert boots and clothing

65.   **The issue of the availability of desert clothing and boots during Operation Telic has been both a confusing and worrying story. MoD should clarify its position on the circumstances in which desert clothing and boots are to be used and ensure that all service personnel understand the position. MoD clearly underestimated the impact on morale of failing to provide service personnel with the clothing and boots which they required and expected. We find it unacceptable that some two weeks after the start of the combat phase 60 per cent of the additional clothing requirement that had been ordered was not available in theatre. We understand that MoD has now increased its stockholding of desert and tropical clothing and boots up to a total of 32,000 sets. We expect MoD to keep the level of stockholding under review.** (Paragraph 257)

Enhanced body armour

66.   **Body armour is another example of where MoD's in-theatre distribution and tracking led to shortages in critical equipment. MoD should identify and implement solutions to address these shortcomings and ensure that service personnel receive the equipment they are entitled to.** (Paragraph 262)

67.   **We will be interested to see the results of the audit of previously issued body armour components and the action that MoD plans to take in response to the findings.** (Paragraph 264)

68.   **Before any firm decision on whether enhanced body armour should become a personal issue item is made, the views of service personnel, as well as the logistic implications of a change in policy, must be considered. If the conclusion is that enhanced body armour is not required for all operations, efforts should**

nonetheless be made to ensure that where it is required it is issued to personnel before their deployment. (Paragraph 265)

SA80 A2

69.   **The modifications to the SA80 have provided UK service personnel with a more effective weapon system. MoD must ensure that users of the weapon are kept fully aware of the cleaning requirements for different environments and provide the necessary cleaning material. Concerns about the weapon's safety catch must be monitored and, where necessary, appropriate action taken.** (Paragraph 267)

Ammunition

70.   **Our examination suggests that there were problems with the supply of ammunition when the fighting echelon began operations. MoD accepts that in the very early stages there were some problems and not all service personnel had the right amount. We expect MoD to establish the scale of the problem, to investigate any specific cases identified, in particular the tragic incident involving the six Royal Military Policemen, and to implement the necessary action to avoid any re-occurrence in the future.** (Paragraph 270)

Night vision capability

71.   **We understand that MoD is currently reviewing the scales of issue of night vision equipment. We consider that the ability to operate confidently and effectively at night greatly enhances force protection and capability. We look to MoD to examine the case for providing night vision capability to all service personnel who are required to operate at night.** (Paragraph 272)

NBC equipment

72.   **We find it alarming that MoD had to 'move Combopens around in theatre' to fulfil the requirement.** (Paragraph 274)

73.   **Given the potential threat posed by Iraqi armed forces, sufficient chemical warfare detection and protection were particularly important for this operation. However, there were serious shortcomings in the supply and distribution system and the required levels of detection and protection were not always available to everyone. Indeed, while MoD ideally would have liked each serviceman and woman to have had four suits available, only one suit per person was available, which MoD judged to be sufficient for this operation. Furthermore it is essential that personnel have confidence in the effectiveness of the equipment with which they are provided. It was fortuitous that service personnel did not suffer as a consequence, but had the Iraqis used chemical weapons systematically, as employed in the Iran-Iraq war, the operational consequences would have been severe. The lack of armoured vehicle filters seems to us to be a matter of the utmost seriousness. The lessons identified need to be implemented as a matter of urgency to ensure that servicemen and women serving on operations have complete and justified confidence that chemical warfare attacks will be detected**

in time, that their individual protection equipment will save their lives and that operational success will not be imperilled. This is particularly important given that UK service personnel are more likely to be operating in such environments in the future. (Paragraph 281)

Logistics and asset tracking

74.   Given how critical logistics are to operations, we expect MoD to implement the lessons identified in its reports on Operation Telic, and also those lessons identified by the National Audit Office. We intend to closely monitor the progress of MoD's end-to-end review. (Paragraph 283)

75.   We are in no doubt that one of the key lessons to emerge from Operation Telic concerns operational logistic support and specifically, the requirement for a robust system to track equipment and stocks both into and within theatre—a requirement which was identified in the 1991 Gulf War. The lack of such a system on Operation Telic resulted in numerous problems with the in-theatre distribution of critical items such as ammunition, body armour and NBC equipment. MoD has told us that having such a system is top of its logistics priorities and we understand that proposals will be submitted to Ministers in the spring. We urge Ministers to provide the necessary funding. However, we find it alarming that a full system is unlikely to be in place within the next five years. (Paragraph 291)

Accommodation and food

76.   We are pleased to learn that the majority of Armed Forces personnel in Iraq are now in satisfactory air-conditioned accommodation. Such accommodation is vital in ensuring that Armed Forces personnel can perform their roles effectively when they are deployed to harsh environments. It should be a priority of any operation that appropriate accommodation is made available as quickly as possible. (Paragraph 296)

77.   During our visit to Iraq we were impressed with the quality of the food provided to our Armed Forces, particularly given the difficult conditions, such as the very high temperatures, in which catering personnel had to work. (Paragraph 299)

Operational Welfare Package and Families

78.   We regret the decision to withdraw the free postal service in February 2004. (Paragraph 300)

79.   The operational welfare package in place for Operation Telic worked well and was well received. However, we are concerned that early entry forces saw little benefit from the package. MoD acknowledges that this is an area where improvements are needed. We expect MoD to implement such improvements as quickly as possible. (Paragraph 302)

80.   We are pleased to learn that the needs of families are being addressed and that there is now a families element to the operational welfare package. (Paragraph 305)

81.   MoD is currently considering further ways of providing improved information to families. Given how important this is to families, MoD should implement the improvements identified as quickly as possible. (Paragraph 306)

82.   The families of reservists have not, in the past, received the same level of support as the families of regular service personnel. We recommend that MoD takes action to address this imbalance. This is particularly important given the increased contribution which reservists are now making and are expected to make to future operations. (Paragraph 309)

83.   MoD needs to ensure that service personnel have access to the required level of life and accident insurance while on operations. (Paragraph 310)

Bereavement

84.   We conclude that, overall, MoD's casualty reporting arrangements worked well during Operation Telic. We emphasise the critical importance of ensuring that next of kin are informed of any casualty by the MoD and not the media. We welcome the improvements in the revised arrangements introduced, which now better reflect the needs of bereaved families. (Paragraph 316)

85.   We welcome the fact that widows' benefits have been extended to unmarried partners of service personnel who die in conflict, and that bereaved families can now remain in their service accommodation until they are ready to leave. We look to MoD to implement any further improvements which are identified by the current tri-Service review of bereavement policy. (Paragraph 318)

Training

86.   The high number of operations which UK service personnel have been involved in has had an adverse impact on their training. We expect MoD to ensure that service personnel returning from operations catch up with their training as soon as possible and that promotion opportunities are not adversely affected because of their operational deployment. But we recognise that, in the short term, the most important point is for service personnel to recuperate properly and that this includes the opportunity to take the leave to which they are entitled. However, the Government must recognise that the Armed Forces are simply not large enough to sustain the pattern of operational deployment since the Strategic Defence Review permanently without serious risk of damage to their widely admired professional standards. (Paragraph 320)

Post operational health

87.   We are pleased to hear that MoD has commissioned research into the physical and psychological health of personnel who deployed and that the initial research is being followed up in a major study to commence early this year. We look

forward to seeing the outcome of this work and expect MoD to take appropriate action in response to its findings. (Paragraph 322)

88.   **We are pleased to learn that the take up and use of the new medical form appears to have been high and that, despite the increased administrative burden, it has proved popular with users. We note that MoD is reviewing the format in order to ensure even greater utility for future operations.** (Paragraph 323)

89.   **We welcome the measures relating to post traumatic stress disorder which MoD introduced for Operation Telic. We look to MoD to monitor this aspect closely and also other illnesses experienced as a result of being deployed on Operation Telic. We are disappointed by the delays to the publication of MoD's paper covering the health lessons from Operation Granby and the experience of Operation Telic. Given the level of interest in these matters, we expect MoD to publish this paper as soon as possible.** (Paragraph 327)

Costs and recovery

Resource Accounting and Budgeting

90.   **Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) is a complex financial process and MoD needs to ensure that its staff are appropriately trained in its application. We remain concerned that the application of RAB may, perhaps through a misinterpretation of its aim, have led to stock holdings being reduced too far. We recommend that MoD undertakes a review which assesses whether RAB is leading to poor decision making, in particular in relation to stock level holdings.** (Paragraph 333)

Cost of the operation

91.   **It will be some time before the costs of the operation in 2003–04 are known— perhaps not until late summer 2004 when they are published in MoD's Annual Report and Accounts. MoD acknowledges that it has taken longer than expected to assess the costs of stock consumed and equipment lost or damaged during the conflict phase. We expect MoD to ensure this work is advanced as quickly as possible and for the outcome to be reported to Parliament as soon as it is completed.** (Paragraph 339)

92.   **We expect MoD to recover costs owed to them by other coalition partners as soon as possible.** (Paragraph 340)

Funding of the operation

93.   **We expect MoD to replace the equipment, and the stores and supplies, necessary to restore the operational capabilities consumed or lost during Operation Telic as soon as possible, to ensure that Armed Forces personnel can undertake their roles effectively.** (Paragraph 344)

Transition and Reconstruction

Plans and preparations

94. **Being a junior partner in a coalition constrained the British Government in its ability to plan independently for after the conflict.** (Paragraph 355)

Constraints

95. **We believe that it was a misjudgement by the Government to have decided that planning to meet the needs of the Iraqi people following a conflict was particularly sensitive—more sensitive, even, than the deploying of military forces. This misjudgement unnecessarily constrained planning for the post-conflict phase.** (Paragraph 357)

96. **It has also been suggested that DfID's role in post-conflict planning was constrained by the attitude of the then Secretary of State towards the prospect of military action. Although our witness from DfID denied that this was the case, we remain to be convinced.** (Paragraph 358)

97. **The poor co-ordination of planning within the US Administration meant that better co-ordinated British input into the process had less impact than it should have had.** (Paragraph 362)

98. **The need to maintain a unified Iraq under central control has been a constraint— usually a reasonable constraint—on British freedom of action in the south-east of the country.** (Paragraph 364)

99. **Perversely, the failure of the wider international community to support the coalition's military action did little or nothing to constrain that action, but did make it more difficult for the coalition to restore law and order and to administer Iraq once hostilities were over.** (Paragraph 365)

Planning assumptions for the transitional phase

100. **The Government was right to plan for a humanitarian crisis. Such a situation might have arisen, and the Government would have been rightly condemned if its preparations had been inadequate.** (Paragraph 369)

101. **For the Government to argue that it was unaware of the extent of the repressive brutality of the Iraqi regime strains credibility. It was widely known, not least because of information published by the Government.** (Paragraph 375)

Insecurity and disorder in the transitional phase

102. **Much has been made of the many Iraqis who were involved in looting and destruction in the immediate aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. It should not be forgotten that thousands more were locked up indoors, fearing for their security and for their lives.** (Paragraph 379)

103. **The scale and shape of the force provided were best suited to achieving the coalition's desired effects in the combat phase, but not to carrying those effects through into the post-conflict phase. We acknowledge, however, that the scale of force which might have best achieved these effects was beyond the Government's means.** (Paragraph 387)

104. **A harsh critic might argue that coalition planning assumed that it would be possible to employ elements of the Iraqi police, army and administration to maintain law and order, because the alternatives were too difficult to contemplate. That assumption was not only incorrect, but incautious. A realistic judgement, based on good intelligence, should have warned of the risk of serious disorder.** (Paragraph 388)

105. **It was indeed crucial to protect Iraq's oil infrastructure from damage, as the main potential source of future Iraqi wealth. But it was a mistake not to have identified and protected (and to have been seen to be protecting) other key buildings and infrastructure as a priority.** (Paragraph 390)

106. **If 'a few more' troops were needed to protect key sites, this should have been identified as a scenario at the planning stage, and these troops should have been found and deployed with this specific task in mind.** (Paragraph 392)

107. **The Government should have taken more care to identify in advance sites in Iraq likely to contain records of use to the coalition, and should have ensured that forces were provided to protect these sites from damage and looting.** (Paragraph 397)

108. **While coalition forces successfully removed Saddam Hussein's regime with remarkable speed, they were not able to establish themselves on the ground with sufficient speed and precision to avoid a damaging period of lawlessness during which much of the potential goodwill of the Iraqi people was squandered.** (Paragraph 398)

109. **None of these criticisms, however, should be seen to detract from the thoroughly impressive way in which individual members of Armed Forces personnel demonstrated their ability to accomplish the transition between warfighting and peacekeeping operations swiftly and effectively.** (Paragraph 399)

110. **We commend the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the performance of its humanitarian role in Iraq, before, during and after the combat phase of operations, and we commend British forces for the way in which they co-operated with the ICRC.** (Paragraph 402)

Lessons for future campaigns

111. **We recommend that the Government should consider closely, in the light of operations in Iraq, how the United Kingdom provides peace support capabilities, and in particular how the transition is managed between warfighting and peacekeeping. We further recommend that the Government should consider whether either a dedicated part of the Armed Forces, or even a separate**

organisation altogether, could be specifically tasked with providing these capabilities. (Paragraph 407)

112. **We are concerned about the continuing requirement on the ground for specialists from the military in areas which would under other circumstances be provided by civilian organisations. Many of these specialists will be reservists, and their prolonged deployment may have adverse consequences for retention in specialisms which are already suffering from undermanning.** (Paragraph 411)

113. **We agree that the provision of language training will need to be re-examined if the Armed Forces are to be more involved in expeditionary operations in the future. In an effects-based operation aiming to win over hearts and minds, an ability to communicate with the local population is vital.** (Paragraph 414)

114. **Preparations should have been made in advance of the military campaign to ensure that police advice on maintaining law and order would be available as soon as possible after the end of the combat phase.** (Paragraph 416)

115. **While we support entirely the notion that Iraqis should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own security, we are concerned that local militias which have been allowed to operate in the south-east of Iraq may represent vested interests. There is a danger that these may seek to use their position to pursue agendas which might not be to the advantage of the people of Iraq more generally.** (Paragraph 417)

Reconstruction

116. **The circumstances of the conflict in Iraq were particular: operations without broad international consensus in a country with a relatively advanced but extremely decrepit infrastructure. While MoD is right to assess whether a national capability to repair infrastructure is required, it would be wrong to assume that a capability which might have been useful in Iraq will necessarily be required in future operations.** (Paragraph 422)

117. **Quick Impact Projects are, as one of our interlocutors told us in Iraq, a 'band-aid' solution, which cannot hope to approach the scale of the reconstruction effort required in Iraq. But they have been a vital tool for showing that there are immediate benefits from the presence of coalition forces and the end of Saddam Hussein's rule. We commend all those involved.** (Paragraph 425)

118. **Coalition efforts to clear unexploded ordnance throughout Iraq will make the country a far safer place for the people who live there. But the failure to provide sufficient forces to guard and secure munitions sites in the weeks and months after the conflict cost Iraqi civilian lives, and also provided potential enemies of the coalition with a ready stock of easily accessible weaponry.** (Paragraph 431)

119. **The Government should look again at whether the relatively modest funds that it has dedicated to supporting the clearance of unexploded ordnance in Iraq are adequate for the task at hand.** (Paragraph 432)

120. **Mistakes were made in identifying potential local leaders, and without better intelligence and a better understanding of Iraqi society, such mistakes were probably inevitable.** (Paragraph 437)

121. **The Armed Forces have done their utmost to fulfil their responsibilities to the Iraqi people as the occupying power, and we applaud them. But they have been under-resourced for this enormous task. It is unreasonable to expect the military to have a fine-grained understanding of how an unfamiliar society operates; but without this understanding, and without substantial civilian support in the form of experts and interpreters to help them to gain this understanding, mistakes were bound to be made which would make it more difficult to construct the kind of Iraq that the coalition wants to see: stable, secure and prosperous; a threat neither to its neighbours nor to the wider world.** (Paragraph 441)

Information Operations

UK psychological operations capabilities

122. **Our evidence suggests that if information operations are to be successful, it is essential that they should start in the period when diplomatic efforts are still being made, albeit backed by the coercive threat of military force through overt preparations. This would allow for the full potential of information operations to be exerted in advance of the start of hostilities and might even contribute to their avoidance.** (Paragraph 455)

Effectiveness

123. **We believe that the British information operations campaign did not begin early enough. We are concerned that the lessons of the Kosovo campaign were not better learned in this important area. It is disappointing that the coalition is widely perceived to have 'come second' in perception management. However, we recognise that 'coming second' may be inevitable if a conflict of choice is being pursued by liberal democracies with a free media. We are, however, persuaded that information operations are an activity which can be expected to become of increasing importance in future operations. There were a number of successes which provide evidence of the potential effectiveness of information operations. We recommend that the Government should consider significantly enhancing our capabilities in this area.** (Paragraph 465)

Role of the Media

124. **We believe that the importance of the media campaign in the modern world remains under-appreciated by sections of the Armed Forces. The early establishment of a robust media operations capability in theatre must be a priority for any operation. Where an operation is perceived to be a 'war of choice' the ability to handle multiple media organisations in theatre with professionalism and sophistication is essential.** (Paragraph 477)

125. We strongly believe that the live broadcast of the death of service personnel would be utterly unacceptable. We recommend that MoD begin discussions as a matter of urgency with media organisations to find a solution to this very real possibility in a future conflict. (Paragraph 480)

126. Overall the embedding of journalists with combat units worked well. The experience is likely to be seen as a precedent for future operations. Problems arose, however, firstly with the shortage, particularly early on, of properly trained and experienced media officers in some units and secondly because of the inflexibility of the deployment arrangements of the journalists. We recommend that MoD take steps to avoid these problems arising in future operations. (Paragraph 486)

127. Whatever the intentions, it is clear that the arrangements to provide a broader context for individual reports from embedded journalists did not work in Operation Telic. In part this was a consequence of advances in technology and of the growth in 24 hour news channels, both of which can be expected to apply at least as forcibly in any future conflict. MoD needs to consider how better to support the context setting of battlefield information in the future. (Paragraph 495)

128. MoD did not fully appreciate how the embedding system, coupled with rolling 24 hour news programmes, would undermine their ability to manage the information coming out of the combat theatre. Nor were they successful in managing the expectations of the different journalists in different centres such as the Forward Transmission Unit and Qatar. We believe that failure to support the media presence swiftly enough with enough adequately trained and skilled media relations personnel was a serious shortcoming and one that MoD should not allow to happen again. It is also the case that this campaign went the coalition's way most of the time—in the circumstances of a more difficult military campaign it is not clear how the Ministry of Defence would cope with the pressures of unfavourable coverage from the front line. (Paragraph 499)

Cause and Effect

129. We welcome the fact that on this occasion the decision to commit forces followed resolutions of both Houses of Parliament, and believe that it should be seen as an explicit precedent for future combat operations. (Paragraph 504)

130. The crafting of the targeting set to minimise civilian casualties was not only a choice made by the coalition in order to achieve a particular effect, or deliver a particular message; it was also a requirement of international law. (Paragraph 514)

131. The priority for military planning must be the achievement of military objectives. We are concerned that too great a focus on effects-based planning, and on the part military action can play as one component in a spectrum of political and diplomatic activity, may further complicate the tasks of military planners and commanders who are already operating in an ever more complex battle space and under more intense and intrusive scrutiny than ever before. (Paragraph 517)

IRAQ
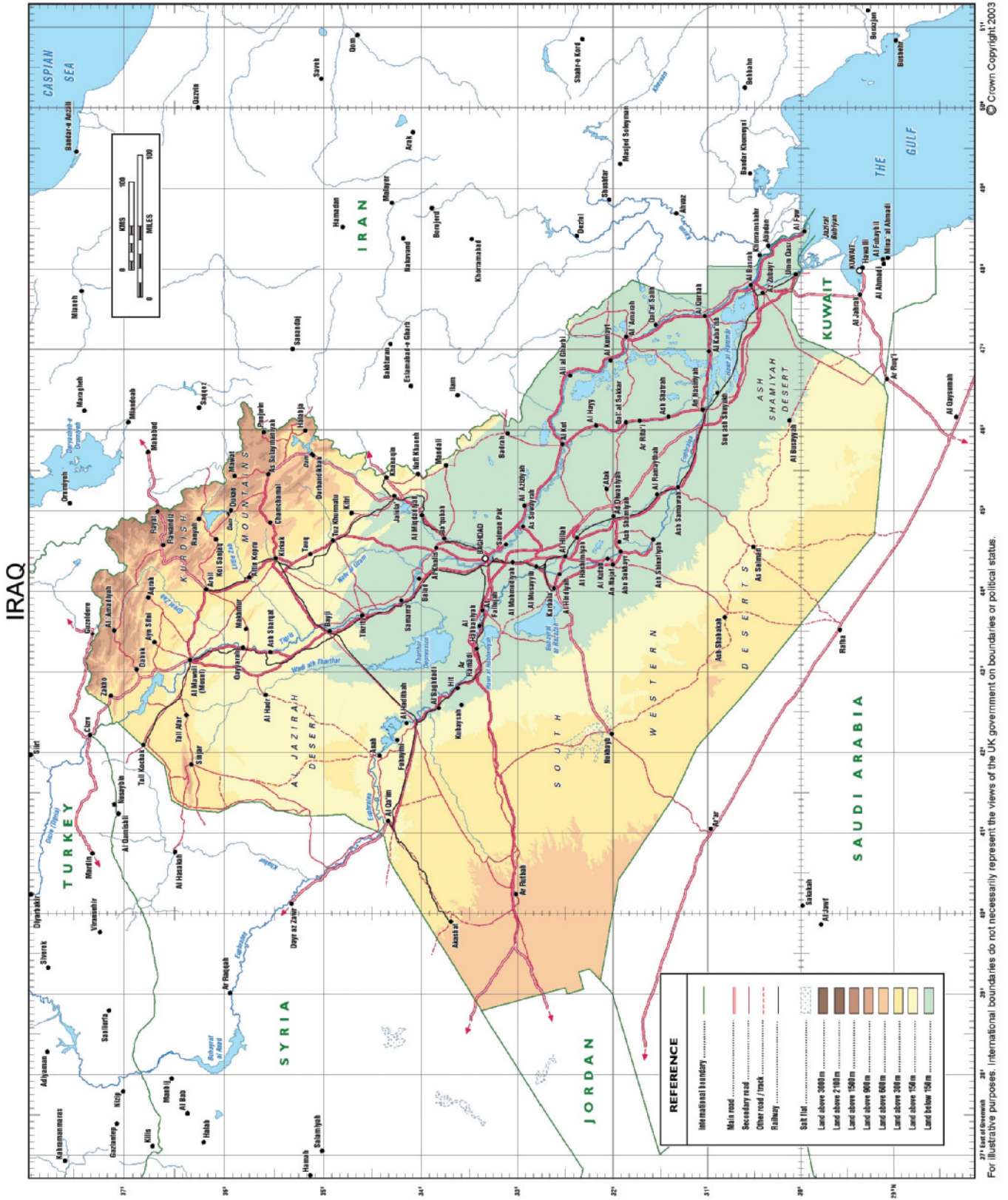
Source: Ministry of Defence

1 Introduction

1. **The men and women of the Armed Forces deserve the highest praise for their conduct and performance in Iraq. The commitment required of them not only during the combat operations but also in the subsequent peacekeeping and peace support roles is of a very high order.** That commitment is most forcibly demonstrated by the fact that 33 members of the Armed Forces lost their lives during the combat operation, and, 24 have subsequently lost their lives in the post-conflict period.[1] In addition 1,757 personnel have suffered injuries or illnesses severe enough to require their aeromedical evacuation, 160 of whom have been seriously ill or injured.[2] Considering the size of the deployed force and the task demanded of them these figures are thankfully small. But that is no comfort to the friends and families of those who lost their lives. **We extend to them our deepest sympathies.**

2. We are conscious that our coalition partners and the Iraqi people have also suffered significant casualties and we extend our sympathies to them as well.

3. We are aware that there have been a very small number of occasions on which the conduct of British service personnel appears to have fallen below what is expected of them. Some of these have been the subject of continuing investigations. We did not consider it appropriate to seek evidence on particular cases before those investigations had been completed.

Our inquiry

4. It has been the practice of Defence Committees to conduct inquiries following major combat operations involving UK Armed Forces.[3] The focus of our inquiry and therefore of this report has been the British contribution to the combat operations in Iraq in March and April 2003. But we have also examined the preparatory and deployment phases and the transition from combat operations to peace keeping and peace support operations. It is our intention to return to issues relating to the continuing British military commitment in Iraq later this year.

5. We chose not to commence our inquiry into Operation Telic until the combat operations had concluded, in order, to quote our predecessors in 1991, 'to avoid any possibility of endangering their success and thus the lives of British and Allied personnel, or of distracting the attention of those whose efforts had to be single-mindedly devoted to the endeavour.'[4] Nonetheless we kept a close eye on the operations as they unfolded. We are grateful to the Secretary of State for following the example of his predecessors in being prepared to give us regular private briefings during the combat phase.

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1   Ev 443

2   Ev 444

3   Eg First Report of Session 1982–83, *The Handling of Press and Public Information during the Falklands Conflict*, HC (1982–83) 17; Tenth Report of Session 1990–91, *Preliminary Lessons of Operation Granby*, HC (1990–91) 287; Fourteenth Report of Session 1999–2000, *Lessons of Kosovo*, HC (1999–2000) 347.

4   Tenth Report of Session 1990–91, HC 287

6. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) routinely conducts a 'lessons learned' exercise after an operation. On this occasion it decided to publish some initial lessons within a few months, with a more considered report following later. The Secretary of State told us:

> …the Ministry of Defence has launched a thorough and broad-ranging exercise to identify lessons learned from the operation. This work has only just started; it will be several weeks before we can publish our initial thoughts, and several months before we can present definitive conclusions.[5]

MoD published *Operations in Iraq: First Reflections* on 7 July 2003 and *Operations in Iraq: Lessons for the Future* on 11 December 2003. The second of these documents is not dissimilar in form to MoD's *Kosovo: Lessons from the crisis*, which was published in 2000. **We welcome the openness of MoD and the Armed Forces in publishing its 'lessons learned' reports on operations in Iraq and we commend them for the efforts they made to do so promptly after the major combat phase had concluded.**

7. Our inquiry began with evidence from the Secretary of State on 14 May 2003. Our final session of evidence was again with the Secretary of State on 5 February 2004. In total we took evidence on 19 occasions from 48 witnesses. As well as senior members of the Armed Forces and MoD who were involved in the operation our witnesses included officials from other Government departments, representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the media, as well as academics and commentators. A full list of our witnesses is on pages 204–6 . We also visited many of the units of our Armed Forces which took part in the operation and other organisations which contributed. In July 2003 we travelled to Iraq. We visited British forces in the south of the country and then flew to Baghdad to meet Ambassador Paul Bremer and other senior members of the Coalition Provisional Authority and Lt General Ricardo Sanchez, Commander of Combined Task Force 7 (ie the principal elements of Coalition forces in Iraq). We were also briefed on the work of the Iraq Survey Group. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to all those who shared their experiences and their knowledge with us as well as all those without whose help we could not have undertaken our many visits. Much of what has proved to be most useful and informative in the course of this inquiry has emerged from those visits.

8. Many of the officers involved in Operation Telic have subsequently been promoted. However, in order to avoid confusion, we have in this report referred to them throughout by the rank they held during the operation.

9. Throughout our inquiry we have been assisted by our Specialist Advisers: Mr Paul Beaver, Professor Michael Clarke, Rear Admiral Richard Cobbold, Dr Toby Dodge, Air Vice Marshal Tony Mason, and Brigadier Austin Thorp. We are grateful to them.

Other inquiries

10. We have already noted that MoD has published two documents on the lessons which it has drawn from operations in Iraq. A number of other inquiries have also taken place which have been relevant to our work.

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5   Q 1

11. The Foreign Affairs Committee published a report on the decision to go to war in Iraq on 7 July 2003.[6] That report focussed on the dossiers presented to Parliament by the Government in September 2002 and February 2003. The same committee published a report on the foreign policy aspects of the war against terrorism (one of a series of such reports) on 31 July 2003 which contained sections covering the diplomatic processes in the UN and elsewhere in the run up to the conflict and on post-war Iraq, including the role of the UN and the British diplomatic presence in Iraq.[7] On 2 February 2004 the committee published its latest report on the foreign policy aspects of the war against terrorism which examined developments in Iraq over the period since the earlier report.[8]

12. The Intelligence and Security Committee conducted an inquiry into Iraqi weapons of mass destruction which examined whether the available intelligence, which informed the decision to invade Iraq, was accurate and properly assessed and whether it was accurately reflected in government publications. Their report was published on 11 September 2003.

13. The National Audit Office (NAO) published its report into Operation Telic on 11 December 2003. The report focuses on the mechanics of the deployment for, and execution of, the operation and the performance of equipment used by the Armed Forces. The Committee of Public Accounts held an evidence session with MoD's Accounting Officer, the Chief of Defence Logistics, and the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments) on that report on 21 January 2004.

14. In July 2003, the Government asked Lord Hutton, a Law Lord, to conduct an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly, who had been one of the chief weapons inspectors in Iraq in the period following the 1991 Gulf War and was employed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory of MoD. Lord Hutton published his report on 28 January 2004.[9] It was the subject of a full day's debate in the House of Commons on 4 February 2004.

15. On 3 February 2004, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced the establishment of a committee of Privy Counsellors, under the chairmanship of Lord Butler of Brockwell, to review intelligence on weapons of mass destruction. Its terms of reference are:

> to investigate the intelligence coverage available in respect of WMD programmes in countries of concern and on the global trade in WMD, taking into account what is now known about these programmes; as part of this work, to investigate the accuracy of intelligence on Iraqi WMD up to March 2003, and to examine any discrepancies between the intelligence gathered, evaluated and used by the Government before the conflict, and between that intelligence and what has been discovered by the Iraq survey group since the end of the conflict; and to make recommendations to the Prime Minister for the future on the gathering, evaluation and use of intelligence on WMD, in the light of the difficulties of operating in countries of concern.[10]

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6   Ninth Report of Session 2002–03, HC 813

7   Tenth Report of Session 2002–03, HC 405

8   Second Report of Session 2003–04, HC 81

9   HC (2003–04) 247

10   HC Deb, 3 February 2004, c 625

It has been asked to report by the summer recess 2004.

16. Where relevant and appropriate we have sought to take the work of these inquiries into account in this report. Where those inquiries have been tasked with answering specific questions we have not sought to second guess their conclusions. Only the NAO report focussed specifically on military issues and we have made extensive use of the information contained in it. Our inquiry, however, is the only one which has examined the military operations in their broader political context. That context was of particular importance in this case because this was advertised from the outset as an 'effects-based' operation in which the success or otherwise of military actions could only be judged by reference to political outcomes. We discuss the implications of this in greater detail below.

Relations with MoD

17. A glance at our list of witnesses shows that the overwhelming majority of them have been from MoD. We also asked for and received a significant amount of written information. As we mentioned above we have visited a number of MoD sites. By and large we have received the co-operation and assistance which we have requested. In some respects however we have not:

- We requested sight of the directives issued by the Chief of Defence Staff to the commanding officers in theatre. This was after the conclusion of combat operations and we were prepared to receive them in the form of classified papers and respect that classification. Our request was refused.

- We requested copies of the Rules of Engagement (RoE) under which British forces fought. Again this was after the conclusion of combat operations and again we would have been prepared to receive them as a classified document. The RoE of the American forces have been published. Our request was refused.

- We requested copies of the 'lessons learned' reports produced by senior officers involved in the operation. *Lessons for the Future* states, 'all Service units, MoD directorates and agencies directly involved in an operation whether in theatre or elsewhere, [are required] to submit frank reports via the chain of command on their experiences.' These reports were provided to the National Audit Office for their inquiry.[11] Our request was refused, ostensibly on the grounds that the disclosure of these reports would 'harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion, both on this operation and for future operations.'[12]

18. As noted above we made a number of visits to military units and establishments involved in the operation as well as visiting British forces in Iraq. All of our visits were valuable and informative. Some were arranged at short notice, and where that was the case, there were inevitably occasional constraints on whom we were able to meet or what we were able to do. But sometimes we were perhaps not as well served as we should have been. One such occasion led to correspondence between us and MoD.

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11   National Audit Office: Ministry of Defence, *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq* (HC 60, Session 2003–04, 11 December 2003), Appendix A

12   **Ev 402**

19. When he appeared before us at the conclusion of our inquiry, the Secretary of State said:

> I should begin by congratulating the Committee on what I know has been a very thorough inquiry into Operation Telic. I will not pretend that this process of scrutiny is always entirely comfortable for those who sit on this side of the table… but… All those who care about defence will certainly welcome and applaud the inquiry. It is a serious and appropriate examination of what are extremely important issues.[13]

In a debate in the House on 13 January, he said, of MoD's own lessons learned exercise:

> There is no benefit in a lessons process that is bland or uncritical. I encouraged the production of an honest, unflinching report that focussed quite rightly on the future, and outlined areas where there must be improvements.[14]

20. MoD's two published lessons documents were prepared and published with commendable speed and, while they did not hesitate to draw attention to the many successes of the operation, they did also identify failings and shortcomings in a number of areas. But they were conducted within MoD, drawing on evidence provided through the chain of command. The process was not independent and it was not transparent.

21. By contrast, our inquiry has been both transparent (as far we have been able to make it) and independent. We are an all party committee, established by the House of Commons and entrusted by it with the responsibility to scrutinise the policies and actions of MoD and the Armed Forces. Our report is derived from the evidence we have received. Some of that evidence has been classified. We have spoken to many of the commanding officers whose reports on the operation we have not been allowed to see. We do not believe that they would have been less candid in the reports which they submitted, if they had known that those reports would be provided to us. **We regret that MoD has failed to provide us with certain documents which we have requested and has demonstrated on occasion less co-operation and openness than we have the right to expect as a select committee of the House of Commons.**

Special Forces

22. We raised the increasing importance of special forces to modern military operations in our inquiry into the New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review last year. In a speech to RUSI in July 2002 the Secretary of State said 'there will also be an increasing role for the use of Special Forces in the present environment.'

23. **That 'increasing role' was demonstrated in operations in Afghanistan, and has now been emphatically reinforced by the crucial role which they played in Iraq. Their skills and professionalism provide a unique capability to the total British military effort.** It remains, however, the policy of MoD to make no public comment on their activities. As the Secretary of State told us in May 2003, '…I am not going to go into the detail of what [Special Forces] were doing.'[15] The information which we have received subsequently on

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13   Q 2220

14   HC Deb, 13 January 2004, c686

15   Q 79

their activities has largely been classified. Because of this longstanding policy on the part of MoD not to speak publicly about their contribution, we have been unable to cover their activities in the way they deserve in this report.

2 Planning and Strategy

Military Preparations and Coercive Effect

24. Sir Kevin Tebbit, Permanent Under Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, explained that military preparations were in the first instance undertaken for coercive purposes:

> It is very clear to us that the initial objective was for military capability to be used for coercive purposes and only if the diplomatic track failed was it for military action. The whole plan was to support a diplomatic process, culminating in Resolution 1441 in November, followed by the return of the inspectors and the hope that that process would indeed bring the result, the bringing into conformity with the security resolutions by Saddam Hussein. It was only subsequently, when it became evident that diplomacy had failed, that what had been a military plan put there for coercive and contingent purposes had to become a reality.[16]

25. As Lieutenant General John Reith, the Chief of Joint Operations (CJO) put it:

> There was a political process running parallel with the military process here. We were producing a capability which was being used at that stage for a coercive effect to try to make a success of UN Security Council Resolution 1441. At the same time, there was a diplomatic process, trying to get us to be allowed to use various bases within the region, and there was a public face to many of the people we dealt with and a private face, and, clearly, in the end, we managed to get the basing we required.[17]

It might be argued that, if the purpose of using the military was as a coercive force during diplomatic phase, there should have been no constraint on the military preparations and deployments undertaken, since the more convincing the coercion the more effective it might be expected to be. The Iraqi regime, however, was not the only audience: other members of the UN Security Council needed to believe that UK and US attempts to find a peaceful solution were sincere, as did the broader international community and domestic US and UK audiences.

The UK and the planning process

26. The bedrock of the UK's involvement in the planning was the close relationship between MoD and the United States Department of Defense (DoD), which had been built up over a number of years. Sir Kevin Tebbit explained the relationship:

> we have had very close relationships with the Americans, particularly on Iraq. It is often forgotten that we had our northern and southern no-fly zone military operations going for ten years with the United States. This has obviously been our closest ally for a long time and we have very close entrenched links, both organisationally and on the basis of individuals…The relationships went throughout

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16   Q 1690

17   Q 890. UN Security Council Resolution 1441 was unanimously adopted on 8 November 2002. It declared Iraq in breach of past UNSCRs and established UNMOVIC to enter Iraq and verify disarmament.

the system: military to military relationships, DoD to Ministry of Defence relationships, the Hoon/Rumsfeld relationship was very important in all of this, as much as, at the top level, the Prime Minister and the President, Number 10 and the White House, the Foreign Secretary and Colin Powell. Throughout the system there were interlocking relationships of personalities.[18]

The close working relationship between the armed services of the two countries had been reinforced by shared operations most recently in Afghanistan and the no-fly zones in Iraq. Much of the effectiveness of the British military contribution to the planning process derived from the embedding of British staff officers from the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), in Centcom in Tampa—a development dating from just after 11 September 2001, when some 40 were based there. A similar number has been maintained ever since.[19] According to General Reith, the result of these close working relationships was that the British were able to 'put a degree of sensitivity into the planning… and… General Franks appreciated our contribution.'[20] The embedding of military officers at Centcom gave the British influence over planning; there are, however, parallel dangers of being locked into American policy where that planning leads to military action. We discuss British and American command and control relations in Chapter 4.

Early preparations

27. The UK National Contingent Commander, Air Marshal Brian Burridge, told us that the planning began in June or July 2002, when the British were invited to participate by the US, in advance of other nations such as Australia and Canada.[21] A wider invitation was sent out by the State Department in November to a number of countries inviting their participation.[22] The British were thus able, he maintained, to influence planning from 'the bottom up':[23]

> We began looking at Iraq planning in the summer. We had no timetable, but—it was put to me that if the UK was at any stage likely to participate, then best we at least understand the planning and influence the planning for the better. At no stage did we say 'Here is the end date by which we are going to do this'. What we did have was a couple of windows. We said ideally it makes sense either to do this in the spring of 2003 or autumn of 2003. When we started planning, the US forces were still reconstituting after Afghanistan. That was an issue for them: how quickly would they be ready to do another operation of this size?[24]

28. Sir Kevin Tebbit said that at the military level, there was some exchange of views in 'summer 2002' with serious planning crystallising in the autumn.[25] General Reith, however

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18   Q 1698

19   Qq 875, 877

20   Q 877

21   Q 240

22   Q 239

23   Q 222

24   Q 232

25   Q 1689

picked up that the Americans were engaged in planning in May 2002 and confirmed that the British were involved from June onwards:

> It was in about May last year when we picked up that the Americans were doing some, what they call, 'no foreigners' planning, to which we were not allowed access, which was unusual, because normally we have very, very good access on everything. Clearly, there was a decision, I think in June of last year, by the Americans to bring the UK and Australia in on their planning cycle. I then got authority from the Ministry of Defence to get involved in that planning, on the basis of no UK commitment.[26]

The Committee was also told that the use of Urgent Operational Requirements[27] was being discussed by MoD, or 'rather by the military and the suppliers in May 2002.'[28]

29. However, Sir Kevin Tebbit claimed that this military planning did not amount to any 'serious engagement' with the Americans.[29] MoD's Director General, Operational Policy, Mr Ian Lee, characterised it as a free form exercise with little concrete occurring until September, when the detailed planning actually began:

> Planning…dates back to having embedded staff with the Americans, and back to May/June and the first consideration of this in small groups… just…think of this as a continuum, where, at the beginning of the continuum, one is talking about staff discussions, people in a very exploratory way just discussing a subject and then gradually it becoming slightly more defined. One is talking about contingency plans on paper, and that was going on during the summer last year in these very small groups, but…entirely on a 'no commitment' basis, just an exploratory activity. It was not until September…after President Bush had been to the United Nations and made the speech…that we got into a phase which might be more recognisable as planning, in the sense actually of developing options and beginning to think about taking action in respect of training, or whatever, which would have an effect of some sort on the ground, as opposed to entirely paper contingencies.[30]

30. The Secretary of State insisted that planning for 'a specific military operation' did not get under way until after the Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons on 24 September 2002.[31] But since the specific operation undertaken by British forces was fundamentally redrawn in January 2003, we are not clear how much weight to place on the distinction drawn by the Secretary of State.

31. Surprisingly, Major General Robin Brims, the UK Land Component Commander, only became aware of the planning at the end of September and increasingly involved in

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26   Q 875

27   Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) procedures are used for the rapid purchase of new or additional equipment to support a current or imminent military operation. To qualify as a UOR it must be possible to introduce the equipment in time to make a contribution to the operation. *Smart Approvals,* (Part 2, Annex B) Edition 8, March 2003.

28   Q 163

29   Q 1700

30   Q 881

31   Q 2262

October/November. He developed some plans for exercises in December.[32] However, he was not directly involved with Centcom at that stage, although he attended some commanders conferences where he was made aware of their planning.[33] An exercise ('Internal Look') was held at Centcom before Christmas, which was a mission rehearsal for the Americans. The plan was run through and the British made comments on the basis of their own analysis of the plan.[34]

32. The UK Air Component Commander, Air Vice Marshal Glen Torpy, became involved in the planning in the summer:

> we first became involved in planning for the operation really in the summer of last year. That really came about because of our intimate involvement in the southern no-fly zone operations. Inevitably, because of the very close linkage between the RAF and the United States Air Force in the no-fly zone operations, we became aware that the Americans were starting to look at some contingency planning and we became involved in that at a very early stage. That matured over the autumn.[35]

33. Unlike the 1991 Gulf War, which was preceded by a 38 day air campaign, the land campaign in 2003 was not preceded by a discrete air campaign. One scenario had apparently envisaged an air campaign of up to 20 days and it has been alleged that a 2–3 day air assault including 3,000 precision attacks was cancelled at the last minute.[36] Air Vice Marshal Torpy explained how the decision not to have a preparatory air campaign phase was reached:

> When we started doing the initial plan, we constructed it in a similar manner to that seen during the first Gulf war and during Kosovo, with a discrete phase, in which air was going to be used to shape the battle space so that it would set the conditions for the land component and the maritime component as well. As we developed our thinking, gained more intelligence, there was a shortening of that phase and it came down in the early part of this year from approximately 16 days down to a matter of five days…that was driven even closer together, as we got closer to the likelihood of the operation being executed, for three factors really. First of all, there was a growing realisation that we needed to secure the southern oil fields as swiftly as possible to prevent any subsequent damage, because we always realised that the southern oil fields were going to be key to the long-term future of Iraq. There was a nervousness by the American land component and by General Franks over the vulnerability of having a very large land contingent in a fairly small area in Kuwait and the likelihood of a threat from Iraqi forces, possibly an asymmetric threat…General Franks felt that if he had the ability to synchronise the components together as comprehensively and coherently as possible then he would have the highest possible chance of dislocating the regime as swiftly as possible and getting the campaign over and done with as quickly as possible…as our thinking matured and as the plan developed, we believed

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32   Q 537

33   Q 538

34   Q 222

35   Q 1233

36   Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons* (Washington, 2003), p 60.

that we could bring what was commonly known as A and G day closer and closer together.[37]

However, this strategy was not without risks: not least because it placed a good deal of pressure on the coalition air forces to carry out a multitude of tasks at the same time:

> The risk of bringing A and G day together basically left the air component with five simultaneous tasks and there then would have to be a prioritisation on resources… So the air component's nervousness in compressing the campaign, was (a) would he have the resources to carry out those tasks? and (b) would he be able to execute, for instance, gaining air superiority in sufficient time for him to be able to do some of the other tasks?[38]

34. The Maritime Component Commander, Rear Admiral David Snelson, explained the background to the shaping of the maritime commitment:

> The process whereby we arrived at what the maritime contribution should be was basically to look at the effect that we had to produce for the Joint Commander, Air Marshal Burridge, on the ground. One of the early considerations was the opening of the port of Umm Qasr. That was a specified task very early on in the planning, and for that we knew we would need mine counter-measures ships…it quickly became apparent that we would need to occupy elements of Iraqi territory close to the waterway so that the Mine Counter-Measures Vessels could operate safely. It was that which led, in the first instance, to the consideration for an amphibious contribution…this was done with the backdrop of a likely UK land contribution being from the north, so the amphibious element was a limited operation, in the first concept, to support the mine counter-measures forces.

> When it was decided the UK land element would be coming from the south, it made a great deal of sense to grow that into a brigade-sized operation to make sure that we had occupied and taken the oil infrastructure on the Al Faw peninsula…as well as contribute to the UK land effort. Precision strike Tomahawk submarines clearly were required for tasking against specific targets, then…we needed a frigate and destroyer force for protection, and we needed the logistics back-up at sea as well.[39]

Did the Plan Match the Threat?

35. Dr Barry Posen, Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, praised the coalition campaign plan for not over-estimating Iraqi capabilities and for playing to western strengths notably in air power. Mr Paul Beaver, however, believed that the capabilities of the Republican Guard had been overestimated and that the threat from irregular Fedayeen groups and terrorists was underestimated.[40] Air Marshal Burridge explained that one strategy open to Saddam Hussein was:

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37   Q 1268

38   Q 1269

39   Q 1462

40   Q 104

to delay us by using irregular forces and that is what he did…We were not surprised that he did it. I was surprised by how much he did it, because the judgement, which was impossible to make, was the extent to which he had front-loaded those southern cities with the Baath militia, with the Al Kud with the Saddam Fedayeen and the extent to which actually they had moved some small groups of Republican Guard down there. He chose to face us with irregular forces using asymmetric methods, fighting in civilian clothes, using human shields extensively, profligate with the lives of their own people, using ambulances as armoured vehicles. He knew that culturally that is quite difficult for us to deal with because it is high risk to the population whose hearts and minds we are trying to secure.[41]

36. In the early stages the planning had envisaged mounting an attack from the north, through Turkey, as well as from the south. Dr Posen questioned whether the plan was adequately resourced once the Turkish option was closed. The US 4th Infantry Division, which was standing off Turkey, was not available when the major combat phase started and Dr Posen argued that it would have been reasonable for another division to have been available to the commanders, or at least for materiel to have been pre-positioned to make it easier to bring another division into theatre.[42] Professor Chris Bellamy of Cranfield University characterised the plan as a high risk one based on intelligence about the will of the Iraqis to fight:

> …there was a reluctance among senior members of the Iraqi military leadership to fight and I am sure that the allied planners had intelligence to that effect which gave them the confidence to put in what, by any normal military criteria, was a high-risk plan.[43]

This was confirmed by the UK National Contingent Commander:

> We were convinced that the regular army would not fight and that was pretty obvious from their dispositions. In many ways the divisions to the north-east of Basra were configured as though they were fighting a war with Iran. In fact most had deserted and those who had not deserted were not going to fight. But we were not talking about a conventional armour to armour piece of manoeuvre warfare. What we had were very long lines of communication with these irregular forces able to apply irritation, but it was only irritation.[44]

The Secretary of State, however, told us that the planning was conducted on a 'worst case scenario, on the assumption that Iraqi forces might fight more rigorously than actually it turned out that they did.'[45]

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41   Q 260

42   Q 103

43   Q 106

44   Q 265

45   Q 2273

The debate within the Pentagon

37. The press reported that there was a vigorous debate within the US military about the plans for Iraq. According to Dr Posen, the plan probably went through a number of iterations. Initially, a group around the Secretary of Defense, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, appeared to have thought that the regime could be easily toppled and hence the talk of very small forces, special forces and air power being able to do the job. The US military apparently pushed back against this idea and General Tommy Franks, the Centcom Commander, proposed what became a rather large force. Under pressure from the Rumsfeld team to have it made smaller, Dr Posen believed that in the end the force may have been lighter than General Franks had wanted. This was demonstrated by the planning which included the US 4th Division, which, in the end, was still at sea when the ground campaign began. Furthermore, the 101st Division did not have most of its equipment available to it when the attack began. [46] The compromise appears to have been to adopt a rolling start—starting the attack with a medium sized force of three Corps ground formations, backed by massive airpower. A further 100,000 troops would be held in reserve until needed.[47] Some reports claimed that the discussions over a larger or smaller force continued in the Pentagon into March.[48]

38. Dr Posen argued that in the event, the key battles were fought by the coalition's heaviest units. There were three heavy brigades in the 3rd Division, two marine brigades which were heavily reinforced, turning them effectively into mechanised brigades, and what he termed the 'heavy unit', the British 7th Armoured Brigade. The 101st Airborne Division (an air cavalry unit) was never used as a division. Instead it provided forces for other units.

39. Air Marshal Burridge however argued that the application of air power had completely changed the way one had to think about the size of forces for such operations and the coalition's force mix had been appropriate:

> The effect of modern air power in post-modern warfare is overwhelming, absolutely overwhelming. Some 700 sorties a day could be used in counter land operations. This is one of the aspects we will study. Von Clausewitz always told us that if you are going to invade somebody's country go at three to one…We did it the other way round but von Clausewitz did not have the understanding of air power. Air power was decisive in the manoeuvre battle.[49]

Dr Posen, although more cautiously, accepted this view:

> it is the massive responsiveness of American air power today which makes a plan that 20 years ago would have looked insanely risky look bold but still well considered and, on the whole, still prudent.[50]

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46   Q 108

47   Tim Ripley, '*Planning for Iraq Freedom*', Jane's Intelligence Review, 1 July 2003.

48   Cordesman, pp 149–53.

49   Qq 268–9

50   Q 108

40. Where the force package was weak, Professor Bellamy argued, was in its preparation for phase 3b (the grey area between war and peace) and phase 4 (post combat peace support operations). At which stage another division, perhaps configured for peace support operations would have been very useful.[51] General Reith told the Committee that the size of the land force was set once the task was identified and the only reinforcement held ready was the spearhead battalion.[52] In the event it was not deployed, and it is apparent from its size and configuration that it was held in case it was needed to reinforce troops engaged in combat operations. We discuss the planning for the post-conflict phase below (paragraphs 350–75).

41. In conclusion the coalition plan for the invasion of Iraq went through a number of iterations and was altered up to a very late stage, possibly as late as March, with the initial compression and eventual removal of any preparatory air campaign in advance of the ground assault. This is unsurprising and in part reflected developments in military assessments (for example of the risks from asymmetric attacks that might be faced by forces in Kuwait during a prolonged air campaign). But some changes were driven by political developments and imperatives. We discuss these below.

42. Debate had also continued on the size and structure of the force assigned to General Franks. It seems likely that the force package that was finally arrived at was, in the opinion of a number of senior commanders, on the 'light' side, but it was self-evidently adequate to the task.

43. **The British, who had had embedded staff officers at Centcom from September 2001, were the first foreigners to be brought into the American planning process and appear to have been influential in the overall shape of the plan. In this the British-American relationship also drew on more than 10 years of close collaboration between the RAF and USAF in enforcing the northern and southern no-fly zones over Iraq. We are not, however, able to define the areas in which the British made specific contribution to what was essentially an American campaign plan, other than in the consideration of the Northern Option (which we discuss below) and in niche capabilities such as special forces operations.**

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51   Q 109

52   Q 974. The Spearhead Battalion is a 'high readiness', light infantry battalion drawn from 3 Commando Brigade, 3 (UK) Mechanised Division's ready brigade, or 16 Air Assault Brigade.

3 The UK Force

44. Britain deployed the largest force it had sent overseas since the 1991 Gulf War—some 46,150 service personnel out of a total coalition force of 467,100.[53] Some 32,000 of these troops were deployed to Kuwait. The forces broke down as follows: land, 28,000; maritime, 9,050; and air, 8,100. The final 1,000 were deployed to the national contingent headquarters in Qatar and elsewhere. The force included 19 warships, 14 fleet auxiliary vessels, 15,000 vehicles, 115 fixed wing aircraft and 100 helicopters. But these bald figures do not reflect the full extent of the British contribution. Most importantly, the UK provided a significant proportion of the combat power on the ground, including a third of the main battle tanks available to the coalition land component commander.[54]

45. According to MoD the size and structure of the force was based on an assessment of the mission and sustainability requirements. The size of the force was not in itself the focus of a decision: 'the figure of about 45,000 was simply the sum of decisions on the various components of the force'.[55] But some of those decisions were more obviously about components than others:

> The decision to fight at divisional level was taken for a variety of reasons…most importantly, the military estimate based on the mission analysis for both northern (attack from Turkey) and southern (attack from Kuwait) options demanded a divisional sized force in order to be successful. Furthermore, a divisional approach allowed the UK to have significant influence over the planning and the execution of operations in Iraq.[56]

Sir Kevin Tebbit argued that the main political criterion in judging the size of the British force was that Britain wanted to have a material rather than a symbolic effect:

> Political considerations were pretty general. The importance of having something which was appropriate and was more than a token, in other words that it could actually do a proper job in pursuit of joint objectives. If there were political objectives about the size of force—and I do not think we ever looked at it in that form—it would have been that it should be appropriate to what the UK could provide in the circumstances, while being sufficient to have a material effect rather than just a paper effect.[57]

46. The Secretary of State told us that the force fielded had its roots in the work of the 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR), although he did note that it was larger than that prepared for under the SDR's planning assumptions.[58] As he later stated 'the scale of this operation was such that it went beyond what was anticipated, for example, in relation to the Joint

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53   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 84.

54   Q 1

55   Ev 391

56   Ev 391

57   Q 1755

58   Qq 1, 48–9

Rapid Reaction Force concept of deployment…'[59] The SDR envisaged a Joint Rapid Reaction Force (JRRF) that would encompass all 'ready' forces, forming a joint 'pool' of forces from which elements could be assembled for rapid reaction missions. The aim was to be able to support up to a medium-scale operation (up to Brigade level) in two echelons of forces—a rapidly deployable spearhead, and a follow-on more substantial force (at 20– 30 days' notice). The SDR envisaged the JRRF pool including about 20 major warships and 22 other naval vessels, four army/commando brigades, 110 combat aircraft and 160 other aircraft.

47. Exercise *Saif Sareea II* in Oman in 2001, which the Committee observed, was intended to 'demonstrate key aspects of the JRRF concept'—it did not *test* the JRRF because its scale was less than that of the JRRF; it excluded NBC capabilities; it did not transport the 40,000 tons of munitions expected in war fighting, and the deployment to Oman was not rapid but rather spread over three years to save money. MoD's appraisal of *Saif Sareea II* cautioned that 'strategic lift continues to be a limiting factor and concerns remain over the overall ability to sustain a medium-scale war-fighting force and operation at extended range' (where the report defined 'medium' as 15,000 personnel).[60] *Lessons for the Future* states that 'the deployment was at a larger scale and completed in shorter timelines than were allowed for in the way the Armed Forces are structured and resourced.' Working beyond the existing planning assumptions placed strains across the whole force. For example, even 16 Air Assault Brigade (16 AAB) (one of the UK's highest readiness forces) had to generate its forces in less than its mandated Notice to Move Timescales.[61]

48. The scale of the operation was also reflected in the large number of reserves that were called out to support Operation Telic—the largest mobilisation of reserves since the Suez crisis of 1956.[62]

49. The Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel), Lieutenant General Anthony Palmer, accepted that gaps existed in the force that was put together for Operation Telic:

> The force we put together was self-evidently sufficient to do the job. That does not mean to say there were not gaps we had to deal with at the time in some …specialties…and we did that either by using augmentation, taking people from other units to fill those slots, or we used the Territorial Army who are there exactly for that purpose.[63]

He revealed that at one stage almost two thirds of the entire Army was committed (ie preparing for, taking part in, or recovering from operations):

> To give you a figure, 62 per cent of the Army was committed at the maximum commitment level—historically we have never been higher.[64]

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59   Q 48

60   Directorate of Operational Capability, '*Appraisal of Exercise Saif Sareea II*', of April 2002, Executive Assessment, para 5.

61   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003) paras 2.1–2.2.

62   Q 1133

63   Q 2100

64   Q 2114

50. MoD admitted that the Iraq operation had been demanding and, while claiming that it had shown the SDR's force structures to have been robust, accepted that it also suggested a need for a rethink on the demands of multiple, and more frequent, small and medium operations:

> The New Chapter to the SDR identified a trend for our forces to meet an increasingly varied pattern of concurrent and sequential operational commitments, at small and medium scale. Experience suggests that for many assets, such as deployed headquarters and logistic support, conducting several smaller scale operations is more demanding than one or two larger scale operations. Therefore, in addition to retaining the capacity to undertake the most demanding, but less frequent, large scale operations, it has become clear that we should structure our forces with a focus on the demands of concurrent medium and small scale operations.[65]

51. Asked if a larger force could have been deployed, the Secretary of State said that there were 'areas in which we could have deployed more forces.'[66] The force was large enough to stay in theatre for a 'reasonable length of time' for combat operations and follow-on humanitarian operations, he added. If it had gone on for a 'very long time, going into many months,' judgements would have had to have been made about replacing in particular combat forces.[67] This could have been done but he would have preferred not to have had to.[68] It is not clear from these answers how difficult it would have been for MoD to have replaced these forces had a prolonged combat phase made it necessary.

Effect of Operation Fresco

52. During the run up to military operations the Fire Brigades Union was involved in industrial action in connection with a dispute over pay and conditions. During periods of industrial action, the Armed Forces provided a replacement fire fighting capability. This commitment was known as Operation Fresco. The Secretary of State told us that although 19,000 service personnel were earmarked for Operation Fresco, it did not affect the overall deployment to Iraq.[69] However, he did concede that one consequence of Operation Fresco was to reduce by 19,000 the number of troops to choose from in assembling the force for Operation Telic.[70] MoD officials explained how Operation Fresco played a role in shaping the force:

> The precise nature of the force and size of the force was something which evolved as a result of proposals from the military side in relation to a political willingness to be involved. The final size was a result of the interaction between the two elements and other things, like we still had the fire-fighters' strike going on, and the need to continue to hold back 19,000 troops against that contingency.[71]

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65   Ev 393

66   Q 7

67   Q 69

68   Q 70

69   Q 74

70   Q 8

71   Q 1756

Furthermore it would have proven problematic if reinforcements had been required:

> My recollection…is that it did not seriously affect the size of the military force which was sent but it was beginning to have, and would certainly have had if it had continued, a serious effect on our recuperation speed and our ability to continue to roule forces were it necessary to do so for a long campaign. The concern about the fire-fighters' strike was potential, as it happened, rather than actual. I do not believe we would have actually put together a different military force had we not had that obligation, but it was certainly something which affected consequence planning and recuperation times.[72]

Nonetheless, Operation Fresco and the need to have troops ready for a prolonged fire dispute did effectively put a ceiling on what Britain could offer:

> It more or less put a ceiling; it did not affect the package we had decided on. If the fire-fighter strike had been continuing it would not have been possible to put together anything much bigger than what we decided on, but it was not a constraint. Some of the individual units were shuffled—I cannot remember the date off the top of my head, but certainly the parachute battalion which actually went was taken off fire-fighting duties because it was thought it might form part of the force which would go to Iraq. There was some juggling of which people were actually designated fire-fighting duties, as opposed to which were more likely to be deployed to Iraq.[73]

53. Operation Fresco also meant that Rear Admiral Snelson was not confident of having more surface ships if required:

> The personnel factor did not affect the ships *per se* that much…Where personnel did affect us probably most of all was that had I required more destroyers and frigates for escort purposes then the demands of Operation Fresco, the support for the fire-fighting, and so on, would have curtailed the number of ships we could have had at some point, was my judgement.[74]

He also noted that Fresco duties would have constrained what additional units could be sent if needed:

> …there was not a direct impact on the front-line fighting forces that we had, but… [Operation Fresco]…impacted on the ability to draw forward more forces, had we needed them, against an enemy who had more capability himself at sea or was determined to fight back further.[75]

54. 16 AAB, which as we have noted is a high readiness force assigned to the Joint Rapid Reaction Force, was engaged on Operation Fresco duties in the winter of 2002/03, and only handed over these obligations to other units on 6 January 2003. They then shifted to begin pre-deployment training for Operation Telic two days later on 8 January. This late notice to move significantly constrained the time available for deployment and training.

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72   Q 1764

73   Q 1764

74   Q 1469

75   Q 1473

55. The Royal Marines deployed with the whole of 3 Commando Brigade, less 45 Commando which was deployed on Operation Fresco duties (and in supporting Special Forces operations). Its numbers were made up by the attachment of a US Marine Corps (USMC) unit (see paragraph 89 below).[76] The stretched numbers also meant that the Royal Marines Reserves deployed almost 25% of their entire trained strength. It appears therefore that Operation Fresco did directly affect the deployment of 3 Commando Brigade to Iraq.

56. **Although the Armed Forces commitment to Operation Fresco did not prevent them from putting together an effective force package for the operation in Iraq, it did limit the total numbers. It also adversely affected some elements of the force (by for example requiring high readiness units to move at short notice from fire-fighting to deploying to Iraq). In the longer term it could have undermined the Armed Forces ability to sustain combat operations.**

57. **Overall, the demands that Operation Telic placed on the UK Armed Forces in the context of other operational requirements were very close to the maximum that they could sustain.**

Planning Assumptions

58. The maritime component arrived in theatre and was ready earlier than the land forces. Nevertheless it did not have all the capabilities it should have had under defence planning assumptions. Rear Admiral Snelson explained the shortages that he faced:

> there were elements of forces that we ought to have had available that we did not have. The defence planning assumptions require two aircraft carriers, one at high readiness, one at lower readiness, two landing platform docks, one at high readiness, one at low readiness, they are specialist amphibious ships, one helicopter carrier, known as an LPH, landing platform helicopter, plus the supporting shipping, specialist shipping for amphibious. At the time we were planning the operation, we had out of those major units only one fixed-wing carrier and one helicopter carrier. The previous LPDs, to use that jargon, Fearless and Intrepid, have been paid off and the two new LPDs which are coming into service, Albion and Bulwark, are not with us yet…It meant that we did not have the ideal force package for an amphibious operation, and therefore we had to maximise the helicopter lift and that is why we converted Ark Royal to being a helicopter carrier, not a fixed-wing carrier, so that we got maximum capability.[77]

Mr Ian Lee, Director General, Operational Policy, in MoD, moreover, argued:

> The purpose of the defence planning assumptions that we have is for, it sounds obvious, defence planning, they are assumptions which are made in order to produce the overall force structure that we have across the Armed Forces. They are not, and never were, intended to be limits which we imposed on a particular operation, in respect of a particular operation, and it is always possible, given the circumstances, as in this one, that one can exceed those assumptions and put together whatever force is

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76   Qq 1469–70

77   Q 1464

necessary for that particular task. Of course, it does mean that you have got then a recuperation period to go through, and you have to revise the way in which you restore your force structure to its original balanced position, but the planning assumptions themselves are not intended to limit or guide particular operational deployments in that way.[78]

59. Furthermore, Brigadier Seamus Kerr, Assistant Chief of Staff, PJHQ, told the Committee that the limit on how large a force could be deployed was not people but rather the sustainability of equipment and therefore how much had been invested over the years, particularly in armour. The Chief of Defence Logistics (CDL), Air Chief Marshal Sir Malcolm Pledger, also noted in commenting on the use of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) that:

> …as we revisit the planning assumptions, which we do every year, then we have to factor in whether or not that is the right way in future to balance the equipment programme. I am sure that judgement will then come out as part of the white paper later on this year.[79]

We look at the effect of the planning assumptions on personal equipment below (paragraph 250ff). UK Armed Forces face a future in which a larger proportion of them will need to be deployable at greater speed and at higher operational tempo. This can be expected to place the planning assumptions and the judgements on which they are based under ever more strain. That in turn may undermine MoD's assertion that the planning assumptions are not intended to 'limit or guide particular operational deployments'. **We believe that MoD should consider whether for major equipment and capabilities the planning assumptions process is sufficiently flexible to match the very wide range of types and scales of operations which our Armed Forces may be required to undertake in the future.**

The Northern Option to the Southern Option

60. As noted above, initial planning envisaged UK forces entering Iraq from Turkey (the northern option). However, it was always planned that the Royal Marines Commandos would operate in the south. The Commander of 3 Commando Brigade, Brigadier Jim Dutton, explained that the original commitment for the south was fairly small:

> It was going to be, first of all, just one Commando unit, in conjunction with the SEALs, the US Naval Special Warfare Group. As it became apparent that there was a potentially bigger enemy threat in that area in order to package the tasks more neatly with the Al Faw and Umm Qasr together, it made sense to increase the size of the Royal Marine contribution, and added to that was the UK Army contribution coming from the south as well.[80]

The northern option was apparently a British proposal, which the Americans accepted enthusiastically (as General Reith explained):

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78   Q 894

79   Q 1022

80   Q 1463

In the very early planning, the Americans had decided to attack only from the south, and militarily it made more sense to be able to attack on two axes, because there was going to be congestion logistically coming in through the south. That was suggested to the Americans, who seized it with both hands, and that is why there was thought then of putting an axis through Turkey. Of course, as it transpired, the Turkish authorities were unhappy with that, and we did not go through Turkey. So then we had to readjust the plan again to look at another way of doing the plan in the south, and so we participated in that and looked at what we, the UK, could best do in the south, and we assisted the Americans on that basis.[81]

61. Professor Bellamy argued that the Turkish resistance was a gift to General Franks because while talks continued to try to get agreement to enter from the North, it convinced the Iraqis that a northern front was essential to the coalition plan, with the result that they kept two corps in the north along with some of their best troops. Furthermore, the northern option would also have presented the British with some potentially enormous challenges:

A large British contingent originally was going to go in the north…from Turkey down into Iraq…[to]…near Kirkuk or Mosul…and it is one very long, awful route involving a mountain crossing and a major river crossing.[82]

62. The Secretary of State told us that the essence of the plan was to present Saddam Hussein and his leadership with more options to think about than they could cope with:

The idea…of a northern option was to give another situation to the regime that they could not handle. As it turned out, resistance in the North proved ultimately to be very limited and, indeed, the ability of the regime to move forces from the north to defend other parts of the country proved very limited so the overall force composition, in this case coming in essentially from the south rather than from the north and the south as perhaps at one stage was anticipated, did not particularly affect the level of resistance put up by the regime.[83]

63. The decision to move from the northern to the southern option came in late December/early January. Air Marshal Burridge set out the timelines as follows:

The decision came initially out of discussion between the PJHQ and Centcom. Throughout that period at the end of December people were assessing the likelihood of Turkey agreeing to UK land forces going through Turkey. Given the circumstances, people involved in planning recognised that making that assumption was getting higher and higher risk and I think we all understand the Turkish position and have no difficulty with it. To say we should start planning now to go south emerged late December and early January. The Chiefs of Staff took it at a meeting as a proposition and endorsed it and the Secretary of State probably announced it some time around 20 January, but it was that timescale.[84]

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81   Q 885

82   Q 126

83   Q 6

84   Q 344

We heard from others that commanders were informed of the likelihood of this decision on 18 December 2002 and had been planning for various possibilities even before this date. General Brims said that he was told of the likely decision in early January and that it came in late January.[85] General Reith told us that the final force package was agreed upon on 16/17 January.[86] Sir Kevin Tebbit said the British came to the view that the Turks would not allow them to use their territory earlier than the Americans did (and in advance of the vote in the Turkish parliament), but that MoD was still seeking permission to use their territory in January when he himself visited.[87] Mr Lee claimed that: 'It was shortly after that visit, in fact in mid January, round about 17 January, that it was decided that it was no longer viable to plan on our forces going through Turkey and therefore we would have to look for a southern option.' The Secretary of State, however told us:

> the decision to go to the south [was] a decision that I took very early as soon as I realised, having been to Turkey and having discussed it in Turkey, that the option of going through Turkey was not likely to be available to us. I probably took an earlier decision than other people did because having spoken to a number of members of the Government in Turkey… I simply felt, as was proved correct, that they were not going to agree.[88]

64. This sits oddly with Sir Kevin Tebbit's argument that the decision to switch to the southern option, was not a political judgement but rather a military judgement:

> It was really rather straightforward. Military commanders had to judge the probability of securing agreement from Turkey in the end. We had less flexibility than the United States, being smaller and having smaller force packages to offer. Therefore we had to move to a conclusion that we should go in through the south earlier than it was necessary for the Americans to conclude that. It was military advice which led the Secretary of State to conclude that it was more sensible to plan to seek to put forces in the south.[89]

> It was based on a military view of probability, which was put to ministers and taken on that basis. What I am saying is that there was not some sort of political judgement here. It was straightforward as to whether we were likely to get agreement in the end. The judgement of our military people was that it was unlikely.[90]

Lieutenant General Robert Fry, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments), in evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts stated:

> It was not until just about over the Christmas period that we actually gave up in terms of planning for a northern entry through Turkey and into the north of Iraq. Now, that would have had sets of implications for the force that we would have deployed. It would have been essentially armoured rather than infantry-heavy, so

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85   Q 547
86   Q 895
87   Qq 1710–6
88   Q 2281
89   Q 1714
90   Q 1716

until that point we were still looking at the 1st UK Division probably in its original configuration being very armour-heavy and that would also explain why the UORs of the Challenger had been made earlier. It was only then during a fairly hectic planning period in the first part of January that we entirely redefined the plan and rescoped the force which would then need to be infantry-heavy because we were looking at fighting in built-up areas throughout the Al Faw Peninsula and into Basra.[91]

65. We discuss UORs below, but we are surprised at the suggestion that more tanks would have been sent under the northern option given that 7 Armoured Brigade deployed to southern Iraq with 116 Challenger 2s. Rather the major difference in the northern option appears to have been the inclusion of a mechanised brigade instead of 16 AAB, fewer troops but potentially more vehicles:

> The composition of the UK division was influenced by the decision to deploy to the south rather than the north, as originally envisaged. The UK role was not now to manoeuvre with a single UK brigade operating with a UK divisional framework (with much of the rear area held by the US), but to hold ground for a considerable period and potentially conduct operations in an urban environment. This required an additional brigade.[92]

66. The decision to give the UK forces the Basra sector in the south east 'emerged' from planning at Centcom where the British had embedded officers and from discussions between the Pentagon and MoD.[93] According to the Secretary of State—'that was something that we readily agreed to, not least because obviously it gave us much shorter lines of communication back to bases further south.'[94] Mr Paul Beaver said that the UK requested what was in its capability. Another factor that may have played a part was that the Americans may have felt that the Shia population of the south might have found British troops more acceptable given the perceived failure of the Americans to defend them in 1991. There was also the question of how far the British would have been capable logistically of doing anything more and of how far they would have been able to operate more closely alongside the Americans given the lack of communication compatibility. Air Marshal Burridge accepted the constraints that the British had faced in deciding an area for UK forces:

> …original planning had assumed a northern option. When we changed from a northern to a southern option in early January, then our time lines for deployment changed and the time it would take for us to arrive, bearing in mind that we did not know when this was going to start because at that stage the progress through the UN to a second resolution was indeterminate really. So we had to construct a plan that would make full use of our combat power, but would be sufficiently flexible not to constrain timing…The second point is that there is a limit to UK's logistics which

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91 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 9

92 Ev 391

93 Q 9

94 Q 9

yes, we could have taken an armoured brigade further north, but it is a limiting factor, there is no doubt about that.[95]

67. Air Marshal Burridge told us that there had been a plan to move 16 AAB north if it had been required.[96] We have heard that the Americans requested the British to supply troops from the Brigade to support the MEF in its northward advance by securing river crossings in An Nasiriyah, at the same time as taking Basra, but this was vetoed by General Reith as being too demanding for the size of the British force deployed. Another plan was for the Brigade to go even as far north as the river crossings across the Tigris, to release US combat power to push onto Baghdad.

68. The northern option would have been 'very challenging' but most of the logistical support would have been given by the Americans.[97] This would have worked as long as the British operated at a Divisional level, because it would have taken away most of the problems that could arise in mixing units within a brigade.[98] The northern option involved lines of communication hundreds of miles long through mountainous terrain that would have been testing for any country; coming from the south with its tarmac highways presented far less testing challenges.[99]

69. **From the evidence we have seen it appears that the late decision to move from the north to the south led to a requirement for the UK to deploy a significantly larger force—at least one brigade, something over 5,000 troops. This may well have been a contributory factor in complicating the various logistical problems that were later faced.**

The force balance

70. The UK force was configured for 'winning', the Secretary of State told us, not only for high-intensity war fighting at the initial stage but also for what UK forces expected to be engaged in shortly thereafter—peacekeeping and reconstruction. However, as the UK was contributing to a US-led coalition, the force balance had to fit in with the American force— for example the amount of British armour deployed was balanced with the armour available to the US.[100] Sir Kevin Tebbit argued that the structure was based on the desire to be flexible:

> … our ground forces were configured the way they were… partly because they were expected to have to do some serious war fighting initially, hence the armoured brigade, but also because it was uncertain how quickly it would be possible to secure Iraq as a whole, but there was still a hope that we could do it very rapidly and hence the light forces were there to be flexibly deployed, quickly if necessary. As it happens,

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95   Q 331

96   Q 270

97   Q 332 (Air Marshal Burridge)

98   Q 335

99   Qq 337–43

100   Q 5

we more or less stayed in the southern area, but there was always uncertainty as to how quickly we might have to move around the country.[101]

Mr Paul Beaver noted that the operation proved that:

we can deploy up to a certain level an armoured division with its assets in place… [but] what did show up was that it was very lucky that we did not have to go very much further up the road than north of Basra because we do not have that capability and that sustainability, and the problem we have is that to put that deployment in place we had to rob Peter to pay Paul.[102]

71. To deploy one fully equipped armoured brigade the Army had to cannibalise the majority of the tanks in the remaining two brigades. There were severe problems bringing infantry battalions up to war establishment manning levels, with reliance on ad hoc reinforcement from other battalions. Other Arms and Services had similar problems. It is apparent that the Force Readiness Cycle at the heart of the SDR force structure, which was designed to enable seamless reinforcement to war establishment, does not work given the current level of commitments. **MoD needs urgently to re-examine the mechanisms, including the use of reserves, by which units are brought to war establishment with minimal disruption in all important preparatory phases of the operations.**

72. The British chose to deploy a formed British-led land force that fitted in with the Americans rather than supply a variety of units to join with American elements. Sir Kevin Tebbit explained that a brigade sized force was deemed to be the minimum scale at which the UK could sensibly operate in a major coalition:

That is a general military view that the chiefs of staff hold, so it is a question of how many brigades one was to contribute on the ground. Our overall planning guidelines are for medium scale and basically following the strategic defence review that is broadly the sort of capacity we would expect to contribute to a military operation. The air and maritime packages were about that scale. The land package was slightly larger as it happened, but those would be the broad parameters within which we work. It was always going to be that the minimum would have been a brigade, a self-supporting brigade; in the event it was larger than that.[103]

Regimental and battalion sized American units, however, were attached or planned to be attached to British forces, as in the case of the Royal Marines and the Al Faw peninsula operation and the plan for the Northern option.

73. MoD explained that a number of force packages were explored during the planning phase including:

the possibility of sending two 'triangular' Armoured Brigades (each comprising one Challenger 2 Regiment and two Warrior Battalions). This would not have meant deploying any more tanks, but would have included 2 additional Warrior battalions, an additional Engineer Regiment and Artillery Regiment, and associated Combat

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101 Q 1760

102 Q 121

103 Q 1757

Service Support assets. The possibility of deploying 3 Armoured Brigades was not an option explored in any depth.[104]

The final scale and composition of the force was driven by what was thought most appropriate for the task, but other considerations that were taken into account included:

the likely timescales for deployment and the availability of strategic lift, and the sustainability of additional vehicles and personnel deployment. A particular consideration was the requirement to ring-fence a brigade for deployment on stabilisation operations following military action. Also to be taken into account was the possible impact upon other operations, in particular Operation FRESCO, of the deployment of further assets and personnel.[105]

74. **Overall, however, the signs are that, above Brigade level (i.e. at Division level), the UK Armed Forces have become a one operation force—one operation which must be followed by a lengthy period of recovery before they can be in position to mount another similar operation, even within a coalition.** To deploy the forces to the Gulf it is apparent that MoD and its suppliers were making a maximum effort. They demonstrated great agility and adaptability. They also benefited from a number of highly favourable circumstances including host-nation support built up over many years in the region, the experience of over ten years of Operation Southern Comfort, the impact of Operation Desert Fox in 1998, the lessons of *Saif Sareea II*, and significant assistance given by the United States of America, the world's largest military power. As Sir Kevin Tebbit noted:

to really be able to conduct expeditionary warfare with this size force more rapidly than we have managed on this occasion would be very expensive. That is not to say we cannot do it with smaller packages, 9,000 brigade level, medium scale, but this is a very large operation.[106]

75. **We are pleased to learn that according to *Lessons for the Future*, MoD intends to review the generation of force elements at readiness and the implications for notice to move times. But we feel that MoD should be more explicit in articulating what scale of forces can be offered for expeditionary operations of choice in the future, while ensuring adequate resources, equipment and training time.**

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104 Ev 388

105 Ev 388

106 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 171

4 Command and Control

Higher Command Levels

76. Political direction was provided at the highest level by the weekly Cabinet meetings during the months of the emerging crisis and then through almost daily ad hoc meetings from mid-March to late-April of a smaller group of Cabinet Ministers, usually chaired by the Prime Minister (the so-called 'war cabinet').[107] In addition, the Defence Secretary and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) briefed the Prime Minister on an almost daily basis on the progress of the military campaign. There were regular discussions in Cabinet on the basis of reports from the Defence, Foreign and International Development Secretaries. The Secretary of State had daily meetings in MoD with CDS and others in the chain of command responsible for the operation, as well as the Chiefs of Staff. These meetings usually preceded the daily meetings with the Prime Minister.[108]

77. There were contacts with the field commanders through PJHQ. There were twice daily video link meetings between MoD and PJHQ. The Secretary of State said that his role was not to interfere in a detailed manner in the actual conduct of a conflict. He added that the whole thing worked as a process rather than as a compartmentalised series of teams and at high speed:

> …there was never an occasion on which ministers were sitting back thinking about a decision whilst military commanders were waiting for the answer. If a decision needed to be taken it was taken very quickly.[109]

There was also regular (sometimes daily) contact with the Pentagon.

PJHQ

78. General Reith, explained the thinking behind the establishment of the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) and his role as CJO:

> The Chief of Joint Operations works directly for the Chief of Defence Staff, and he has responsibility for planning, mounting, directing, sustaining and recovering all troops on operations abroad, and I have a responsibility only for outside of the UK. So in that process my Headquarters does the operational level planning and gives politically aware military advice into MoD, and then MoD puts the strategic piece on top of the operational piece in the decision-making process that goes before ministers.[110]

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107   The ad hoc meetings were regularly attended by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, the Leader of the House of Commons and President of the Council, John Reid, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary, Margrett Beckett, the International Development Secretary, Claire Short, the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon and the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith. The Chief of the Defence Staff also regularly attended. Memo from MoD, May 2003, Ev 385.

108   Q 57

109   Q 60

110   Q 863

The operational team at PJHQ directly working on Operation Telic was only 12 strong. It acted as the conduit to the various branches of PJHQ staff for support. During the operation some 50 per cent of all PJHQ's staff effort went into Operation Telic, reflecting the fact that other operations were still on-going, including in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Sierra Leone. The basic establishment of PJHQ is 460 staff, but following the attacks on the United States in September 2001, this was raised to 550.[111]

Deployed Command

79. The National Contingent Commander in theatre, Air Marshal Burridge, reported to General Reith at PJHQ, although both are 3* officers. General Reith told us:

> I was the Joint Commander and I was delegated by CDS, and the single Services then put their troops under my command. As the Operational Commander, I had command, I delegated operational control to Air Marshal Burridge, and therefore he was controlling the operation as the man in theatre dealing with the detail.[112]

80. We asked why, given the scale of the operation, CJO himself had not deployed, in effect with a forward PJHQ.[113] PJHQ and the CJO are supposed to be deployable and General Reith's response accepted this point:

> One of the lessons which I have drawn from this operation is that maybe our doctrine is wrong, we have to review it. It may well have been, with modern communication, that actually, as the Joint Commander, I could have been forward and still performed the function that I did for the Chiefs of Staff Committee and ministers in the briefing process during the conflict from Qatar on a video teleconference link.[114]

That said he believed he had made a useful contribution in taking some pressure off the land component commander, General Brims:

> We had the ability in my Headquarters, through the connectivity, to see where the forces were on the ground, using a thing called Blue Force Tracker, so I could see the deployment of our sub-units on the ground. Which meant I was able to keep a lot of pressure off Robin Brims, in particular, because we could give the briefing, and everything, in to the MoD direct without having to ask him to give us the information. So this was very much a step forward, in terms of management of information.[115]

81. Air Marshal Burridge explained his role as follows:

> I had operational control of some 45,000 to 47,000 British personnel involved in the operation… (which)…means that I was responsible for allocating them to agreed tasks, tasks agreed by the Ministry of Defence, for their logistic support and for their

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111 Qq 868–9

112 Q 864

113 Qq 127–32

114 Q 866

115 Q 978

alignment with the US plan. To do that in Qatar essentially I could rely on two elements: my own headquarters; then some UK embedded staff, who were members of General Franks' staff; so instead of an American officer doing a particular job, there would be a British officer. That gave us the linkage and connectivity between our two headquarters. Then there was my own headquarters' total of about 350, including the life support of signallers, etcetera, but in terms of staff officers about 180.[116]

While Air Marshal Burridge held 'operational control' of UK forces, CJO had 'operational command' and:

> was able to assign different forces to different missions, that is what operational command actually means. I sat below him and I had operational control, so I was given the tasks and the forces and then I just had to match them into the American plan. Tactical command, in other words executing the individual tasks, was held by the UK 2* officers who were contingent commanders within each environment, air, land, maritime. They handed tactical control to their opposite number who was in all cases a 3* American, who would actually be the person who owned that part of the plan.[117]

Separate arrangements applied to Special Forces.[118]

82. **The appointment of a deployed UK National Contingent Commander worked effectively in Operation Telic.** Nonetheless, it has been suggested, not least by CJO himself, that consideration should be given to deploying CJO and elements of PJHQ for specific operations. The SDR envisaged that PJHQ should be a deployable headquarters. Since then, however, UK forces have frequently found themselves committed to a number of concurrent operations. **We expect MoD to revisit the question of the deployability of PJHQ, raised in the SDR, in the light of recent operations, and we look forward to their conclusions.**

Command relations with the Americans

83. The role of the national contingent commander, according to Air Marshal Burridge, revolved around three main tasks: support (logistics); information (to military and political decision-makers in UK); and influence (amongst coalition partners, notably the US).[119] He told us that the UK was regarded as a kind of US conscience:

> because we see things through different eyes, maybe make a different sort of analysis.[120]

Air Marshal Burridge and General Franks had first met in April 2002, when the former was designated the UK deployable 3* commander. Their initial discussions were about

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116 Q 217
117 Q 220
118 Q 913
119 Q 222
120 Q 222

Afghanistan. General Franks 'recognised from a strategic political sense the importance of the UK's part in this as a coalition partner and was very keen to make sure that what he did underpinned that'.[121]

84. The American military-political interface was much more direct than the British—going from the President to Secretary of Defense and then straight to General Franks, bypassing to some extent the chiefs of staff. The British chain of command had more components in that Air Marshal Burridge reported to CJO and occasionally the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The Secretary of State's main relationship was with CDS. During the operation he telephoned Air Marshal Burridge only once.[122] Air Marshal Burridge professed himself 'very happy' with the command arrangements, primarily because he was shielded from London. However, if more frequent operations with the Americans are to be expected (as they appear to be in the recent White Paper, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*), it might be argued that the British system should be able to adapt to deal with the more direct political-military interface practised by the Americans. Air Marshal Burridge's view was that the American system depended significantly on the personalities involved. Changing doctrine in the UK might therefore be a risky business.[123] **We recommend that MoD considers whether the highest levels of British command structures might be made more adaptable so as to be able to operate more closely in parallel with their American counterparts, when UK and US forces are operating together.**

85. Command and information systems (CIS) is an area in which the UK is significantly behind the US. This constrained co-operation at the command level and was of significant concern to Air Marshal Burridge. We discuss information systems in more detail below (paragraphs 214–18).

The Land Component

86. The individual UK component commanders came under American Corps *command*, although they were under UK operational *control*. As General Brims, the British Land Component Commander, explained:

> I was the Land Force Component Commander, and nationally I reported to the National Contingent Command Headquarters, commanded by Air Marshal Burridge. Operationally, I was embedded in the 1st US Marine Expeditionary Force, the equivalent of a corps, and therefore I was commanding one of the divisions within that US corps. That US corps was commanded by the Land Component Commander, General McKiernan, and his Land Coalition Component consisted of two corps, the MEF, the one I was embedded in, and 5th Corps. So, although nationally I was a Land Component Commander, in military speak I was about a two-down tactical commander, which makes me slightly different from the UK Maritime and the UK Air Components.[124]

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121 Q 224

122 Q 230

123 Q 225

124 Q 511

In practice, although he retained a national 'Red Card' (ie the standard authority to exclude British forces from operations of a type which he was not permitted by his UK superiors to conduct), he received his orders through two American Generals: the 3* Coalition Force Land Component Commander (CFLCC), General McKiernan, and his subordinate commander the 3* Commanding General of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), Lieutenant General Conway.[125]

The Maritime Component

87. The naval component commander, Rear Admiral Snelson, explained his role as follows:

> My role during the operation was as the UK Maritime Commander and my staff and I were based in Bahrain alongside the US Maritime Commander, to whom I acted as the Deputy for the Coalition Maritime Force. The UK maritime forces under command comprised some 34 ships of the Royal Navy, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and contract merchant ships, plus three maritime patrol aircraft based in Oman, which were the lynch-pin of the maritime surveillance effort. The Royal Navy also provided two Tomahawk-firing submarines although, strictly speaking, these were kept under command directly from Northwood. Although the force provided transport support and the launch platform for 3 Commando Brigade, the Royal Marines were not under my command and I simply facilitated their deployment for Brigadier Dutton, …who worked for General Robin Brims.[126]

The arrangements built on established command relationships with the United States which had already been tested in operations in Afghanistan:

> The Royal Navy had established a headquarters there [in Bahrain] in the wake of 9/11, with the UK Commander acting as the Deputy Coalition Joint Force Maritime Commander for Operation Enduring Freedom, the campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The decision to establish this headquarters was a significant factor in the success of the UK maritime contribution to the Iraq operation.[127]

88. Two thirds of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary were deployed to the Gulf. *Lessons for the Future* reported that they delivered 'effective, flexible logistics support throughout the operation.'[128] Some limitations were highlighted during the operation, such as their ability to simultaneously re-supply several ships over sustained periods and their limited self-defence capability. **The Royal Fleet Auxiliary made a vital contribution to the operation. MoD should ensure that the shortcomings which were highlighted are addressed.**

3 Commando and the Al Faw Penninsula operation

89. During the initial stages of the operation a United States Marine Expeditionary Unit, or MEU (the equivalent in size to a British Commando unit) was placed under the command

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125 Ev 388

126 Q 1461

127 Q 1461

128 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 4.9.

of 3 Commando Brigade for the Al Faw peninsula operation. Even before the northern option was closed down and the British focus moved exclusively to the south of Iraq, 3 Commando Brigade had been tasked with this operation. When the main British effort moved south, 3 Commando Brigade became part of General Brims's Division and the Marine Expeditionary Unit with it. After the initial Al Faw operation the MEU rejoined the MEF.[129]

90. General Brims explained how this relationship operated:

> The Commanding Officer of the Marine Expeditionary Unit would report to the 3(UK) Commando Brigade, 3(UK) Commando Brigade reported to me, and I reported to the MEF; although, clearly, the American would report directly to an American on a national basis, in exactly the same way as I was reporting to Air Marshal Burridge, so the fail-safes were there. So if we, the UK, had given 1 MEU, this single American Unit, an order that perhaps they felt was not in the US interests, contrary to US law, they had a fail-safe mechanism, exactly in the same way as we had.[130]

Having the US involvement with 3 Commando Brigade brought with it some useful capabilities that were not organic to the Brigade. Brigadier Dutton explained:

> [The Al Faw peninsula assault] was a combined operation with the US Navy SEALS, who had had the task of seizing the oil infrastructure for some considerable time. In a sense we were in support of them but we had been training with them and planning with them from a very early stage, in fact, they joined 40 Commando in Cyprus and sailed round with them. There was very close liaison in Kuwait. The Centcom NSW Commander co-located his deputy and quite a large headquarters, with a very considerable communications capability, alongside my Brigade Headquarters in Kuwait, just south of Umm Qasr, for the actual assault,…Because this was a combined operation with the Naval Special Warfare Group, they came with Predator UAVs and I was able to watch the Predator picture in my headquarters, where we were co-located, so I could see the landing taking place. Also they came with AC130 and A10s and with JDAMs dropped from F18s in a short, sharp, fire plan just before H-hour, so we had full access to those.[131]

91. Close air support was facilitated by American liaison officers on the ground with the Royal Marines, the ANGLICO teams (US Marine Corps Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Companies teams). These specialist teams, which control air and naval gunfire, and artillery, were embedded at company, commando and brigade level and brought a degree of fire support expertise previously not available to the UK's ground forces. They were also embedded with other parts of the UK division.[132]

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129 Q 524

130 Q 525

131 Q 1519

132 Q 1520

The Air Component

92. The Air Component Commander's command and control arrangement were broadly similar to those of the Land Component Commander, although UK air assets were pooled into a coalition force under American command:

> we had a very established command and control relationship with the United States air force as a result of the no-fly zone operations, and we were really building on exactly that structure. What had changed was the creation of an in-theatre UK joint headquarters with Air Marshal Burridge as the National Contingent Commander. He had operational control of all of the UK assets committed to the operation. I had tactical command of all of the air assets, which basically meant that I allocated UK resources to specific tasks and I then gave tactical control of those assets for the execution of a particular task to the United States 3* air component commander.[133]

He denied that the relationship was one in which he in effect acted as deputy to the US commander (a role filled by a US Navy 2* officer). He pointed out that his deputy, Air Commodore Nickols, was one of three 1* officers who oversaw the day-to-day execution of the plan for the US Air Component Commander. Air Vice Marshal Torpy sat alongside this structure with his own headquarters checking that the UK resources were being used effectively.[134]

Logistics

93. The Defence Logistics Organisation (DLO) was involved in the planning from 'day one' of the strategic planning options. They based their planning on what is known as 'CJO's estimate'.[135] We were told:

> The estimate is very simple and common sense. We talk about the four 'Ds' which is Duration, Distance, Destination and Demand…Having conducted the estimate we then put together a sustainability statement which we work out very carefully with the DLO and with the front line commands looking at the art of the possible. The size and the structure of the force is actually driven by the operational imperative…a decision was taken to send a division structure.[136]

Logistics were provided within theatre by a British Joint Logistic Component, commanded by Brigadier Shaun Cowlam:

> I was Commander of the Joint Forces Logistic Component, which was a Joint Component, primarily, the majority was made up of Army units and a large proportion of that was 102 Logistics Brigade, which I commanded, in peacetime, in Germany. It was an organisation of about 7,500 people, 19 major units, predominantly Army but with some Navy and Air Force elements, a joint staff, with the Headquarters Signal Squadron, and support, about 200 people, about 65% Army,

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133 Q 1254

134 Q 1255

135 Q 992

136 Q 994

> 25% Air Force and about 10% Navy. And our role was to receive, stage and onward move all three components as they came into theatre, then to sustain them and conduct other operations as required…we were very closely allied to the Land Component, we provided the Land Component 3rd Line Logistics piece, and for that we used most of 102 Logistics Brigade.[137]

In chain of command terms, Brigadier Cowlam was a component commander in his own right and responsible for all three services:

> Unlike the Land, the Air and the Maritime components, who were embedded within the coalition components, Logistics was a national responsibility and so I reported directly to Air Marshal Burridge. Quite clearly, at staff level, I was speaking to PJHQ, and indeed to Land, Fleet and Strike, almost daily, but my chain of command was very clear, straight to Qatar and the Air Marshal and his staff…At theatre level, we aligned to 377 Theatre Support Command; tactically, with the Land component, we were aligned to 1 MEF and the Marine Logistic Command, and therefore I had links. And indeed for the early part of the campaign I was co-located with 377 Theatre Support Command, we had embedded staff in their Headquarters although we were not under their command, and so the level of co-operation was very close, and we did help each other out, constantly…a similar arrangement happened with the Marine Logistics Command, further forward.[138]

While 3 Commando Brigade was part of the amphibious Task Group their logistics were part of the Maritime Component; when they came ashore they switched to the joint logistics chain.[139]

Targeting

94. Targeting was one area in which the British claimed to have specific and important influence. General Reith explained how the British were involved in the targeting process:

> The air campaign had considerable flexibility within it. We were involved in a target list, there were over 300 targets which we cleared jointly with the Americans, and we went through a full process, over several weeks, before the campaign, ensuring that we were happy with the targeting.[140]

The command and control procedures were well developed and included a clear rule that if there was any British involvement (which extended beyond whether the aircraft themselves were British and, for example, also included whether they had launched from a British base) then the British National Contingent Commander could veto the mission:

> If we are attacking a target with a UK platform, aircraft, then I have to approve it. It cannot be attacked unless I or someone to whom I have delegated approve it. If we are attacking a target using an American platform, but from a British facility, Diego

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137   Q 516

138   Qq 518–9

139   Q 521

140   Q 910

Garcia or Fairford, I have to approve it or someone to whom I have delegated. That is quite formal, legalistic, everybody understands that.[141]

Ultimate authority, however, rested with ministers, although, as Sir Kevin Tebbit explained their involvement was kept to a minimum.[142]

On targeting, for example, a Secretary of State will lay out the parameters of what is acceptable and what is not and in a few cases say 'These sorts of targets I reserve to my own decision at the time', but very few. Though broadly laying out categories of control so that it was clear where the parameters lay, the military men were given maximum flexibility within those parameters to go about their task.[143]

95. We were told that in Operation Telic, the Americans accepted British advice even where no such direct British involvement existed. As Air Marshal Burridge explained:

Where I believe the interesting bit occurs—and I think this is where we added considerable value—was in saying yes, okay, this is an American target, American platform, no British involvement, but actually let me just say how this might look viewed in Paris, Berlin or wherever.[144]

Indeed MoD claimed that there were no occasions when British advice on targeting was not followed.[145]

96. Air Marshal Burridge explained that the coalition's approach to targeting had to take in four major influences: the laws of armed conflict; proportionality (the use of minimum force); the extent of discernible military advantage; and the need to take 'all feasible precautions in making your judgements'.

In this operation, we wanted very much to be using minimum force so as to leave the infrastructure of Iraq and also the perception of the people of Iraq intact; so we only did the minimum we needed to.[146]

97. The speed and tempo of decision-making required in the campaign was of a different order compared to the 1991 Gulf War, the Bosnia and Kosovo air campaigns, Operation Desert Fox or the Northern and Southern Watch operations. Given the nature of the plan, which was designed to overwhelm the command and control of the Iraqi regime through high tempo and high manoeuvre, decision-making on targeting needed to move from what had been 'sedate' to 'fast and furious'. This required a greater degree of delegation to Air Marshal Burridge and his targeting board.[147] Air Vice Marshal Torpy explained:

What was different was that we were given greater delegation on this occasion because we knew the tempo of the operation would demand decisions to be taken

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141 Q 251
142 Q 911
143 Q 1733
144 Q 251
145 Ev 392
146 Q 250
147 Q 291

quickly and I could not go right the way back through the process, back to the PJHQ and MoD, which we could do when we had the luxury of time for our southern no-fly zone operations.[148]

But Air Vice Marshal Torpy also highlighted the problem of integrating information in a network-centric environment:

> The areas in that process that remain a real challenge are identifying the target, tracking it, if it is a small target, and then the assessment afterwards. We have a vast array of collection platforms and collection capability. Joining that information together remains a challenge.[149]

We discuss the question of battle damage assessment below (paragraphs 105–6).

98. **There is clear evidence of UK influence on the air targeting operations of the coalition. Principally this influence seems to have been applied to issues of perception, specifically how attacking particular targets would be received by European allies. The extent to which the UK persuaded the US out of attacking certain targets on grounds of principle is less clear. We asked MoD for specific examples of UK influence but they failed to provide any, even on a classified basis.**

Close Air Support

99. The air campaign saw a significant change in the nature of the munitions delivered both by the coalition as a whole and by the RAF in particular, with a shift towards precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and away from 'dumb' bombs. The number of PGMs dropped was 85 per cent (679 out of 803),[150] up from less than 10 per cent in the 1991 Gulf War. We were told that some 90 per cent of PGMs hit their target. All British air power was pooled and the British forces were not able to rely on organic air support (that is air assets dedicated to support particular land forces) as Air Marshal Burridge told us:

> All the air power was integrated. Whatever proportion was allocated to close air support, could either be British or American aircraft. There is one distinct difference and that is the US Marine Corps are configured as relatively light forces and they do not have indigenous deep fires, that is, a lot of artillery. They have very little artillery. Their equivalent of artillery is the Marine Air Wing F18s. They live together very intimately and their ability to do close air support, both the ground forces' ability to control it and the air's ability to integrate with it, is very impressive, very impressive indeed.[151]

One of the lessons from operations in Afghanistan was that the UK had to get better at close air support and this was underlined by the experience of working closely with the USMC in Operation Telic:

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148   Q 1256

149   Q 1310

150   Q 1291

151   Q 398

In Afghanistan we were finding that we were using close air support for strategic effect and in high manoeuvre, high tempo warfare, the relationship between air and land is now much, much more important.[152]

Air Vice Marshal Torpy accepted these problems, which were also about how well practised the RAF was in close air support:

There is no doubt that we need to do more air-land integration. It is something that we knew about at least 18 months before we started this operation, and it was work that we had in hand: improving the procedures; looking at our equipment… I still believe there are lots of lessons that we have learned out of this particular campaign in terms of the core skill that air-land integration should form for all of our fast jet aircraft.[153]

100. An innovation for the RAF in Iraq was the use of 'kill-box interdiction and close air support' or KI-CAS, long practised by the United States' air forces (Navy, Marines and USAF). Air Vice Marshal Torpy explained the concept:

There are two discrete, different bits to this. Close Air Support is when air is used when forces on the ground are in close contact and need air support quickly. Kill box interdiction is a more methodical way of attacking targets in particular areas. A kill box is an area which has been defined. Aircraft are tasked into that area to attack mobile targets—so fielded artillery, tanks and those sort of targetS.[154]

But we have heard that the targeting pods (the sensors that allow the pilot to identify a target) on British aircraft were not sophisticated enough to support the kill-box approach, which requires the aircraft to identify small targets from a medium to high altitude. The Air Component Commander conceded there was a problem:

One of the lessons that we have learned out of the campaign, [is] that our targeting pods need longer range, better fidelity… positively identifying that a target is a military target.[155]

101. He also accepted that more needed to be done in terms of air-land integration:

I think we are probably victims of past campaigns in that Operation Desert Storm was a discrete air operation followed by a short land campaign, and very little integrated air-land operation took place. Afghanistan was the first time we saw closer integration between air and land, but on a relatively small scale in terms of the land component. This was the first operation that I have certainly seen for many years where we have seen such close linkage between the air and land components…we have forgotten some of the things that we were quite good at during the Cold War…We have probably neglected the exercising of those over the years.[156]

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152 Q 399

153 Q 1253

154 Q 1294

155 Q 1296

156 Q 1312

Worryingly we heard reports that there was a serious lack of air to ground communications capability, with RAF aircraft unable to communicate with the forces on the ground in the vast majority of missions flown. Additionally there was a lack of understanding on the part of land force commanders about the need to have cleared specific targets to be struck from the air through the appropriate channels. We heard reports of some one third of missions being aborted because of problems in the air-land interface. The intention is now to increase the RAF involvement in the BATUS exercises in Canada and to improve the use of targeting pods, extending it to all aircraft that engaged in KI-CAS and to exercise the whole command and control organisation from the Combined Air Operations Centre.[157]

102. During the ground campaign there were also some delays in the provision of air support. This was a matter of concern to some UK land forces. General Brims, however, believed that overall the system had worked well and particularly highlighted the work of the ANGLICOs discussed above:

> Utilising 3rd MAW, the Marine Air Wing, as a tactical air wing; in order to do it, we had to receive…ANGLICO battalions…they come with communications, life support vehicles, and everything else, and you could say to them, 'We need the fire there,' they will call for it, and we had them embedded throughout our chain of command and it worked wonderfully well.[158]

Nonetheless, concerns have been raised that in a coalition, where aircraft may be reassigned when returning from other missions, there may be even less time to make decisions about the appropriateness of the targets from a national perspective.

103. Whether to rely on organic air support or to pool all air assets and allocate those assets from a central coalition air centre is a continuing debate. Air Marshal Burridge told us:

> Some people will say that if you have British forces on the ground then you should have Royal Air Force aircraft providing their close air support…We do have to be sure that if we are in a coalition the right amount of air power is used for the high priority tasks at any one time and that is quite difficult to do.[159]

Air Vice Marshal Torpy argued that it would not be possible to support British troops just using UK air power:

> It is impossible, for instance, to say, 'we are only going to use UK aircraft to support the UK land force' because that would be an inefficient use of air power. Inevitably, we would not have sufficient UK assets to provide cover for instance to a UK land component 24 hours a day. That is why air power has always been used and planned on centralised methodology; and then we decentralise the execution of the operation. It is trying to make the best use of the resources across the battle space and in time.[160]

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157   Q 1312

158   Q 626

159   Q 399

160   Q 1316

104. The argument over whether forces should have their own organic air power or not is a debate that will no doubt continue on both sides of the Atlantic. Dedicated air power *was* attached to the USMC's MEF (which the British came under) and other discrete ground formations operating elsewhere in Iraq, which suggests that the doctrinal basis for the decision to pool the British air assets is not clear cut. Given the nature of the coalition action in the south eastern sector around Basra, using the MEF's organic air assets to support all the forces in the district and centralising the RAF's contribution in a coalition pool seems to have worked well. **However, we feel that the shortcomings in the practice and training of close air support by the RAF and land forces which have emerged in recent operations must be urgently addressed. This will require a reassessment of the numbers of and equipment for Forward Air Controllers, both on the ground and in the air, the provision of adequate targeting pods for individual aircraft and significantly greater exercising of these capabilities in a joint environment. Such exercises are likely to have to take place overseas since, as we understand it, no UK based facility exists for such training.**

Battle Damage Assessment

105. Air Vice Marshal Torpy told us that 'one of the main underpinning objectives of the campaign was to make sure that we minimised damage to civilian infrastructure and civilian casualties as well'.[161] We asked how the extent of damage to a particular target was assessed and what use made of such assessments. He told us:

> One of the major parts of the whole execution cycle is to assess the effect that you have had against a particular target, and battle damage assessment is a key element of that, so that you can change the campaign plan when you know that you have created the effect that you want to achieve, and, against a particular target, that you do not have to revisit the target.[162]

106. In terms of the process of assessing battle damage and how effective it was, Air Vice Marshal Torpy told us that MoD had a vast array of 'collection platforms and collection capability'[163], but joining the information together remained a challenge. He did not think the current system was 'perfect by any stretch of the imagination' [164], and it was one of the areas identified where a lot more effort was required. He considered that improvements should flow from employing network centric capabilities as:

> then we will be able to get a better fused product, which would provide to the commander and his staffs the ability to improve both the speed and accuracy of battle damage assessment.[165]

Effective and timely arrangements for assessing battle damage are crucial for continuously informing the campaign plan and for establishing whether the aim of minimising damage to civilians and civilian infrastructure has been achieved. We look

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161 Q 1290

162 Q 1293

163 Q 1310

164 Q 1310

165 Q 1310

to MoD to exploit the latest technological advances to further improve the speed and accuracy of battle damage assessment.

5 Use of Reserves

107. MoD told us that the Armed Forces have been planned and structured on the basis that any major war-fighting operation would draw on support from the Reserve Forces. It considers that the use of reservists is a prudent approach that allows the maintenance of full time Armed Forces in no greater strength than is needed for normal peacetime activity and to meet a limited range of contingencies. In addition, the more flexible use of reservists gives MoD the opportunity to harness skills appropriate for operations, but which are not needed on a regular or frequent basis in peacetime and, therefore, are not readily found within the regular Armed Forces.[166]

108. MoD provided us with details[167] of the different categories of reserves. The reserves are divided into two parts: the Reserve Forces and those individuals with a recall liability (for example pensioners and the Long Term Reserve). Only the Reserve Forces were involved in Operation Telic. The Reserve Forces can themselves be divided into two parts—the Volunteer Reserve Forces and the Regular Reserve Forces.

> **Volunteer Reserve Forces**—Personnel of the Volunteer Reserve Forces are members of the public who voluntarily undertake military training, for which they are paid, in their free time. In return they accept a liability for call out as individuals or in military units when required to supplement the regular armed forces for military operations. They total around 45,000 people, some of whom may be former regular servicemen and women. They are members of either the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Territorial Army, or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Members of each of these forces were called out for Operation Telic.

> **Regular Reserve Forces**—Personnel of the Regular Reserve Forces incur a liability for reserve service as a result of previously completed regular service. They are either members of the Royal Fleet Reserve (former Royal Navy and Royal Marine regulars), the Army Reserve (former Army regulars) or the RAF Reserve (former RAF regulars). In addition, each Regular Reserve Force has a component comprising volunteers who are mainly, but not wholly, ex-regulars who have voluntarily extended their reserve liabilities. Only members of the Army Reserve and RAF Reserve were called out for Operation Telic.

109. Sponsored Reserves are special members of the Reserve Forces. They work for a civilian employer who has entered into a contract with MoD to provide a support function which under normal conditions can be performed by a civilian workforce, but which during operations requires a military workforce. A condition of each such contract is that a proportion of the workforce must be capable of being called out for full time service and they must therefore be members of a Reserve Force. There are currently five Sponsored Reserve contracts in place. For Operation Telic a small number of Sponsored Reservists were called-out for service with Strategic Sealift (Ro-Ro ferries), the Mobile Meteorological Unit, and providing engineer support for 32 (Royal) Squadron RAF.

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166 Ev 404

167 Ev 407–8

Call-out and mobilisation

110. The key dates for the call-out and mobilisation of the Reserve for combat operations were:

> 7 January—Secretary of State for Defence announced the making of a call-out Order and the intent to call out 1500 Reservists;
>
> 30 January—Secretary of State for Defence announced a further call out of Reservists to an overall total of up to 6000[168]

111. In terms of the scale of the call-out, *Lessons for the Future* reported that:

> this operation involved the largest compulsory call-out of Reserve Forces since the 1956 Suez Crisis. Over 8000 reservists were called out for the deployment and campaign phases, with over 5200 taken into service. Following further incremental call-outs in April and August 2003, an additional 3300 reservists were taken into service for roulement purposes, and a further requirement for some 1100 will be met by mobilisations in January [2004]. Further call-outs may be made for future roulements. Most reservists were drawn from the Volunteer Reserve Forces together with a smaller number from Army and RAF Regular Reserves, and Sponsored Reserves.[169]

The National Audit Office reported that the reservists who were deployed 'were drawn from a wide range of specialisations, although a large number were medical personnel'.[170]

112. MoD told us that in broad terms, the requirement for Operation Telic was about 5,600 reservists: 500 Royal Navy and Royal Marine reservists; 3,600 Army reservists; and 1,500 RAF reservists.[171] In determining the number of reservists who would be sent call-out notices, allowance was made for the possible wastage rates resulting from those who might not meet medical or dental standards, and from applications for exemption or deferment from reservists or their employers. Details of the number of reservists mobilised for the combat phase of Operation Telic are shown at Table 1.

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168 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 41.

169 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq— Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.17.

170 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 5.8.

171 Ev 404

Table 1 The number of reservists mobilised for the combat phase of Operation Telic

Service	Call-out notices served	Reservists who reported for service	Reservists who were accepted into service	Percentage accepted into service who reported for service
Royal Navy	334	311	292	94%
Royal Marines	131	113	112	99%
Army	6540	4873	3787	78%
RAF	1487	1181	1030	87%
Total	8492	6478	5221	81%

Source: Ministry of Defence (Ev 406)

113. The Reserve Forces Act 1996 includes the right for reservists or employers to seek revocation, exemption from or deferral of call-out, an application for any of which is considered by an Adjudication Officer. MoD told us that, generally, a revocation is only given either when it finds the reservist is surplus to requirements or if the reservist is suffering from an injury or ill-health.[172] For Operation Telic 1 (i.e. the combat operation), MoD received 2,021 applications for exemption and 80 applications for deferral. Of the 2,021 applications for exemption—1,101 were from reservists and 920 were from employers.[173] For Operation Telic 2, 809 applications for either exemption or deferral were received and, for Operation Telic 3, 76 applications for either exemption or deferral were received.

114. MoD told us that notice to report for compulsory call-out is set by operational requirements. Ideally, MoD would aim to give both regular reservists and volunteer reservists 21 days notice to report for service, but they noted that this cannot always be achieved. For Telic 1, MoD told us that in order to ensure the reserves were ready in time, it was generally only possible to give 14 days notice to report, and in some cases notice to report was considerably shorter. MoD believed that, in the main, these cases were due to postal problems or short notice changes in requirement. For Telic 2 and Telic 3, MoD aimed to give reservists 21 days notice to report, but this was not guaranteed and a small number of reservists received a shorter notice period due mainly to last minute changes to operational requirements. As the operation matures, MoD plan to move to 30 days notice to report.[174] We asked MoD for details of the reservists who were called up at relatively short notices. Details of the number of call-out notices issued at short notice during Operations Telic 1 and 2 are shown at Table 2.

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172 Ev 408

173 Ev 410

174 Ev 408–9

Table 2 The number of call-out notices issued at short notice during Operations Telic 1 and 2

Operation Telic phase	Less than 1 week	Between 1 and 2 weeks	Between 2 and 3 weeks
Telic 1	201	5140	1580
Telic 2	41	39	345
Total	242	5179	1925

Source: Ministry of Defence (Ev 418)

Note: The figures depict the number of call-out notices issued and not the number of individuals called out. The notice time includes the time taken to deliver the call-out notices.

115. We asked MoD about the numbers of reservists who were given informal indications that if there was a war they were likely to be called up. MoD told us that a high degree of planning was undertaken prior to the call-out order on 7 January 2003 and that this activity included warning units that their personnel might be required for mobilisation. In the case of the Army, for example, approximately 15 per cent of the TA personnel MoD planned to call-out received some form of advance notice through their unit commander prior to the call-out order being made. MoD explained that those who received advance warning were, in the main, personnel and or units who were required at fairly short notice to support the mobilisation and deployment. The change to the southern option required a different force structure to support it and a number of personnel forewarned of the possibility of mobilisation for the northern option were not used.

116. The Secretary of State told us in February 2004 that:

> we have… recognised that our procedures for mobilising Reservists need to allow for greater notice than was possible in January last year, and I am pleased that we have managed to do a bit better in subsequent mobilisations, meeting our aspiration to provide 21 rather than 14 days' notice[175]

While we are pleased to learn that for Operations Telic 2 and 3, MoD has been able to give most reservists 21 days notice to report, we are concerned that for Telic 1 reservists were given 14 days notice to report, and in some cases considerably less. We expect MoD to ensure that the appropriate lessons are learned to avoid the need for such short notice to report, and to recognise the impact of this on reservists, their families and their employers.

117. *First Reflections* states that 'the need for structured mobilisation and demobilisation procedures was confirmed by our experience in the 1991 Gulf conflict and reinforced by subsequent reservist deployments to the Balkans and Afghanistan. The establishment of the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre at Chilwell did much to streamline mobilisation procedures'.[176] We visited the Reserve Training and Mobilisation Centre at Chilwell where we were briefed on its role in relation to Operation Telic and visited the

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175 Q 2220

176 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 9.

various Departments. We were told that the Director of Operational Capability had identified a number of issues from Telic 1. These included:

- Timings were squeezed by changing strategic circumstances, military options and decision making. This led to limited warning for reserves and employers (the two week target was not achieved) and training and preparation time was reduced to the minimum.

- 20–25 per cent of reserves were given less than 14 days notice (the average was 9 days).

- There was an apparent lack of knowledge of call-out liability among some members of the Territorial Army. Staff at Chilwell told us that they had received a number of calls from reservists in the TA along the lines of 'I'm not in the Army, I'm in the TA'. Some reservists did not understand that they could not resign once they had been called up.

We expect MoD and the reserve organisations to take appropriate action to ensure that reservists are made fully aware of their liability for call out.

118. During our visit, we were told that a number of improvements to the mobilisation process had been introduced including: more intelligent selection of reserve personnel (due to the timing of the formal call-out, much of the intelligent selection took place late on); enhanced briefing to donor and receiving units; and an improved training regime.

119. Reservists had to undergo 'medical run-ups' on their first day at the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre—the aim was to clear out reservists who were going to fail as early as possible. We were told that 48 per cent of the regular reserves who turned up failed the medical compared with 14 per cent for the TA reservists who tuned up. **We recommend that MoD consider what action can be taken to ensure that these reservists return to being 'fit for role'.**

120. During our inquiry we received correspondence from a Major in the TA who raised a number of concerns about his experience going through the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre at Chilwell before deploying to the Gulf. These included concerns about the adequacy of the five days training provided, in particular firing practice—he said that he had only fired ten rounds of ammunition. He was also concerned that young reservists were not adequately prepared before being deployed. We asked MoD to investigate these concerns.

121. MoD told us that each year a TA soldier is expected to undertake between 19 and 25 man training days, depending upon their operational role and specialisation, to ensure they meet minimum training standards and are fit for role. During mobilisation an assessment is made of the training that an individual has completed. All reservists mobilising through Chilwell received training in accordance with the Operation Telic 'mounting instruction' and further training was provided in-theatre. MoD noted that when a reservist is demobilised through Chilwell they are invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire, and one of the questions asks how well they thought they were trained for war. As at 1 September 2003, of the 1,748 individuals who completed the questionnaire, over 85 per cent of officers and nearly 80 per cent of other ranks considered that they were either 'very

well' or 'well prepared' for Operation Telic (3.5 per cent of officers and 4 per cent other ranks considered they were not properly prepared).[177] However while these responses appear fairly positive, assessing how well one is prepared is a very subjective judgement and only about half the reservists who were invited to complete the questionnaire did so.

122. MoD told us that the 'non-alignment of TA and Regular shooting standards is one of the top 10 operational lessons identified and the resource implications of bringing standards into line is currently being considered'.[178] In the United States we were told that training, and particularly marksmanship, was their 'asymmetric advantage' over the Iraqi forces. The importance of maintaining high standards of basic skills, such as marksmanship, must not be forgotten. **Overall, it appears that the majority of reservists mobilising through Chilwell considered that they had received adequate training before being deployed. However, we are concerned about the non-alignment of TA and Regular shooting standards and expect MoD to address this issue as soon as possible.**

Length of the call-out

123. MoD told us that at the time of the call out in January 2003, it was not known whether offensive operations would occur and if they did, how long the campaign would last—the length of the call out was therefore unknown. MoD recognised that employers and reservists needed guidance on the expected duration of the call out. Reservists of all Services were told to expect a six month deployment plus two months of training and leave giving a total period of absence of eight to nine months.[179] MoD has not calculated the average length of mobilised service, but considers that the period of mobilised service for Volunteer and Regular Reserves on Operation Telic has generally been four to six months in theatre preceded by a period of pre-deployment training and followed by post-deployment and leave—this latter being dependent on how long the individual was deployed in theatre. This equates to a total of up to seven to nine months.[180]

124. In some cases, such as for the key enablers mobilised early in Operation Telic, the period for mobilisation was shorter and in others, where the skills were required immediately after the conflict to aid in the stabilisation and reconstruction, the period of mobilisation is likely to have been longer. MoD told us that a number of reservists have voluntarily extended their period of mobilised service.[181]

Finance and compensation issues

125. We received reports that some reservists had experienced problems with their pay. MoD acknowledged that there had been a problem with TA reservists and recognised that it should have sent out a reserve unit for pay and administration much earlier, so that reservists would have someone in theatre with whom they could discuss pay and other matters. MoD considered that it was a 'local problem' which had been addressed and had

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177 Ev 419

178 Ev 419

179 Ev 406

180 Ev 408

181 Ev 408

not been a major issue.[182] **We are concerned to learn that some TA reservists experienced problems regarding their pay. We understand that for future operations, where significant numbers of reservists are deployed, PJHQ have agreed to the deployment of a Reserves Cell whose role will include issues such as pay and allowances.[183] We expect MoD to ensure that this lesson is implemented in full.**

126. MoD provided us with information on the pay and financial assistance arrangements for reservists.[184] If a reservist is dissatisfied with MoD's decision they have a right to appeal to an independent Reserve Forces Appeals Tribunal. MoD and the reservist can continue to negotiate an agreed outcome before the tribunal sits and MoD told us that it was often the case that such agreement is reached prior to a hearing. As at the end of October 2003, MoD told us that, for Operation Telic 1, no reservist had made an appeal against MoD on financial grounds. MoD has subsequently received nine financial appeals—one of which has been withdrawn; one has been heard by a tribunal which found in favour of MoD; and seven had yet to be heard.[185] **It is clearly wrong that reservists who are compulsorily mobilised for combat operations should lose out financially. We note that to date only a small number of appeals have been made. We recommend that these be considered sympathetically and that MoD monitor closely the numbers and outcomes of such appeals over the coming months.**

127. In a presentation to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on 30 September 2003 Lieutenant General Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), accepted that there had been a number of problems with the question of financial assistance to reservists in matters such as loss of earnings. The system was highly bureaucratic and personally intrusive with reservists forced to spend many hours demonstrating their regular outgoings, through the submission of receipts and bank statements in many cases. Reservists also raised these concerns during our visits. **We expect MoD to ensure that the procedures for reservists claiming financial assistance are streamlined and less intrusive.**

Employment issues

128. We have received correspondence from individual reservists, and from a firm of solicitors representing reservists, raising concerns about employment problems encountered after returning from operations. A key concern raised was that reservists had not been given adequate briefing on mobilising and, as a result their expectations of their personal employment protection were high and over optimistic. MoD told us that the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985 deals with the rights of reservists in respect of reinstatement in their former employment after mobilisation. There is a general requirement on the employer to reinstate the reservist on return from a period of mobilised service. If it is not reasonable or practicable for the reservist to be given their old job, they must be offered employment on the same terms and conditions or on the most favourable terms and conditions applicable in their case. Employers are required to

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182 Q 2164

183 Ev 443

184 Ev 409

185 Ev 409

continue to employ the reservist for a set period after reinstatement—depending on the length of time the reservist has worked for the employer. The Act provides an appeal procedure, to bodies called reinstatement committees, which may order reinstatement or payment of compensation or both. The Act also makes provision for other circumstances, including the bankruptcy of the employer.[186]

129. There have been reports in the media that a number of reservists, in particular members of the TA, had lost their jobs since returning from Iraq and we asked MoD to investigate this. MoD told us that there was no obligation on reservists to inform their units or MoD of any difficulty they may have in obtaining reinstatement, or any other problems they may have with their employers. MoD also told us that there was no evidence to suggest that this problem was widespread—to date MoD was aware of 17 cases, which have resulted in applications to the reinstatement committees established under the 1985 Act. In its view, this was a very low figure when set against a background of more than 8,500 Reservists mobilised for Operation Telic during 2003—two of the cases related to other operations.[187] MoD was also aware of two other cases where reservists sought to bring a case before an Employment Tribunal, rather than a Reinstatement Committee.[188] **We note that MoD has commissioned a study to measure the degree of employer support for the mobilisation of the Reserve and look forward to seeing the findings and the lessons that MoD identify.[189] But we also consider that MoD needs to adopt a more proactive approach to identifying cases where reservists have experienced employment problems following a period of mobilisation. Reservists need to be assured that they will not lose their jobs, as a result of being mobilised, and that support will be available if they encounter such problems.**

130. MoD told us that it recognised that there was a risk that reservists returning from a period of mobilised service might have difficulties in obtaining reinstatement with their previous employer. To counter this risk, all reservists are briefed on demobilisation about their rights under the 1985 Act. Guidance is also given to reservists which covers the issue of returning to civilian employment.[190]

131. MoD subsequently told us that it was aware of a number of cases where members of the Territorial Army based in Germany had lost their jobs on demobilisation. One TA unit is based in Germany—412 Amphibious Engineer Troop (Volunteers). This unit forms part of 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron who provide the only wide water gap crossing capability within the British Army. The unit's strength is 53, and five additional Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (REME) posts are also filled by the TA. Most of these reservists have civilian jobs with MoD in Germany, but a number worked for German civilian employers and one for a civilian employer in Denmark. Forty two of these reservists were mobilised at the end of January 2003 for Operation Telic and were demobilised at the end of July 2003. Eleven of those 42 lost their jobs with their German (and in one case, Danish) civilian employers on their return. In response the MoD offered

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186 Ev 427

187 Ev 427

188 Ev 427

189 Ministry of Defence, *Operation in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.22.

190 Ev 428

them positions in their parent unit on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) terms for up to 12 months. Ten of them took up the offer—two have since obtained alternative employment with other civilian employers and two have regained their previous employment. As at early February 2004, the remaining six were still serving on FTRS terms and had not found alternative civilian employment. The one reservist who did not take up the offer of FTRS has not yet found civilian employment. MoD informed us that the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985 does not apply in Germany, and the equivalent provisions in German law do not apply to the TA.[191] **We are very concerned to learn that 11 members of the TA in Germany (over a quarter of the TA in Germany deployed to Operation Telic), who form part of a key squadron (the Amphibious Engineer Squadron), lost their jobs with civilian employers on returning from deployment on Operation Telic. We expect MoD and the reserve organisations to raise these matters with the relevant authorities within Germany and with the civilian employers of the TA reservists in Germany.**

132. On 3 February 2004, MoD announced administrative changes to the recruitment and re-engagement procedures for the Volunteer Reserve Forces. From 1 April 2004, new recruits to the Volunteer Reserve Force and applicants for re-engagement will be required to agree to their unit contacting their employer about their membership. MoD say that the change will 'enable employers to be in a better position to plan for the absence of employees who are reservists and also to be better informed about their rights and obligations'.[192] **We are concerned that this change seems to have been announced ahead of the findings of MoD's own study on employer support. There does not seem to have been prior consultation with members of the reserves. We recommend that MoD set out why it chose to make this change at this time.**

Impact on the reserves

133. MoD told us that there are no indications to suggest that the call out of reservists to support Operation Telic had resulted in a significant increase in resignations from the Reserve Forces. Some ten per cent of reservists who have demobilised have expressed an interest in joining the Regular Forces or undertaking further full-time service.[193]

134. In order to earn their annual 'bounty'—the only financial remuneration which they receive for their commitment to the Reserve—reservists need to complete their annual training requirement. During our visit to Iraq, and subsequently, reservists have told us that this meant that on top of a full operational tour to Iraq they would have to complete additional training on their return in order to be eligible for the bounty. One group of TA reservists whom we met in Basra, for example, told us that they would have to do 12 more days on their return to the UK. Unsurprisingly this caused difficulties both for their employers and perhaps even more for those reservists who were self-employed. **It is unreasonable that reserve personnel deployed on Operation Telic should have to do additional service, on top of the six to nine months taken up by that tour, to qualify for their annual bounty and we recommend that MoD waives this requirement.**

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191 Ev 428

192 Announcement by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Ivor Caplin), 3.2.04.

193 Ev 406

135. **MoD has identified a number of lessons relating to the reserve from the experience of Operation Telic. We look to MoD to implement these lessons in full. We welcome the announcement that, following Operation Telic, MoD is adjusting the arrangements for the higher management of the reserve and that the Directorate of Reserve Forces and Cadets will come under the direct command of the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, which reflects the importance of this key part of our Armed Forces.**[194]

136. **Throughout our inquiry we have come into contact with a range of reservists who served on Operation Telic. As with the Regular service personnel, we have been impressed with their dedication and the invaluable contribution they made. We concur with MoD's conclusion that reservists 'showed the highest quality and commitment… their value in all phases of an operation has again been demonstrated.'**[195]

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194 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.23.

195 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 47.

6 Defence Medical Services

137. Previous Defence Committees have reported on the Defence Medical Services (DMS) on a number of occasions[196] and expressed deep concerns about the reductions in the DMS, particularly the closure of the Service hospitals. In its Seventh Report of Session 1998–99, our predecessors concluded that the Government's vision for the DMS—'a fully trained, equipped, resourced and capable organisation with high morale, capable of providing timely and high quality medical care to the Armed Force on operations and in peacetime'—would certainly not be realised for some years into the future, and it was possible that it would not be achievable. While it acknowledged the various initiatives in hand, our predecessors questioned whether the DMS could survive for long enough for the measures to have effect. It called for the DMS and the NHS to work actively together to ensure that the potential collapse of the former did not become a reality.

138. The SDR recognised a particular weakness in the amount of medical support which could be provided for substantial combat operations overseas and identified a number of changes to address this—these included an increase in the regular element of the DMS and the use of compulsory call-ups of medical reservists to augment regular field hospitals.

Manning

139. *First Reflections* reports that:

> the medical component of the UK deployment was fully manned, with the 2800 medical staff including around 760 medical specialist reserve personnel… MoD liaised closely with the Department of Health to minimise any impact of this call-up of the reserves on the NHS.[197]

It also reports that 'the scale of effort was only possible by the use of almost all medical Volunteer Reserves, most of whom worked in the NHS'.[198]

140. MoD provided us with information[199] on the manning shortfalls in DMS—these were most severe in key clinical specialties such as surgeons and anaesthetists. Medical reservists were called out to ensure that appropriate medical support was available for UK forces. Compulsory call-out was used to ensure that the appropriate numbers of the correct clinical specialties could be deployed to theatre. Following the main conflict phase, the Chairman of the British Medical Association's (BMA's) Armed Forces Committee[200], said that the conflict in Iraq had highlighted the chronic under-manning in the DMS and that there still remained acute shortages in specialties such as anaesthetics and general surgery as well as accident and emergency. He noted that the volunteer reserves were 50 per cent

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196 Fifth Report 1994–95; Third Report 1996–97; Seventh Report 1998–99.

197 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 5.7.

198 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 31.

199 Ev 407

200 Speech by Dr John Ferguson, Chairman of the British Medical Association's (BMA's) Armed Forces Committee, July 2003.

under strength and that the lack of resources to reinforce or rotate individuals placed greater stress on the DMS and had a detrimental effect on the NHS.

141. We asked MoD about the impact of the under-manning on the planning for the operation. Lieutenant General Kevin O'Donoghue, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Health), told us that 'the medical plan proved to us that we could support CJO's operational plan in manpower terms, just, but we would be required to spend a lot of money on equipment. With that message the operational planning went ahead'.[201] In terms of how difficult it was for the DMS to get to a position of being fully manned for the operation, he told us:

> There were some specialties where we mobilised all that we could and deployed them. We deployed in all about one third of the Defence Medical Services if you add together regulars and reserves but in some specialties surgeons, anaesthetists, intensive care nurses, and so on, we deployed just about all that we could.[202]

> We cross-deployed, there were RAF and Navy in the field hospitals, one of the field hospitals was all regular, one was all reserve and one was half regular and half reserve. We took most of the specialisms out from the reserve and deployed them… There is a process that we went through and we got there and it worked. It was very, very close, yes, in certain areas.[203]

142.   The Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Ian Jenkins added:

> we were fully manned for the medical support operation. If you asked me whether we could match it again tomorrow I could not put my hand on my heart and say yes. We have used all our resources… We have emptied the box to a large extent, that is a slight exaggeration, but in general terms in the major specialities for war requirement we have emptied the boxes. That then, of course, raises another question and that is that of course we are sustaining other mature operations, the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone and the Balkans of course and we are having to re-invite reservists to contemplate supporting some of those operations. We are obviously using our regular people again in our rotations and that is adding to the over-stretched disharmony and everything else which encourages them to consider whether they are going to stay or not.[204]

143. **We find it worrying that some five years after the Strategic Defence Review the problems in the DMS, in particular the problem of under manning, appear to be as bad as they ever have been. We were alarmed to learn that for the major specialties for war MoD had 'emptied the boxes' for Operation Telic. Further deployments in the near future are only likely to exacerbate the problems.**

144. We asked whether DMS was meeting any of its targets in addressing the problems it faced. General O'Donoghue told us:

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201   Q 1177
202   Q 1195
203   Q 1196
204   Q 1197

we are failing on manpower… Recruiting is buoyant, the retention… is stable but we need to look for other ways to attract people to stay in beyond their three year point. We need to look at other ways to give greater predictability of deployment for our TA specialists.[205]

The Surgeon General told us that 'we have to look for new solutions…. we are trying to identify better methods of pay and non-pay options to encourage more people into the military and to retain the people that we have'[206] He referred to initiatives in hand such as 'a pilot with the Birmingham Hospital Trust whereby a team, a surgeon, an anaesthetist, an operating theatre sister and an operating department practitioner, went as a formed unit to the Balkans as a trial last year and that was outstandingly successful'.[207] **We acknowledge that the manning issue is not an easy one to address quickly, but we look to MoD, the Department of Health, the NHS and the medical profession to support the DMS in its efforts to find new and innovative solutions.**

145. In terms of the constraints in deploying medical consultants, MoD told us[208] that, in the case of consultants, clinical governance guidelines limit the amount of time they can spend on operations. The time limit is primarily in place to ensure they do not lose clinical currency or suffer skill fade. On routine low tempo operations the DMS aims to deploy any consultant for no more than three months in any twelve month period. Due to operational commitments, this may not always be possible, although the DMS seeks to avoid deploying them for more than six months at any one time, hence the need to deploy reservist consultants.

146. We asked about the growing trend in the NHS towards greater specialism amongst surgeons and the consequences of this for the DMS. The Surgeon General told us that 'we are really addressing this because it is a very, very major issue… and we have commissioned a study to see how we can address this'.[209] This is an area of real concern for the future. Fewer NHS consultants will have the range of surgical skills required for military deployment, and at the same time the greater focus on specialisation in the NHS risks making a period of regular service in the DMS a still less attractive prospect for anyone who expects their long term career to be in the NHS. **Again, we recommend that MoD bring together the Department of Health, the NHS and the medical profession with the DMS in order urgently to identify solutions to this problem.**

147. A number of press articles had reported that medical reservists returning from deployment on Operation Telic had resigned. General O'Donoghue told us that he understood that, from the Army, 17 medical reservists had put their papers in since Operation Telic. In his view 'that is not very many. After any conflict one would expect a number to put their papers in'.[210] He did not know how many medical reservists from the Royal Navy and RAF had resigned, but was not aware of any problem. MoD subsequently

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205   Q 1229

206   Q 1198

207   Q 1198

208   Ev 407

209   Q 1194

210   Q 1207

provided us with information (as at November 2003) on the number of medical reservists who had resigned following Operation Telic. This showed: 19 from the Royal Navy; 14 from the Army; and 14 from the RAF. For the Army, the figure provided by MoD related to the number of personnel who had left from Field Hospital Units - MoD was aware that a number of medical reservists had also left from other TA medical units.[211] **We are most concerned to learn that 47 medical reservists have resigned on returning from Operation Telic, and that MoD is aware of further resignations from Army medical reservists. The number of resignations represents some six per cent of the 760 medical reservists deployed. We expect MoD to monitor this issue closely, to identify the reasons behind the resignations, and to take account of these in its recruitment and retention efforts.**

Impact on the NHS

148. In terms of the impact on the NHS, the Surgeon General told us:

> this conflict, of course, was the very, very first occasion we have used the new defence medical plan, as it were, the first time that all of our people who have mobilised for deployment, be they regulars or reserves, come almost exclusively from the National Health Service following the closure of all the military hospitals. As a corollary to that it is the very first time that all casualties coming back to the United Kingdom were going to National Health Service hospitals. It was a first both for us and for the Department of Health/National Health Service Executive. It was quite critical that we got this right at the very beginning. I think that I can say that we have, the principles and the processes are right. What I have to say as a caveat to that is that we did not sustain a vast number of casualties so the reception of military casualties back to the United Kingdom within the National Health Service did not stretch the system.[212]

149. **This was the first operation where all the medical personnel deployed came almost exclusively from the NHS and it appears that the arrangements, such as the liaison between MoD, the Department of Health, and NHS Trusts worked well. However, thankfully, the number of casualties was low and the arrangements for treating casualties in NHS hospitals were not fully tested.**

Medical equipment and supplies

150. *Lessons for the Future* reports that 'because of the lead-time for the supply of some key items of medical equipment, some modules arrived in theatre incomplete… There were also shortfalls in some medical stocks, including ComboPens (self-injection antidotes for nerve agent poisoning) prior to deployment'.[213] General O'Donoghue told us, 'we spent £35 million on UORs'[214] (Urgent Operational Requirements) but he said that some of the 'modules were not necessarily complete but where they offered an operational capability…

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211 Ev 418

212 Q 1181

213 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.41.

214 Q 1211

they were dispatched and the bits that were missing were sent later'. [215] He was 'not aware… that any equipment that was critical was not in place on time'. [216]

151. The Chief of Defence Logistics told us that no UORs were prosecuted if they could not be delivered at the six month point (31 March 2003) and we asked whether there was any medical equipment or supplies which were not ordered because they would not be delivered within the timescale. General O'Donoghue told us that there were not, but added that 'we had to procure too much equipment by UOR, we need to have more on the shelf.'[217]

152. **We are pleased to learn that lessons about the need to have more medical supplies on the shelves rather than over-relying on UORs have been recognised. We expect MoD to identify the appropriate balance between holding items and relying on UORs. We also expect MoD to review any cases from Operation Telic where inadequate or insufficient equipment may have disadvantaged clinical outcomes and, if any such cases are identified, to take appropriate action to avoid such situations occurring in the future.**

215 Q 1211

216 Q 1211

217 Q 1212

7 Deployment

Key dates and scale of deployment

153. The key dates relating to preparation are set out in *First Reflections:*[218]

> 25 November—Secretary of State for Defence announces that contingency planning is taking place for possible operations in Iraq.
>
> 18 December—Secretary of State announces further contingency preparations, including approaching the shipping market to charter vessels.
>
> 7 January—Augmentation of the Naval Task Group 2003 with 3 Commando Brigade is announced.
>
> 20 January—Composition of the land package announced.
>
> 6 February—Secretary of State for Defence announces the composition of the air package to be sent to the Gulf.

154. The Secretary of State told us about the approach to the preparations for and the scale of the deployment:

> Towards the end of 2002 and in the early weeks of 2003 our preparations necessarily moved up a gear. Along with the United States we began to deploy significant forces to the Gulf region…This was the largest logistics effort by the UK Armed Forces since the 1991 Gulf conflict but, on this occasion, we deployed about the same number of personnel and volume of materiel but in just half the time previously. Around 45,000 servicemen and women from all three services with all their equipment, from tents to tanks and planes, to portaloos and the supplies of food, water, fuel and ammunition required to sustain them, were deployed 3,400 kms to the region in 73 ship moves and over 1200 chartered and military aircraft sorties… In a logistics operation of this size there are bound to be glitches and we will look at how we can avoid these in the future, but I would like to take this opportunity in paying tribute to the remarkable hard work of those who have been involved throughout the logistics chain. They do not always get the praise that they deserve.[219]

Sea Lift and Air Lift

155. *First Reflections* also contrasts the logistics challenge of Operation Telic with the 1991 Gulf War: 'This massive logistic effort was achieved using 670 aircraft sorties and 62 ship moves in half the time it had taken to deploy a similar sized force during the 1991 Gulf Conflict'.[220] *First Reflections* states that 'Sea lift benefited from the recent introduction… of four new Roll On/Roll Off vessels under the Private Finance Initiative. These deployed

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218 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), pp 41–42.

219 Q 1

220 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 2.13.

15,000 lane metres of equipment (some 11% of the total requirement)'.[221] 'The RN committed significant resources to protect… some 60 UK chartered merchant ships bringing in over 95% of all UK military equipment'.[222] On air lift, 'the daily air re-supply operation reached a maximum of 254 metric tonnes at its peak. Our four C-17 aircraft and other air transport assets deployed some 50% of the personnel and stores that were required to go by air'.[223] **We conclude that deploying such a large force to the Gulf in the time available was a significant achievement.**

Challenges faced by the sea lift and air lift operations

156. We asked whether it would have been possible to have deployed even quicker, if additional lift assets had been available. The Secretary of State told us that, in relation to air lift, the number of aircraft available was not a limiting factor; it was the availability of landing slots:

> The issue is how many flights take place. Sometimes having more aircraft, given the limitations, for example, of aircraft movements in and around a theatre, would not make any difference because physically it would not be possible to fly more into the particular base in question. I am absolutely confident that we had the right combination of lift needed to get this force at this speed to where it was going.[224]

157. General Fry told the Committee of Public Accounts about the challenges faced by the sea lift and air lift operations:

> We were planning at one stage to approach Iraq from an entirely different direction which would have led to an entirely different logistic assumptions… We then find ourselves with a significant logistic challenge, first of all we had to go right the way round the Arabia peninsula and through the Suez Canal in order to get there, which built a considerable amount of time into deployment. We then found ourselves in Kuwait…. this is a tiny and highly congested country with two sea points of entry and a single airhead. We sharing those very limited resources with a hugely larger American Army that was doing exactly the same thing at the same time.[225]

158. The challenges faced by the sea lift and air lift operations illustrate that deployment is very dependent on Host Nation Support, which is itself dependent on the infrastructure available. **MoD should identify how the challenges of limited landing slots for aircraft and small sea ports could be addressed in the future.**

Use of commercial shipping and aircraft

159. *First Reflections* states that 'Although both the C-17 in the air, and the new Ro-Ro ferries at sea, provided excellent support, both the deployment and the re-supply phases

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221 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.22.

222 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), box on p 12.

223 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.22.

224 Q 42

225 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 147

involved recourse to a large quantity of chartered shipping and air assets. We will need to keep under review our air and sea transport assets and our ability to secure access to commercial transport in the quantities and timeframes required to meet future expeditionary requirements'.[226]

160. MoD provided information on the use made of commercial lift—'49% airlift (equipment and materiel, not including personnel) by charter and 88% sealift (again equipment and materiel only) by charter'[227] and told us that the rates paid for the commercial assets 'were the normal market rates on the day, but market rates did increase over the period of the Operation, and these were subject to further negotiation'.[228]

161. MoD told us that 'the cost of sea-lift attributable to Operation Telic was £70 million. The cost of the air-lift was £53 ½ million… The Defence Transport Movement Agency… approached the market for shipping in five tranches. The first three tranches secured the majority of required shipping and the contracts were signed… by 31 December… the prices that we were offered were very good … That is not to say that by the time we got to tranche 5 the market had not woken up to what we were doing and we probably paid a premium'.[229]

162. We asked whether MoD had undertaken any specific review of the provision of sealift capacity for deployed operations.[230] MoD replied that it had not undertaken such a review since the Strategic Defence Review confirmed the requirement for an expanded sea lift capability (six ships in total) to transport equipment for the Joint Rapid Reaction Forces. The Defence Transport and Movements Agency (DTMA) used established relations to maintain periodic snapshots of ro-ro availability within the market.[231] MoD did, however, review the process for chartering freight-carrying commercial ships during 2003, following the conflict and as a result incorporated a more robust risk-based assessment into the process.[232] NUMAST have pointed to the significant decline in the UK's registered fleet over the last twenty years, and have argued that the decline has the potential to prejudice the UK's ability to secure sea lift of adequate quantity and quality for future operations.[233] **We recognise the achievement of the DTMA in securing the sea lift for Operation Telic. We recommend that, drawing on the experience from Operation Telic, MoD should undertake a review of ro-ro shipping to inform its future planning.**

163. In terms of the air lift, Colonel David Martin, Assistant Director Supply Chain Operations, told us that MoD fully utilised the C-17 because it is a relatively large aircraft and its turnaround time is very quick compared to the Hercules C-130. He said that his team 'were probably loading 50 or 60 tons onto a C-17 and that would compare to ten tons on a C-130'.[234] However, there were occasions when MoD had to move loads which were

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226 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

227 Ev 387

228 Ev 387

229 Q 1030

230 Q 1037

231 Ev 411

232 HC Deb, 9 February 2004, c1178W

233 Ev 452–5

234 Q 1039

too big to put in the back of the C-17 and MoD made use of Antanov AN-124 aircraft. Colonel Martin explained that the advantage of the AN-124 is that it enabled MoD 'to fly 20 foot ISO-containers which many of our stores are stored in. There are some items which we had to move in a 20 foot container. That access to the AN-124 is absolutely critical to us.'[235] The Chief of Defence Logistics told us that 'there are three companies… we have been dealing with one company for a long time and has proved reliable'.[236] MoD provided us with further information on the use of Antanov aircraft—no difficulties were experienced in chartering the necessary outsize lift, but it became apparent that the US was actively chartering and therefore, mid way through the deployment, the UK committed itself to AN-124 lift in anticipation of the developing requirement. MoD believed that if it had not taken this action, it was likely that the available lift would have been committed to the US leaving insufficient lift for UK needs. There are 18 aircraft in the AN-124 fleet, but not all are available for charter at any one time, largely as a result of maintenance requirements.[237] **The action taken by MoD ensured that the UK had sufficient lift, but the outcome could well have been different. For any future operations, MoD needs to avoid competing directly with the US for outsize lift and co-ordinate its efforts to secure such assets.**

Balance of lift assets

164. We asked about the longer-term balance of lift assets. Colonel Martin told us that MoD 'have now got access to four C-17s and the six ro-ros, and both assets proved their worth. We have an enabling contract through the market for heavy lift aircraft… Really what we have is a good capability which we have immediate access to and a well tried and tested means of gaining extra capacity if we need it'.[238] Brigadier Kerr told us that the key issue was 'what do you keep as an internal capability that you have, and that decision has been made at the highest level, and what are you are prepared to go to the market with? I think the decisions have been right. There was enough shipping and aircraft to get us out'.[239]

165. MoD provided us with information on the lease arrangements for the C-17 aircraft:[240]

> 'the contract has no limit on the number of hours that may be flown. However, funding for support of the aircraft was modelled on a total of 3,000 flying hours per full year for the fleet of 4 aircraft. Since entering service with the RAF the C-17 fleet has exceeded the modelled hours, largely as a result of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. This has resulted in additional support costs'.

Lieutenant General Rob Fulton, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Equipment Capability, told us that the operation 'underlined the success of the C-17… we are looking at how far

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235 Q 1039

236 Q 1041

237 Ev 411

238 Q 1031

239 Q 1043

240 Ev 387

we can retain those in-service once the lease has expired because they have proved their worth'.[241]

166. In terms of future airlift, the A400M aircraft has been selected to meet the UK's Future Transport Aircraft requirement and a total of 180 aircraft are being procured. The approved in-service date for this programme was December 2009, but the current forecast in-service date is March 2011—a slippage of 15 months. MoD recognises that this delay is likely to aggravate the extant strategic, tactical and special forces airlift capability gap unless remedial action is taken. MoD's Director Equipment Capability (Deployment, Sustainability & Recover) is assessing options to bridge the current and emerging capability gaps.[242]

167. **Recent operations have highlighted the need for sufficient sea and air lift. We look to MoD to ensure that those assets that have performed their task well are available to our Armed Forces in the future. We regret that the A400M programme, which is intended to meet the UK's Future Transport Aircraft requirement, has experienced delays to its planned in-service date. We expect MoD to ensure that the current forecast in-service date is met and that any capability gaps from delays already experienced are filled.**

Urgent Operational Requirements

Purpose of UORs

168. MoD's *Lessons for the Future* sets out the purpose of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs):

> The UOR process is intended to provide a cost-effective solution to specific capability shortfalls related to a particular operation. This avoids the need to stockpile equipment and stores for all conceivable contingencies. During the pre-deployment phase of this operation, over 190 UORs for equipment capability were approved at a cost of some £510M. Some UORs were required to fill previously recognised capability gaps which, for reasons of affordability, had not been funded in the Equipment Plan. Some of these sought to increase existing weapon stocks to meet the requirement of a large-scale operation.[243]

By contrast urgent operational requirements for Kosovo operations amounted to £136 million.[244]

169. Rear Admiral Charles Style, Capability Manager (Strategic Deployment), told us that 'the idea of the Urgent Operational Requirement process is to make sure we give our

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241 Q 1984

242 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Major Projects Report 2003* (HC 195 Session 2003–2004: 23 January 2004), pp 45–50.

243 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 2.7.

244 Defence Committee, *Lessons of Kosovo*, Fourteenth Report, HC347-I (1999–2000), para 287.

people the very best that technology or industry can provide us with, up to the last moment'.[245]

170. We asked the Chief of Defence Logistics for a breakdown of the UORs for Operation Telic into the four categories which had been described to us.[246] MoD subsequently provided information on the four different categories and the percentage of total UOR expenditure relating to each category. This information is shown at Table 3.

Table 3 Breakdown of UORs for Operation Telic by category and by percentage of total UOR expenditure

Category of UOR	Percentage by value
UORs that hastened existing programmes	33%
UORs that introduced new capabilities previously unprogrammed	20%
UORs that topped up holdings of items already on the MoD's inventory	30%
UORs modifying existing equipment / infrastructure	17%

Source: MoD [247]

Note: MoD has emphasised that care is needed in drawing conclusions from this information as the attribution to the categories is not a straightforward proposition – the UOR process does not formally categorise UORs in this way, and many do not fall neatly within just one category. [248]

Timing of UORs

171. An indication of the use of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) for operations in Iraq was announced to Parliament by the Secretary of State during the debate on UN Security Council Resolution 1441 on 25 November 2002:

> … as part of the planning and preparation processes, we have been considering potential additional military equipment capability requirements. The Government are committed to equipping the armed forces for a range of contingencies, but specific operational environments and scenarios often require special priority to be given to particular capabilities. That is why we have been taking action to meet certain capability requirements as quickly as possible. In many cases, that involves accelerating existing programmes; in other cases, it involves new procurements against short time scales.

> For example, we are bringing forward the purchase of further temporary deployable accommodation, and we are enhancing our medical support through improved hygiene facilities in deployed field hospitals and improvements to our ambulances.

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245 Q 946

246 Q 1018

247 Ev 416

248 Ev 416

We will further improve the ability of our forces to handle and to exploit secure communications.

… I can assure the House that United Kingdom forces will be fully prepared in good time for any future operations.[249]

172. The timing of UORs was influenced by the diplomatic efforts that were taking place. Sir Kevin Tebbit told the Committee of Public Accounts that 'the basic judgements that political authorities had to make was how much could be done by way of sensible preparation and how much would constitute an unhelpful development in relation to the overall diplomatic objectives which were in the forefront at that time.'[250] He said that the UOR for the modification of the Challenger tank was approved in October 2002 at a cost of 'some £17 million'.[251] Sir Kevin noted that 'it was a question of advancing routine activity where there would be absolutely no ambiguous signals given to anybody. Some, however, were much more directly related to a war-fighting intention and those were generally approved later. If you actually want a date, I think it was not until late November that the Secretary of State finally gave authorisation for pretty full military preparation'.[252] He drew a distinction between UORs and operational sustainability funding: 'we have urgent operational requirements and so-called operational sustainability funding, one is for big equipment and the other is for stores and supplies… the earliest approval from the Treasury for funding came as early as September for some activities and finally in December for others. There was a continuous process'.[253] We have discussed the timing of UK involvement in planning for military action previously (paragraphs 27–34). These dates for action on UORs are consistent with the Secretary of State's statement that planning and preparation for a specific military operation began in late September 2002.[254]

173. We asked Sir Kevin whether any UORs had been delayed because the Treasury had not wanted to authorise the expenditure until it judged that the war was going ahead. He told us that:

> Relations with the Treasury on this have been remarkably cordial and I really cannot say that they have denied us the funding for any of the urgent operational requirements we had. The problem was more a question of how to balance the risk that overt preparations would prejudice the diplomatic process against the need to be ready to take action if the diplomatic process failed. That was the critical calculation of when we could take the risk to go out to industry and let our planning become transparent when we were still seeking to pursue a diplomatic route. That was much

249 HC Deb, 25 November 2002, col 128

250 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 2

251 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 3

252 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 4

253 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 130

254 Q 2262

more of a restraining, naturally and correctly restraining, factor than Treasury attitudes towards funding the urgent requirements.[255]

174. General Fulton told us about the approval arrangements for UORs:

there were 194 UORs approved, and the ones that were not approved were those whose delivery would fall outside the timescale within which we needed to have the equipment in order to either complete the operation or indeed complete that part of the operation for which they were required. There were some examples of things like Temporary Deployable Accommodation, which we did not need for the start of the operation; we needed that for later on. The issue of funding only became an issue with the cut-off of things that would not be delivered in time.[256]

175. A UOR to provide enhanced air conditioning for the AS90 self-propelled gun, was delivered late. General Applegate told us that in this case:

there was an impact of when we could start doing the planning… We had to wait to get the approval to go forward with the AS90 work… actually, we were planning for the end of March / beginning of April for that work to be conducted… That was sensible, because the majority of the work to be conducted on AS90 was to do with the very hot conditions… My point is it came in after the operation; it did not affect the operation because the temperatures did not get up to the high levels that were expected, but work began on the tail end of war fighting operations to ensure that the AS90 could remain in operation in the theatre.[257]

176. In terms of other examples of UOR equipment which were delivered late, General Fulton told us that:

There were some that were deliberately late. I mentioned Temporary Deployable Accommodation because we did not want it then. Also, the stocks of enhanced Paveway and Maverick were designed to backfill the stocks that were used. Ones that straddled the time at which they would have been used: we did not have a full set of the thermal imagers, Lion and Sophie, and the head-mounted night vision system at the time that the first troops crossed the line of departure, and we did not have a full complement of Minimi machine guns, and the Underslung Grenade Launcher also. We had most of the launchers themselves, but there was an issue that I think you are aware of about the release of ammunition. So there were a number of areas where there were numbers of pieces of equipment, of which we had some but did not have a full complement.[258]

177. **We acknowledge that there were constraints on when the UOR process could begin, but it is of real concern that in some cases this resulted in Armed Forces personnel not having access to the full complement of equipment, such as Minimi machine guns and Underslung Grenade Launchers.**

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255 Q 1771
256 Q 1923
257 Q 1939
258 Q 1940

Success of UORs

178. *Lessons for the Future* states that the 'majority of UORs were very successful in rapidly delivering enhanced capability.'[259] It highlighted successes such as the dust mitigation modifications made to the Challenger 2 main battle tank, the Minimi light machine gun, and the new Shallow Water Influence Mine-Sweeping equipment which was leased. The National Audit Office (NAO) concluded that 'overall, the enhancements worked very well'.[260] During our visits, the Armed Forces personnel we met told us that they were particularly impressed with the Minimi light machine gun.

179. There were, however, drawbacks in using the UOR process. *First Reflections* acknowledges that 'the UOR process inevitably involves the risk that not all requirements will be met in time.[261] *Lessons for the Future*[262] accepts that it 'may be necessary to review the constraints on earlier industrial engagement to minimise procurement delays in future' and that 'delivery of equipment was also complicated by some deployment dates being advanced once the date for the likely timing of the operation became clearer.' Some equipment had to be 'delivered direct to theatre', and that 'while delivery was still achievable in most cases some equipment was not able to be fitted prior to operations as a result'. *Lessons for the Future*[263] also states that 'personnel did not always have time fully to train or become familiar with new equipment' and that 'in some cases, where training occurred only in theatre, this delayed the achievement of full operational capability'. The complaint that they had insufficient time to familiarise and train with UOR equipment was raised with us on a number of occasions by Armed Forces personnel we met.

180. MoD recognises that 'other capability shortfalls (e.g. those involving more complex systems such as warships and aircraft) were not filled by UORs because of the long lead times involved. We need therefore to consider key war fighting capabilities and review the Equipment Programme to ensure that we can deliver them within planning timescales'.[264]

181. **Much of the equipment procured as UORs made a significant contribution to the success of the campaign and, in most cases, industry supplied equipment at very short notice. However UORs are not the solution in every case. MoD needs to be better informed of which types of equipment and capabilities can be delivered in UOR timescales—there were a number of cases where equipment was not delivered by the time required or where users did not have a full complement. We do not consider that MoD planning properly recognised that the delivery date for a piece of equipment and the date by which a capability is achieved are not the same. If personnel are to be confident and fully efficient with their equipment there must be adequate time for familiarisation, training and integration. Furthermore, given the desire stated in the White Paper to be able to intervene anywhere in the world at short notice, we believe**

259 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 2.10.

260 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003-04: 11 December 2003), para 2.7.

261 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.4.

262 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 2.6.

263 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 2.9.

264 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 2.7.

that the risks of relying on UORs, instead of holding adequate stocks, are not sufficiently well analysed or understood in MoD's risk assessment processes.

182. We asked what lessons could be learned from the UOR process to improve MoD's normal equipment acquisition arrangements. General Fulton told us that 'one of the key issues about a UOR is that it has to be available to be bought off the shelf… One of the reasons why a number of UORs did not succeed was because there was complex integration involved'.[265] We heard evidence that the UOR process was becoming part of the informal procurement process due to the frequency of recent operations.

183. **There are likely to be positive lessons from the UOR process which have applicability to MoD's normal equipment acquisition processes: for example, where UORs were used to accelerate existing programmes. We expect MoD to identify and implement these and reflect on the appropriateness of UOR procurement becoming institutionalised.**

Retention of UOR equipment

184. The NAO reported that 'Urgent Operational Requirements fitted for warfighting may be removed, even sold, if long-term funding is unavailable or there is no identified requirement to retain them for the long term. In one case, that of "All Terrain Mobility Platforms", vehicles that had been disposed of were repurchased from a company at a cost of £1.1 million'.[266] MoD is 'now considering which of the equipment bought specifically for this operation it would be beneficial to retain for future use'.[267] Sir Kevin Tebbit told us that some UORs 'will have a continuing bill attached to them…. We would rather not have simply to destroy them for want of resources to sustain them in our force structure'.[268] General Fulton told us that:

> After this operation, we have been very careful to make sure that we look very critically at what equipment can and should be retained in service, because by nature of an Urgent Operational Requirement, it does not come with support funding; you buy it and that is it. So the first issue is whether we can afford to take it into the normal equipment programme and provide it with sufficient support funding so that it can then be sustained through life…. So there are a number of questions that we have to ask ourselves, but ultimately, what it comes down to is the affordability of retaining that capability in-service, and that is when you have to come back round the loop and ask what its wider applicability is…. There is a fine balance, and that is why we are going through it as part of the normal long-term equipment planning process at the moment, to assess how many of those 190 we can afford to keep and how many we cannot. Then the issue is, if there are some that we cannot afford to keep, the Chief of Defence Logistics would be very keen that we take them out of

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265 Q 1942

266 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 2.8 e (iii).

267 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003) , para 2.10.

268 Q 1772

service, so that we do not have unsupportable equipment in the inventory that he cannot then maintain.[269]

We expect MoD to evaluate fully the performance of the equipment procured as UORs and the specific enhancements they provided to the UK's military capabilities. This evaluation must also take full account of the views of those members of the Armed Forces who used the equipment in action. Disposing of useful equipment cannot represent good value for money if it then has to be re-acquired in the future.

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269 Q 1935

8 The start of operations

185. The opportunity attacks by US forces attempting to kill Saddam Hussein on the night of 19–20 March did not pre-empt British plans according to the Secretary of State, but rather 'accelerated certain decisions that were in any event going to be implemented very shortly'.[270] However, the British were only told of the planned attacks 'a few hours prior to the air strikes taking place'.[271] It has since been suggested that the opportunity strikes not only missed Saddam Hussein, which they self-evidently did, but that there were no bunkers in the buildings that were destroyed. Asked whether the 'de-capitation' strikes brought the Royal Marines' attack on the Al Faw peninsula forward the Secretary of State replied:

> there was no difficulty. Those forces were poised and ready to do the important job on the Al Faw peninsular and begin the move north…there was some acceleration in the timescales but essentially we are talking hours rather than days.[272]

186. Mr Paul Beaver told us that he thought that the campaign had started two to three weeks ahead of schedule.[273] Air Marshal Burridge said that he was not surprised by the attacks on the leadership targets that started the war.[274] The execution of the plan went according to expectations, he went on, claiming that the only surprise was the 'inelegant' way in which Baghdad fell.[275] General Brims admitted that the attacks had brought forward 'D-Day' by 24 hours and then another 24 hours (ie 48 hours in all) and that the British had been 'bounced' into going early, although they were ready to go:

> D-day and H Hour did get pulled forward, first by 24 hours and then by another 24 hours. That was partly because, as I understand it, there were some opportunity targets for deep air to do, but I think that we had always decided that we wanted to get the land campaign launched early so that we could try to capture the oil infrastructure intact, and, in the final analysis, as I understand it, there were thoughts that the oil infrastructure was in danger of being trashed; and therefore, the decision, because we were bounced to go early, we did.[276]

The Coalition Force Land Component Commander, US Lieutenant General McKiernan has since stated that he brought forward his plan to launch the land attack after receiving reports of a number of oil wells having been set alight following the attacks on the leadership targets. As the security of the southern oilfields was regarded as a vital objective for both military and environmental reasons, he judged that if the troops were ready, they might as well go.[277] The question of readiness matters because of the suggestion that operations may have begun too soon for elements of the British force and that that may

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270 Q 64

271 Ev 393

272 Q 65

273 Q 104

274 Q 257

275 Q 259

276 Q 553

277 Interview with Lt Gen McKiernan, Channel Four, *Invading Iraq: How Britain and America Got It Wrong*, 31 January 2004.

have been a contributing factor in the later equipment and distribution problems which the Committee has repeatedly heard about.

187. General Reith told us that although the British came 'perilously close'[278] to not being ready at the start date, they actually were ready and that troops would not have been committed if they had not been operationally ready:

> I would not have allowed our people to go into peril, and the plan was flexible enough that if those two battlegroups, and we knew it was going to be tight-run with those two battlegroups, had not been operationally ready they would have been held back and then committed later in the operation, and that was within the plan. We used the words 'perilously close' but I can promise that I would not have allowed them to commit to the operation if the operational commander had not been satisfied that they were operationally ready.[279]

188. The Royal Marines who arrived in late January and early February, were explicitly aiming to be ready by 15 February which was the date by which General Franks had indicated he wanted troops ready. Brigadier Jim Dutton explained that:

> 42 Commando and the Brigade Combat Service Support Units that deployed with me by air arrived by, roughly speaking, the end of January, so there was adequate time for familiarisation, acclimatisation and in-theatre training. The 40 Commando group that deployed amphibiously, in the Amphibious Task Group, arrived in the middle of February, of course having acclimatised coming through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, round into the Gulf, and they had exercised already in Cyprus, as you have heard, but then latterly in the UAE, so that was important to them. 15 MEU, who sailed from the west coast of the United States, from San Diego, on 6 January, arrived on or about 12 February and deployed ashore almost immediately to do familiarisation training with the other units of my Brigade, and indeed acclimatisation training, and so on. I am content that certainly there was adequate time, bearing in mind, of course, at the time, we did not know that 20 March was going to be D-Day. We were always aiming for 15 February…which we could have met just—just—but we used the time available for more training in theatre.[280]

If a date was set for the amphibious force to be ready by, it is strange that there was no date by which time the ground forces were supposed to be ready.

189. The point about how close run things were was underlined by Brigadier Kerr, Assistant Chief of Staff, PJHQ who admitted:

> We did come perilously close. There was a debate all along when we were going to actually desertise the armour. I can remember the discussion going back a couple of months before that as to whether or not 7th Armoured Brigade—which those tanks came from—was going to have the opportunity to desertise before we sailed the tanks out to the Middle East. The decision was to allow some training to take place.

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278 Q 949

279 Q 949

280 Q 1531

> We knew when it came down to it that it would be all about that set date; we thought it was going to be the end of March but we never knew quite when it as going to be…General Robin Brims…and General John [Reith] discussed it with the Americans and the view at that time was that we came perilously close but we were ready to cross the line of departure.[281]

The Chief of Defence Logistics described it as 'the optimum way to use the whole of the strategic base in order to achieve the operational commander's decision cycle; and it worked'.[282] General Brims argued that the division was 'ready' even though certain units were not ready:

> from my perspective, we were ready; if you work from their perspective, certain of the units would say they were not ready, because, the last Brigade, we came in Brigade by Brigade, so the first one ready was 3 Commando Brigade, then 16 Air Assault Brigade and then 7 Armoured Brigade, and we defined readiness, the readiness to be able to conduct the plan that we had agreed, would be where we had two battlegroups of 7 Armoured Brigade ready, and that was the definition of readiness. Now, if you went and saw the two battlegroups of 7 Armoured Brigade that were not the two that were declared the first ready, they would tell you that they were not ready, but the Division was; if that is a reasonable explanation. And the two battlegroups, the last two battlegroups in were the Scots Dragoon Guards and 2 RTR, but, I may say, they did do the catch-up and they caught up remarkably quickly, and, with all their professionalism, skill and determination, they made light of that; but, from their perspective, they would be entirely accurate to say that they were not ready at that stage.[283]

190. However, 16 AAB told us that they were at the bottom of the priority list in terms of their deployment to Kuwait with the order being 3 Commando Brigade, 7 Armoured Brigade and then 16 AAB. That is because 16 AAB was given the role of securing the oil fields and of supporting the other two brigades and of acting as reserve for the Division. General Reith explained 16 AAB was there for 'exploitation':

> The principal task of 16 Brigade had been to get in and keep the oilfields secure and then they were to be used for exploitation; they were used for exploitation. Once we went beyond Basra, we went up into the north east, up into Maysan Province. Now, of course, that did not get much publicity, because by that stage the embedded journalists had left them, and I do not think it even hit the UK media.[284]

191. Thus, whereas General Brims was no doubt correct in saying that 16 AAB had achieved readiness ahead of elements of 7 Armoured Brigade, it should be noted that their role was separate from that of the main front line elements of General Brims' force at the start of operations. As it was, the two main heavy armoured battlegroups of the division were not ready. These battlegroups included the majority of the Challenger 2 tanks deployed. General Brims therefore took a command decision to state that his division's

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281 Q 987

282 Q 988

283 Q 554

284 Q 900

readiness was acceptable even though the majority of its main battle tanks were not ready. If the battle plan called for four battlegroups, it may have been that the decision that two were enough to start the campaign was based on an assessment of the strength and willingness to fight of the enemy. It may also be a somewhat vivid example of what was called the 'rolling start'. General Brims' view was that it was a reasonable judgement:

> Sometimes, you have to be positive, and you are dealt a hand of cards and you have to play the hand of cards you have got to the very best of your ability to deliver the mission; you cannot turn round, on some sort of scientific basis, and say, 'I'm not going to do it.' (You would like to have 52 cards in the deck, when you do play them?) But, in this case, we had actually declared readiness in that scenario with 46 cards; that was the state of readiness, because two of the battlegroups were not, to go back to the earlier question.[285]

192. Brigadier Graham Binns, Commander of 7 Armoured Brigade, told a television documentary programme that:

> I felt that we were carrying a lot of risk. The mood was one that we were not ready for this that the soldiers at a personnel level were not properly equipped. That we had problems with clothing. we had problems sourcing ammunition. We knew it was in theatre, but we couldn't find it.[286]

Sir Kevin Tebbit emphasised that a statement of readiness had been sent out before operations began:

> …commanders…have…four things to monitor…Equipment, people, sustainability and command and control and these are monitored by them on a colour code system, red, amber and green. This is information fed up through the subordinate commands, to the National Contingent Commander and through him to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. When all of those indicators go green the Commander knows and the Commanders know and the Chiefs of Staff know that they have full operational capability, that is to say they are signalling they are ready in all areas to discharge the military task, they therefore say, 'when you want to take a policy decision that is up to you but we are ready to go'. What I can tell you is that all of that process was completed, that a week before 20 March the National Contingent Commander signalled to the Chief of Staff, I sit on that Committee so I know, that he expected to be ready, he was waiting for one element and that was for the up-armouring of the Challenger 2 tanks. He expected that to be completed but until that was done his colour was amber for equipment. Once that was done it went green.[287]

193. Mr Lee argued that it was a close run thing, because it was a close run thing, and the British were ready when they were ready which was by design when they had to go:

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285 Qq 561–2

286 Interview with Brigadier Graham Binns, Channel Four, *Invading Iraq: How Britain and America Got It Wrong*, 31 January 2004.

287 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 141

I just want to say that the background to all this, of course, is that throughout this process of preparing the UORs, which takes some months from the very first discussions with industry, and so on, during that period we did not know what the date would be on which the conflict would start and there was great uncertainty about that right the way through. In a sense, the date when the conflict started was when the forces were ready for it to start, and being ready included having the various UORs fitted. So, by definition, deliberately it was going to be a close-run thing, because that was when it started, when we were ready for it to start, it was a conflict which started at a time of our choosing.[288]

The logic of this is, to say the least, somewhat obscure. It also sidesteps the question of the American timetable and how far the British were part of their calculations. It would have been politically (and militarily for that matter) highly embarrassing for the ground campaign to have begun without the British component. While the initial Royal Marine assault on the Al Faw peninsula may have been well within the readiness parameters of the British force, it is not clear that this was the case for the heavy armour of 1st (UK) Armoured Division. The signalling of full operational capability represented commanders' decisions that the forces were ready to begin operations, notwithstanding, or in spite of, continuing equipment shortages and logistic problems. It did not mean that risks were not being taken; rather it may have indicated commanders' assessments that these risks could be taken confident that the mission was still achievable. In the end the decision to go to war before full preparations had been completed was a political one, since from the military perspective there were other windows, including the autumn of 2003, as Air Marshal Burridge told us.

From planning to operations—what was found

194. 3 Commando Brigade's mission to secure the oil fields and associated infrastructure of the Al Faw peninsula was crucial to the coalition's operational plan. It was also designed to protect the mine counter measures group as it cleared the Khawr Abd Allah waterway.[289] Despite losing the Brigade Reconnaissance Force when a US CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter crashed (which led to the grounding of the US helicopter force that 42 Commando was about to be delivered by) the operations went ahead (albeit 6 hours late in the case of 42 Commando) to great success. As noted in paragraph 90, the US Navy Special Warfare group brought with it assets which the Brigade commander would not normally expect to have co-located with his headquarters, including Predator UAVs, AC130 gunships and A10 tank buster aircraft.[290]

195. The port of Umm Qasr, Iraq's only deep water port, was opened on 28 March, when the RFA Sir Galahad brought in the first shipment of humanitarian relief for the local population. An intensive mine-clearing operation had been undertaken in the Khawr Abd Allah waterway by the Royal Navy's Mine Counter Measures Vessels and the Fleet Diving Group, in the days following 20 March when the town of Umm Qasr had been taken. Though world leaders in this field, the Royal Navy's experience and equipment was geared

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288 Q 950

289 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 11.

290 Q 1519

to deep water operations, not shallow waters and rivers as found in the waterway to Umm Qasr.[291] The solution was to acquire two systems through the UOR process, SWIMS and OSMDS, which filled this gap in shallow water capabilities.[292] The operation represented 'one of the most advanced and tactically challenging' mine clearances ever undertaken.[293] **The Committee congratulates the Royal Navy for the success of this complex and demanding operation and urges the MoD to review, as a matter of urgency, the capability of the Royal Navy to undertake mine clearance operations in shallow and very shallow waters, given the likely need for increasing amphibious operations in the littoral.**

196. A critical element in any operation is understanding of and information on the enemy. Air Marshal Burridge's major concern was about the combat power of the Iraqi armoured divisions and on this, he said, the intelligence was fairly good.[294]

197. The Republican Guard had been of considerable interest to the coalition and a great deal of effort went into degrading their capability through air power. Their presence around Basra was relatively small and their role appears principally to have been to bolster and re-motivate the regular army:

> they held their families hostage and invited the regular army from 51 Division, which was the Basra division, to get back into their equipment and face the enemy, that is us. Ill disposed for doing that and you may remember an action south of Basra where a column of tanks came out, not configured to fight an all-arms battle, but came out into the face of our fire power. That is the way we saw the Republican Guard being used.[295]

198. The Air Component Commander, however, was surprised that the Iraqi air force did not fly at all:

> We had a very robust air defence plan in anticipation that they may fly. We also had a very robust plan to keep closed those air fields from which we knew they were likely to operate as well. They had also obviously been watching the way we had been operating in the no-fly zones for 12 years, so they had a good knowledge of our capability and they inevitably also knew what we had brought into theatre as well.[296]

But once it was clear that they were not going to fight as an air force, risks remained that they might use aircraft in asymmetric attacks.[297]

199. The decision not to precede the ground campaign with an air campaign worked well for the coalition, General Brims argued, because it took the Iraqi forces by surprise and allowed the coalition to get inside their decision-making cycle:

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291 Q1553

292 See also para 178

293 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), pp 19–20.

294 Q 308

295 Q 307

296 Q 1270

297 Q 299

> I think that the first key stage, the fact that there was not a long air campaign in front of ground movement,… was the case, I think that was rather crucial, because I think it took everyone by surprise, and I think that worked very well for us. I think that and a number of other things really got inside their decision-making cycle. It had some downsides, because one then had to catch up with some of the things that normally, with your air campaign preceding your ground campaign, you would deny to your opponents, and I am thinking particularly of communications and the length of time that that was open, and that became quite a frustration to us at a tactical level, although on another sphere doing it that way round had big pay-offs.[298]

Overall whereas he had expected the Iraqi regular forces to put up more of fight he was surprised by the numbers and commitment of the irregulars:

> I would say that his army, which was principally what I was up against, fought less than it might have. I thought his irregulars fought more venomously, and actually voluminously in southern parts, than we had anticipated; take the two together, not far off what I hoped would be the case, rather than what, let us say, I anticipated.[299]

It appears from the available evidence that the coalition's tactical intelligence picture of Iraq was not as robust as might have been expected. Lack of access, in particular to human intelligence, has been frequently mentioned to us.

The Approach to Basra

200. A number of press reports claimed that the patient approach to taking Basra adopted by British forces frustrated American commanders. Others suggested that the town would have been ripe for an uprising if the British had moved in quickly. General Brims told us, however, that he was prevented from entering Basra until the American Land Component Commander allowed him to do so:

> Umm Qasr was the only urban area that I was required to take itself, everywhere else, urban areas, eventually we would have to get into, because to remove a regime you cannot leave them in control of an urban area, but, with the Land Component Commander's plan, Umm Qasr was the only place I had to get into,… so to go into Basra, actually, I was not allowed to go into Basra until the Land Component Commander agreed, because that was not what his purpose was at that stage.[300]

201. General McKiernan told General Brims that he did not want to take Basra until the regime had been isolated and that entering Basra with its attendant risks could have undermined the broader mission of avoiding any action which might have pushed people into the arms of the Saddam regime and away from the coalition.[301] This illustrates the effects-based approach of the plan, but also the potential tension between tactical and strategic objectives. As it turned out, in this campaign, the broader aims fitted in with the

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298 Q 621

299 Q 623

300 Q 629

301 Q 637

approach that General Brims and his brigade commander Brigadier Binns independently arrived at, as General Brims explained:

> we were holding the bridges on the western outskirts of Basra, we were coming under fire from its Armed Forces and counter-attacks, and that situation lasted for about two weeks. Around al Zubayr, with a population of about 100,000, we were coming under attack from irregulars, who were operating in and from al Zubayr, and we had taken some casualties…we had to reconfigure ourselves to protect our softer targets, to minimise the number of targets, and 7 Armoured Brigade, whose area this was, did that very quickly…I talked to the Brigade Commander…about four or five days into the thing…and he said, 'I'm going to work out how we're going to take al Zubayr,' and I said, 'Good, I'll go away and consider Basra.' And he said, 'I've got the most powerful Armoured Brigade the British Army's ever put in the field, and I'll back-brief you on my bit, of al Zubayr, tomorrow morning.' I arranged to see him first thing… and he asked me to come aside of him for a short time, and he said to me, 'I've worked out, we can't go into al Zubayr using the most powerful force at my disposal, because that's what the regime want; we'll inflict undue casualties, we'll take undue casualties, we will hurt the civilians, we'll wreck the infrastructure, and that's what he's after. We've got to do it in a more cunning way.'…I said to him, 'Well, that's funny, because I've worked out precisely the same thing for Basra.' .[302]

202. The policy adopted was to approach the towns carefully, build up an intelligence picture and use the population to provide information before moving on the regime elements within the towns:

> the way we did it was to build up an intelligence picture, focussed raids, ground raids, air raids, mind raids…what we were trying to do was destroy the regime and drive a wedge between the regime and the ordinary people, bearing in mind that the people in that southern part of Iraq…were Shia people, who had actually been the victims of the regime for 20 years, or more...Basra had never changed hands but Al Faw had, and they suffered under the 1991 war, then they had their uprising in 1991, which was brutally put down, and they were abused, and I was aware of them continuing to be abused during the war…essentially, they were ripe for being liberated, and part of the intelligence success, done very much bottom-up, because these were people who wanted us to come in, they wanted to be freed but they could not do it themselves, they needed our support, and therefore actually we had them helping us, and they were feeding us intelligence, and accurate intelligence, worthy targets, and the system trusted us and we were able to conduct these raids, and they had a very significant effect.[303]

In the event Basra was taken with very few casualties in a deliberate operation which drew on superior UK firepower and the 'UK troops' resourceful determination.'[304] Intense fighting was limited to a few areas where Baathist irregulars fought with 'venom and fanaticism'. **The operation was a significant military achievement. One measure of its**

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302 Q 635

303 Q 635

304 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 26.

success—and in the context of an effects-based operation an important one—was that just one week later there were joint UK/Iraqi patrols.

9 Major defence equipment

Overall performance

203. The major defence equipments are reported to have performed well during Operation Telic. *First Reflections* reported that 'Equipment across all three services matched and often exceeded expectations, reflecting recent operational experience and the value of exercise *Saif Sareea II*,'[305] and listed a range of equipment which had performed particularly well. It noted the increased availability and use of precision guided weapons 'some 85% of UK air weapons were precision guided, compared to 25% during Kosovo'.[306] These positive messages were also echoed in *Lessons for the Future*.[307] The NAO also highlighted the good performance of major defence equipment, 'throughout the warfighting phase of Operation TELIC a number of both new and in service equipments operated effectively in the austere environment of Iraq'.[308] The NAO also noted that 'the availability and performance of the majority of the fighting equipments demonstrates that the Department's major equipments, both new and in-service, contributed significantly to overall military capability and the success of the operation'.[309]

204. We asked Air Marshal Burridge about the performance of major defence equipment during the operation. He told us that:

> Our fighting equipment, bearing in mind we had a fairly extensive urgent operational requirement programme which brings it up either to a higher level or changes it or whatever, taken together our fighting equipment was very good.[310]

Given that a number of major equipments, such as the Challenger 2 tank, had to undergo substantial modifications before the operation, we also asked him whether there were any occasions when the late arrival of equipment delayed or cancelled operations. He told us that there were no such occasions 'but it was close'.[311] He noted that there had been a 'magnificent effort by Alvis-Vickers in modifying Challenger 2s… The juxtaposition of the UN discussion and what that meant for time lines fortuitously met the technical and engineering time line for Challenger 2'.[312] General Reith told us that in relation to the 'desertising' of Challenger 2 tanks 'We came perilously close... but we did it, and we planned it that way'.[313] We have discussed the issue of readiness in more detail in paragraphs 185–93 above.

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305 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

306 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

307 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 15, paras 5.3–5.7, p 27, paras 6.1–6.11.

308 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.2.

309 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.10.

310 Q 279

311 Q 377

312 Q 378

313 Q 947

205. We asked General Fulton which major equipment had exceeded MoD's expectations and which had not performed as well as expected. On the successes, he told us:

> Starting with the sea environment… the Cruise Missile T-LAM was a conspicuous success… the mine counter-measures capability enhanced by the UORs, was a success… The performance of Sea King Mk 7… was also a revelation… On land, I know that you have heard from General Brimms that he had a number of key stars: Challenger 2 enhanced by the desertification UOR, Warrior, AS 90, and he also singled out Phoenix as a great success… We were delighted with the performance… of the SA 80 A2… the Bowman personal role radio was a conspicuous success… In the air, what the operation proved was the success of the multi-role platforms GR4 and GR7… we were very pleased with the performance of the air-delivered precision weapons. Storm Shadow in particular was brought forward, but also enhanced Paveway and Maverick were great successes... I would also point to the information-gathering capability Raptor… and we were also pleased with the performance of that. Equally, the performance of the Nimrod R1… was a great success, and finally C17 proved its worth.[314]

206. On the equipment that had performed less well, he told us:

> In terms of shortcomings, we were not entirely surprised, but nevertheless the availability of the Combat Engineer Tractor, which was below 50 per cent… was a disappointment… The shortcomings of Clansman are known… but… a number of people described Clansman's ability to hold up pretty well, within its own limitations.[315]

207. We suggested to General Fulton that there must have been other systems that performed less well. He replied that he was not sure that he could add to the list but added that:

> We do have to remember that the equipment was being used in very particular circumstances. There were very particular characteristics of this operation, which in some cases did not test the equipment to the extent that we might have expected it to be tested had we been fighting a more capable enemy or an enemy which fought us in a different way. We also have to remember that we were fighting in conjunction with the United States, and therefore there are also aspects of operating in a coalition which mean our equipment was not tested to the extent that it might have been had we been fighting on our own. What I am saying is that the parameters within which we conducted the operation were less than the most testing parameters against which we would specify equipment.[316]

208. We asked him whether equipment had not appeared on his list of projects which had not performed well because it was known that it had particular deficiencies and, therefore, it performed to expectation which was not very high—he said that this was 'correct'[317]

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314 Qq 1898, 1900

315 Q 1900

316 Q 1901

317 Q 1914

209. **We are pleased to learn that in most cases the major defence equipments performed well in the difficult conditions encountered in Iraq although, given the nature of the operation, many equipments were not tested to the full.**

Availability of equipment

210. On the availability of the major defence equipments during the operation, the NAO reported that 'throughout the war-fighting phase, the availability of the major war-fighting equipments (ships, armoured vehicles, helicopters and aircraft) was generally high'.[318] The 'availability rates for land equipment during the main conflict phase were consistently high'—the average availability for Challenger 2 was 90 per cent, and for AS90 was 95 per cent.[319] However, availability rates for some equipments was not so impressive. The Combat Engineer Tractor, which General Fulton identified as a poor performer, has been in service since the early 1970s and is due to be replaced by TERRIER in 2008.[320] For the Lynx anti-tank helicopter, the NAO reported that the average availability rate for the main conflict phase was 52.6 per cent— compared with 66 per cent for all the helicopters used in Operation Telic.[321] However, MoD subsequently told us that the availability of sand filters meant that no limitations were imposed upon the use of the deployed Lynx helicopters during the warfighting phase, and that composite figures, revised since the publication of the NAO report, indicated that the Lynx anti-tank helicopter in fact achieved serviceability rates of over 70 per cent throughout the deployment.[322]

211. We asked about the future of the Lynx helicopter. General Applegate told us that:

> As far as the Lynx is concerned… we have a fleet which is ageing… the particular element which Lynx is fulfilling as far as the attack element is concerned… is replaced, obviously, by the Apache… So the remaining Lynx we have will be conducting the utility tasks in a less stressing environment.[323]

212. We were impressed with the capability of HMS Ocean, a Landing Platform for Helicopters (LPH), which played a vital role in the operation. During our visit to HMS Ocean, we were told that its four Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) Mk 5 Landing Craft were old and unreliable—they either did not start or broke down when transporting Armed Forces personnel from the ship to the shore. We were dismayed to hear that the new replacement craft that had been ordered, had been rejected as they did not meet the requirement. General Fulton confirmed that that 'the current generation of landing craft are very old and are in the process of being replaced, and…. that there are difficulties with the acceptance of the new landing craft'.[324]

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318 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.9.

319 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.9, figure 9 on p 26.

320 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), Figure 9 on p 26.

321 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.9, Figure 10 on p 27.

322 Ev 432

323 Q 1919

324 Q 1913

213. **The availability of most defence equipment was generally high during Operation Telic. However, it is disappointing that an impressive capability such as HMS Ocean is let down by unreliable landing craft and 'that there are difficulties with the acceptance of the new landing craft.' We expect MoD to remedy this issue as soon as possible to ensure that the capabilities of HMS Ocean are maximised.**

Communication and Information Systems

214. Air Marshal Burridge told us that 'communication, information systems'[325] was one of the areas where he would like to see change. The NAO reported that 'the majority of communications equipment worked well on the operation, although the force sometimes had difficulty maintaining strategic communications between the United Kingdom and units in-theatre'.[326] *Lessons for the Future* reported that:

> The UK's Communication and Information Systems (CIS) infrastructure could not easily support the information exchange requirements of the Iraq operation. UK forces had to rely on a variety of different communication systems connected by numerous gateways and interfaces…. Some gateways could not manage the volume of information traffic generated, inhibiting communication and information exchange between UK Maritime, Land and Air contingents. The limited degree of interoperability between UK and US CIS also had an impact on the ability to support coalition planning and operations in a high tempo environment, though maritime UK / US interoperability was good.[327]

215. We learned that both Harrier and helicopter operations were impeded by the lack of secure communications. We asked MoD whether there were any significant breakdowns in its ability to communicate from the UK to forces in theatre, and from commanders in theatre to their colleagues who were closer to the action. Air Vice Marshal Stephen Dalton, Capability Manager (Information Superiority) told us:

> there undoubtedly were occasions where the communications were not as robust and reliable as they should ideally have been…. due to a variety of factors, not least of which…. is the fact that the volume and the sheer quantity of communications that was required was so much larger than we had anticipated or had been shown in the past to be the requirement.[328]

He outlined the work in hand to address the shortcomings with the communications and information systems:

> We have a number of strands of work, both directly with NATO partners and also with specific countries, the US in particular, to try and make sure that our communications that we are bringing in over the next few years, literally the next two to three years, are compatible with their systems. An example there would be

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325 Q 279

326 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.8.

327 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 3.7.

328 Q 1929

actually making sure that we put the wave form patterns from our radios into the software programmable radios that the Americans are buying for the future for their equipment as well, so that we are interoperable and compatible with their systems. In terms of strategic communications, yes, there were significant problems there, not least of which was with our now ageing Skynet 4 system, where a particular satellite in the net which was critical to it did give us problems, and the management system had to be changed to try and make use of other satellites that were available, including the Inmarsat system, which became at one point the critical communication system because the others which we had in place proved to be unreliable. So there were problems and things were being done about it. What we are doing for the future for that side of things is that we are at the moment in the process of launching the Skynet 5 system satellites, which will be up over the next four to five years, which will then give us a new, modern satellite capability to provide the strategic comms that we need.[329]

It concerns us that for the next four to five years we will continue to be dependent upon Skynet 4 which has recognised limitations and which let us down on this occasion.

216. We asked when there would be reliable, secure, timely and effective communication between all parts of our operations and our allies, Air Vice Marshal Dalton told us that is:

> a difficult question to answer in terms of when…. What we are seeking to do is to put in place a capable, reliable system that will meet the needs that have been specified to do it. When that will all be in place with all our allies is a difficult question to answer specifically in terms of dates…. It is a continuing process, but certainly within the next four to five years we will have a much more reliable system, which will enable us to meet the requirements both of our allies and for our own national use.[330]

General Fulton added that:

> I think we are some way off the perfection that you describe—in fact, I think we are a long way off the perfection you describe—but I would say we are in this situation because, frankly, we have not invested sufficient over the years in the enabling functions that allow us to do these sorts of things. It has only really been since the Strategic Defence Review of 1998 that we have started to invest in enablers as well as in what you might call the front line forces. Communications traditionally has been very much the poor relation and is catching up. There is a lot of investment coming but it is going to be a few years yet.[331]

217. MoD subsequently told us that it envisaged its network-enabled capability building through '3 epochs: firstly, an initial NEC state, characterised by improved connectivity by 2007; secondly, a state characterised by improved integration by 2015; and finally, a mature state in the longer term characterised by greater synchronisation'.[332]

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329 Q 1953

330 Qq 1957–8

331 Q 1958

332 Ev 433

218. **Operation Telic highlighted serious shortcomings in the reliability, capacity and redundancy of the UK's communications and information systems, which to a large extent are a consequence of under investment in the past. While we acknowledge that work is in hand to address these shortcomings, we find it very worrying that it will be some time before any real improvements will be seen, particularly given the frequency with which UK Armed Forces are now involved in operations, and the increased need to communicate effectively not only within UK forces but also with our allies.**

Combat identification

219. The purpose of combat identification is to enable military forces to distinguish friend from foe during operations, thereby enhancing combat effectiveness while minimising the risk of accidental engagement of friendly or allied forces—often referred to as 'fratricide' or 'Blue-on-Blue' incidents. Both the Defence Committee and the Committee of Public Accounts have previously emphasised the importance of this issue.

220. In its report on Operation Telic, the NAO set out the measures MoD had taken to reduce the risk of fratricide during Operation Telic:

> For Operation TELIC, to improve interoperability with other Coalition forces and to minimise the risk of fratricide, the Department procured a number of equipments designed to enhance forces' capability to distinguish friend from foe. These measures comprised a number of visual identification measures fitted to vehicles and worn by individual soldiers (costing some £5 million) and the Blue Force Tracking system which enhanced Coalition land forces' situational awareness.[333]

221. The NAO concluded that 'These measures, in conjunction with training and procedures appear to have been largely effective.'[334] Sir Kevin Tebbit told the Committee of Public Accounts in January 2004 about the measures put in place and the lessons learned relating to combat identification:

> We take it very seriously. We worked very hard with the Americans before the operations on it. We also reviewed our performance after the operation and it was one of the key studies that were initiated immediately afterwards by Vice Chief of Defence Staff to see whether our approach was validated. We have made a copy of that review available to the NAO. Before the operation we procured 1,861 vehicle mounted and 5,000 dismounted for people combat ID sets which were specific to this operation. I will not detail how they work for obvious reasons. We also acquired the American blue forces tracking system which gives general situation awareness, which also helps, the cost was not enormous but we spent several million pounds on doing so. Our initial findings after the combat were that these systems are good and were good but there is still no simple, single solution from technology that training, tactics, procedures and exercises are still vital because in some of the tragic incidents that occurred combat ID was there and it was supposed to be operating and still the incidents happened. We believe, my military colleagues might comment, the answer

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333 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2003 (HC 195 Session 2003-2004: 23 January 2004), paragraph 4.11.

334 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2003 (HC 195 Session 2003-2004: 23 January 2004), paragraph 4.11.

lies in a combination of all of these things, of appropriate systems, procedures, training, exercising with it and we are very concerned to proceed on that basis.[335]

222. **We welcome the overall finding of the National Audit Office that on Operation Telic, the measures, procedures and training relating to combat identification were largely effective. We are disappointed that a copy of the review of combat identification undertaken by the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, which was provided to the National Audit Office, was not made available to the Defence Committee during its inquiry.**

223. MoD reported that 'the US did not decide which combat ID equipments they would operate until the end of 2002'.[336] We asked MoD how the timing of the US decision had affected the UK's ability to field similar or compatible systems. MoD told us that the timing of the decision had not affected the UK's 'ability to procure or deploy the Combat Identification to the Gulf.'[337]

224. *First Reflections* reported that 'In the air and at sea, extra 'Identification Friend or Foe' (IFF) systems were procured to supplement those routinely fitted to all RAF aircraft and RN warships'.[338] MoD has subsequently told us that *First Reflections* was wrong to state that extra IFF had been procured for RAF aircraft—no extra IFF systems were required, as aircraft deployed were already compliant with the existing IFF systems. However, situational awareness of aircraft, and therefore their Combat ID capability, was improved in a number of cases by the fitting of Link 16 tactical data link equipment.[339] About £2.5 million was spent procuring extra IFF systems for ships, which was fitted to the existing IFF equipment on board—fitting costs were minimal as the work was carried out by the ships' staff.[340]

225. For land troops, MoD reports that the UK is actively involved in developing Battlefield Target Identification for ground-to-ground recognition in the future. Bowman will also improve situational awareness and, in turn, Combat ID.[341] On the cost of acquiring the Blue Force Tracking System, MoD told us that for the eight month lease of the equipment, some £2.5 million was set aside. This included the costs of contractor support and provision against damage or loss of equipment.[342]

226. Despite all the measures in place, during the warfighting phase of Operation Telic, there were regrettably several instances of fratricide involving UK Service personnel: a Royal Air Force Tornado GR4A was destroyed by a United States Army Patriot Surface to Air Missile battery, killing the pilot and the navigator; a UK Challenger 2 main battle tank was engaged by another Challenger 2, killing two crewmen and seriously wounding two others; a United States Air Force A10 ground attack aircraft engaged reconnaissance

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335 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 170

336 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), paragraph 4.15.

337 Ev 397

338 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.15.

339 Ev 397

340 Ev 397

341 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.15.

342 Ev 397

elements from D Squadron, The Household Cavalry, killing one trooper and wounding three others. The causes of these incidents are the subject of ongoing Boards of Inquiry.[343] We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of those killed in these incidents.

227. We asked the Secretary of State to what extent 'friendly fire' was a particular problem of combined coalition operations. He told us that:

> These were unlooked-for incidents, despite very determined efforts made, certainly as far as the technology provision was concerned, to use all the efforts that we could to avoid them, but the real answer to your question is that I cannot see, from what took place, that there is any pattern that suggests that this is the result of coalition-style operations.[344]

228. The Secretary of State did not believe that the incidents during Operation Telic would have been reduced if combat identification had been rolled out some time ago, as was planned. He told us that in relation to the incident involving Challenger 2 tanks that:

> I cannot see that any level of technological innovation could avoid that kind of incident taking place. If there is such an innovation, then certainly we will vigorously investigate it, but I cannot see, at the present levels of technology, that being easy to see a solution to, which is why I have consistently emphasised… that there is no simple, single technological solution to these problems.[345]

229. We asked when the ongoing Boards of Inquiry would report their findings on the fratricide incidents that occurred. Air Vice Marshal Torpy could not give us a definitive date but anticipated that it would be sometime in 'the New Year' [2004].[346] MoD subsequently told us that the principle of confidentiality of Board of Inquiry reports is designed to encourage the provision of forthright evidence and they are not normally disclosed in full outside MoD. MoD will in due course make available to the Library of the House a summary of the reports' conclusions.[347] **We expect MoD to make available to Parliament and the Committee the summaries of the reports' conclusions as soon as possible and for the summaries to provide sufficient information on the causes of the incidents and the lessons learned in order to reassure the Armed Forces and ourselves that everything practicable was done to minimise the possibility of such incidents.**

230. We asked MoD whether it was confident that lessons from these tragic incidents would be learned and that remedial action would be taken. Air Vice Marshal Torpy told us that:

> I am confident that we will do everything we possibly can to make sure that the lessons are implemented… It is in all of our interests to make sure that we reduce fratricide to the absolute minimum… Technology will to a degree assist us in this. Again, our aspiration of a network-centric environment will give us better shared

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343 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04), paras 4.11–12.

344 Q 83

345 Q 84

346 Q 1329

347 Ev 431

awareness, and we will know where every asset is on the battle space, which we do not at the moment. Just as technology will give us the opportunity, it will also give us the opportunity to synchronise our activity and make it more complex. The opportunities in an increasingly complex battle space for fratricide are likely to increase.[348]

231. We asked Air Vice Marshal Torpy whether such incidents could be eliminated. He told us that:

> …whenever there is a human in the loop, whilst technology will assist the reduction in these incidents, inevitably, in the confusion of a very complex battle space, errors will be made[349]… It would be wrong to suggest that we could eliminate fratricide. Personally, as a military commander, I regret to say that we will continue to have fratricide just as we continue to have road accidents with our deployed forces as well. It is one of the facts of life. It is our job to make sure that those tragic incidents are reduced to the absolute minimum.[350]

232. In terms of future work to improve combat identification, the Secretary of State told us that 'there is a long-term effort obviously to get as many allies as possible agreeing on a single system… for the moment we have committed ourselves… to having the best equipment that we could lay our hands on.'[351]

233. **We expect MoD to implement the lessons from Operation Telic relating to combat identification. MoD should push forward with the work with its allies to agree on a single system. The latter is particularly important given that future UK military action is most likely to be as part of a coalition. We note MoD's view that the opportunities for fratricide in an increasingly complex battle space are likely to increase, but look to MoD to identify the required action and make the necessary investment to ensure that such incidents are reduced to a minimum.**

UAVs

234. *Lessons for the Future* reported that 'Coalition Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) offered versatile capabilities as both surveillance and reconnaissance, and offensive platforms, and demonstrated that they will play a key role in the future joint battle,'[352] and further that 'Extensive use of Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) enabled the coalition to conduct unrelenting operations…. Although the UK's Phoenix UAV, a first generation system, had a more limited capability than the US systems, it played an important and highly valued role in support of UK land forces, and demonstrated the increasingly key role UAVs may play in the joint battle as they become more capable'.[353]

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348 Q 1332

349 Q 1334

350 Q 1339

351 Q 86

352 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 27.

353 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 6.18.

235. MoD provided us with information on the contribution of the Phoenix UAVs. 89 Phoenix UAVs were deployed on Operation Telic and flew 138 missions—23 were lost or damaged beyond repair and 13 were damaged but repairable. In terms of the future 'Phoenix will be phased out and its role subsumed by the broader Watchkeeper UAV capability which we aim to introduce in 2006'. [354] We asked MoD about the contribution of UAVs during the operation. General Fulton told us that:

> In terms of effectiveness of UAVs, yes, the Americans made a lot of use of them. The Americans, as we know, have a much greater variety of them and they have developed them much further than we have, but nevertheless, there is a great deal of investment going in this country to improve or to increase the use that we make of them. As far as Phoenix is concerned, Phoenix has been a much maligned equipment in the past, but was identified by General Brims as one of his war winners and he certainly found it extremely useful, with all its known shortcomings. Yes, the attrition rate was high…. In terms of causes of loss, technical reasons are believed to account for the majority of those that were lost…. Phoenix is very much a last-generation air vehicle and a last-generation system…. We are not going to go out and buy more Phoenix. Watchkeeper is due in service in 2005-06 and will provide a two-step change in our capability in the information-gathering capability that will be provided…. We are very keen…. not to make changes to the Watchkeeper requirement, so that we do not keep chasing the latest requirement, and we do not fall into the same trap we fell into with Bowman.'[355]

236. **We are pleased to hear that, despite its chequered past, Phoenix made a valuable contribution to the operation. We support the robust approach being adopted in relation to the Watchkeeper UAV programme, which aims to 'nail the… requirement and to make sure that the companies deliver that which we have asked for'[356] although we continue to be concerned that the accelerated in-service date for the programme may not be met. We will continue to monitor the progress of this key programme.**

237. A press article in late 2003[357] reported that MoD had purchased US Desert Hawk and US Buster UAVs. General Fulton told us that MoD was procuring, as a UOR, Desert Hawk UAVs. However, it was not in service yet.[358] It was unclear to us how this procurement fitted with the Watchkeeper programme. General Fulton explained that it did not fit into the Watchkeeper requirement, but was a 'very much smaller air vehicle, very much less capable, with a very much shorter range… Something that is therefore man-portable, to see whether that can help with some of the surveillance requirements that exist at the moment.'[359] **We consider it well worthwhile that MoD is assessing the usefulness of man-portable UAVs for current operations in Iraq. We expect MoD to reflect the results of this assessment when deciding on the overall mix of UAVs for the future.**

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354 Ev 394

355 Qq 1973–5

356 Q 1975

357 *The Times*, 30 December 2003.

358 Q 1977

359 Q 1978

Apache

238. The operational UK helicopter fleet does not currently contain 'attack' helicopters, although there are a number of armed helicopters. MoD, however, is in the process of acquiring 67 Apache helicopters, which should come into service over the next few years. According to *Lessons for the Future*, 'There are…. potential lessons for the future utility of the UK's new Apache attack helicopters from the US experience in Iraq with its Cobra and Apache helicopters'.[360]

239. We were concerned about the reported vulnerability of the Apache helicopter to small arms fire, and were interested in the lessons MoD had identified in relation to this. General Applegate acknowledged that there had been criticism of the Apache helicopter following an attack against elements of the Medina Division in which the Apache helicopters suffered a substantial amount of damage. He argued however that whilst the helicopters involved absorbed a lot of damage all except one returned and went back into action two days later.[361] He also recognised that there 'were clearly problems with tactics, techniques and procedures on that day.'[362]

240. We were pleased to learn that MoD were not planning to reduce its purchase of Apache helicopters and that it was seeking to ensure that 'what we buy are the best.'[363] **We conclude that there are key lessons from the United States' experience in Iraq which MoD needs to take into account when developing its tactics, techniques and procedures for its Apache helicopters. We expect MoD to take the required action to ensure that UK Apache helicopters are as capable as they can be, given the new sorts of environments and operations they are likely to be operating in.**

Sea King

241. The Sea King Mk 7 Air Surveillance and Control System is reported[364] to have performed well using its Searchwater 2000 radar. This radar is normally used over water, but provided battlefield surveillance and target cueing for UK land forces. General Fulton told us that the performance of the Sea King was an example of 'the ability of our people to take in equipment that was designed for one purpose and apply it to another when the situation changes.'[365] He said that in the future, the Astor programme, due in service in 2005, will provide a better stand-off picture of the battlefield and the Watchkeeper programme will also provide a flexible way to do the same thing. **The Sea King helicopter made a significant contribution to the operation and highlighted the benefit of acquiring equipment that is sufficiently adaptable. However, we are concerned to learn that, at times, the Sea King provided the only dedicated stand-off sensor coverage for 3**

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360 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 6.21.

361 Q 1971

362 Q 1971

363 Q 1972

364 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 6.17.

365 Q 1969

Commando Brigade's operations on the Al Faw peninsula.[366] We expect MoD to ensure that the Astor programme meets its in-service date to fill the current capability gap.

242. The Sea King, in common with other helicopters, is vulnerable to ground-to-air threats. General Fulton told us that there was a limited amount that could be done to make the Sea King less vulnerable to ground-to-air threats. He considered that the correct approach was not to incur 'great expenditure' on its protection, but rather to 'limit its vulnerability through use rather than through technical means.'[367] **We expect MoD to ensure that the lessons identified to minimise the Sea King's vulnerability are fully implemented.**

The Defence White Paper

243. The Defence White Paper, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*[368] was published on 11 December 2003. In the foreword to the White Paper the Secretary of State wrote:

> we must invest in the battle-winning equipment [the Armed Forces] will need…. to effectively support expeditionary operations. Resources must be directed at those capabilities that best deliver the range of effects required…. we expect to be in a position to announce significant changes to the current and future capabilities of the Armed Forces and supporting infrastructure next year.

In his oral statement in the House of Commons he said:

> Resources must be directed at those capabilities that are best able to deliver the range of military effects required, whilst dispensing with those elements that are less flexible. [369]

In the case of the Army, he stated that:

> experience shows that the current mix of heavy and light capabilities was relevant to the battles of the past rather than the battles of the future …. the Future Rapid Effects System family of vehicles that we are currently developing will help meet the much needed requirement for medium weight forces. Over time this will inevitable reduce our requirement for heavy armoured fighting vehicles and heavy artillery. [370]

244. We asked what changes MoD expected to make to the Equipment Programme in response to the lessons learned and the experience on Operation Telic, and specifically about the progress with the Future Rapid Effects System (FRES), a programme which is intended to provide a medium weight capability to the Army in the form of a vehicle with some of the reach and endurance of heavy armour and the air-deployability of light forces. General Fulton told us that Operation Telic 'has underlined for us the importance of

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366 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 6.17.

367 Q 1969

368 Defence White Paper: *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, December 2003. Cm 6041-I

369 HC Deb, 11 December 2003, c1209

370 HC Deb, 11 December 2003, c1210

certain aspects…. but…. would not necessarily expect to see…. a wholesale change of direction'.[371] In relation to FRES, General Applegate told us that:

> As far as FRES is concerned at the moment, I think we are still keen to make sure that we get a FRES series of vehicles, but the simpler ones first. The timescale is 2009–10, depending what is available.[372]

General Fulton added that:

> What FRES and what the medium weight force seeks to do… is to plug the gap in the middle, which is a capability that we do not have at the moment.[373]

245. We sought further information on the status of the FRES programme, given its future importance. MoD told us that it is currently reviewing the outputs from the planning work carried out as part of the Concept Phase. Preparatory work for the initial Assessment Phase has begun. Output from this phase will help MoD decide on the procurement strategy for future phases of the programme. An in-service date will not be approved until Main Gate.[374] The planning assumption is to introduce early FRES variants around the end of the decade.[375]

246. **We have announced our intention to undertake an inquiry into the Defence White Paper. We will also continue to monitor the progress of the FRES programme as part of our annual inquiry into defence procurement.**

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371 Q 1984

372 Q1987

373 Q1992

374 Main Gate is the approval point between the Assessment Phase and the Demonstration and Manufacture Phase. At Main Gate, a Business Case is presented, which should recommend a single technical and procurement option. By Main Gate, risk should have been reduced to allow a high degree of confidence that the equipment project will be delivered to narrowly defined time, cost and performance parameters.

375 Ev 434

10 Personal equipment and protection

Chairman: I presume the question of army boots which has been bedevilling the Army for about 400 years, certainly as long as I have been on the Committee, is resolvable?

Admiral Sir Michael Boyce: You would be fully justified in being angrily cross if we went into an operation and found we were living with some deficit or something which diminished our operational capability as a result of lessons learned as recently as 2001. (Evidence from the Chief of Defence Staff, 6 November 2002)

247. Throughout this inquiry we have spoken to a wide range of service personnel who served in Operation Telic. Consistently they relayed to us concerns about their personal equipment and protection—such concerns have also been echoed in letters and e-mails we have received from service personnel and their families and friends. Desert clothing and boots, body armour and NBC detection and protection regularly featured as concerns. Therefore, from the outset of our inquiry, we sought to identify the basis for these concerns and the impact they had on both the morale of service personnel and operational capability.

248. In the early stages of our inquiry, MoD's view was that genuine instances of equipment shortages or defects were few and far between and had had little impact—they were considered to be glitches or local difficulties. In May 2003 the Secretary of State told us:

> All the requisite numbers of boots and clothing and equipment were there and, having only had a brief opportunity of inviting editors of newspapers to devote an appropriate amount of space to the success of the equipment, given the hugely disproportionate amount of space they wasted on making facile criticisms of equipment that proved its worth in the conflict, I am still waiting to see any signs of apology from either individual journalists or from their editors.[376]

> I am certainly suggesting that, in a force of around 45,000 people across three Services, there may have been the odd person who, for example, did not get the right sized pair of boots. There may have been the odd soldier who one day did not get his lunchtime ration pack. There may have been the odd soldier who did not like his ready-to-eat meal of the sort issued by the United States to their forces. There is not the slightest suggestion, however, that any of the stories that appeared so routinely in our newspapers stood up to detailed analysis against what was delivered and what was proved ultimately to be a very successful campaign based on logistical success and the quality of our equipment.[377]

However, on 5 February 2004, he admitted:

> In my evidence last May I acknowledged that there were bound to be some problems in a logistics operation of this size, and that some of our personnel may have experienced shortages of equipment. Our subsequent work has shown that these

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376 Q 44

377 Q 53

shortages were more widespread and in some respects more serious than we believed to be the case at that time. In general, this was not the result of a failure to obtain and deploy the equipment required… on the whole, as we said in our report *Lessons for the Future*, these shortages did not adversely affect operational capability… But I do accept that a situation which seems satisfactory to those looking at the bigger picture can nonetheless be very different for the people who are affected personally by the things that go wrong. I also accept that our inability fully to distribute items such as desert clothing and boots, although not considered operationally essential by commanders on the ground, certainly had an adverse impact on morale.[378]

249. **We are pleased to note that, following its initial rejection of the concerns about personal equipment and protection, MoD now acknowledges that there was a problem which had a detrimental impact on service personnel. Robust arrangements should now be introduced to gauge the views of more junior ranks and specialists whose widespread concerns do not seem to be properly understood, reflected and acted upon by more senior commanders and officials further up the chain.**

250. One reason for the shortfalls in provision of basic personal equipment was that MoD's planning assumptions did not allow for an operation of the scale of Operation Telic being undertaken to such a demanding timetable. We discussed the planning assumptions in paragraphs 58–9 above, but in the context of personal equipment MoD needs to recognise the likelihood that operations in the future will be undertaken under similar timetable pressures to Operation Telic. As Brigadier Cowlam told the Committee:

> we based our organisation stockholders and systems on a certain number of assumptions; on this occasion, we reacted well within those assumptions, in much tighter time-lines than we had assumed, and therefore I do not think any of us were too surprised that a lot of hard work had to go in, to make sure that the necessary equipment, supplies and capabilities were in the right place at the right time. I think the lesson that we are learning is we have got to make sure our assumptions are correct in the first place.[379]

Desert boots and clothing

251. Notwithstanding the Secretary of State's comments in May 2003 about desert boots and clothing, Air Marshal Burridge told the Committee in June 2003 that that he had encountered personnel wearing black boots when he visited Basra on 23 April.[380] This was confirmed during our visits when we were told that some desert boots and combats arrived after the major combat phase. In July 2003 General Reith told us that:

> Turning to the clothing and the boots, I was not concerned about that at all. The temperate equipment we have, the combat clothing is designed up to 39 degrees centigrade and the boots up to 35 degrees centigrade.[381]

378   Q 2220
379   Q 658
380   Q 351
381   Q 956

252. General Reith's comment that he was not concerned about the desert clothes and boots issue appears to ignore the fact that green combat clothing does not provide the same camouflage effect as desert clothing in an environment such as Iraq. It also begs the question as to why MoD procured desert clothing and boots specifically for the combat operation.

253. Rear Admiral Style accepted that shortages had occurred when he told us in July 2003 that:

> The matter of boots and clothing, yes, there were shortfalls there. There are major lessons to learn and we are examining the holdings… and looking at the whole issue of tracking of assets delivery, and so on, but there was a reason why we had that number, whether or not it was the right judgement. This was reviewed, as you know, in the Strategic Defence Review, and the matter of desert clothing, in particular, it was settled in terms of all the balances of capability that we had to spend our money on, that we provide for only the JRRF and the spearhead battalion, that was the judgement, and we provided for that… we decided that, because we are not constrained by those sorts of judgements, it is always a balance of risk, this whole business is a risk business, we decided to go for a bigger operation and so, yes, there were shortfalls. That lesson must be addressed and of course we must consider our balance of priorities, but there was a reason behind the levels that we had…[382]

254. *First Reflections* published in July 2003 acknowledged that clothing did contribute to combat effectiveness. It noted that a new type of boot better adapted to desert conditions had been purchased, but recognised that MoD needed to look at 'the quantities of boots, clothing and other personal equipment we routinely hold'.[383] *Lessons for the Future* published in December 2003 provided details of the temperatures in which standard issue army boots and green combat clothing are designed to be used. It acknowledged that 'nonetheless, given that the temperature was likely to rise to over 50C during the summer months, and the need for appropriate camouflage colours, the Department prepared to issue desert clothing to all deploying forces'.[384] *Lessons for the Future* acknowledged that 'by the time the operation began a number of deployed service personnel had not received the ideal quantities of desert boots or combat clothing… Tight timelines, inadequate tracking of equipment in theatre, and some instances of incorrect boot and clothing sizes meant that not all Servicemen and women received their allocation'.[385]

255. The NAO reported that:

> The pre-TELIC requirement was based on desert clothing for 9,000 troops with three sets per person. An additional 20,000 pairs of desert boots were ordered on 29 November 2002 and a further 10,000 pairs on 10 January 2003… 89,700 pairs of desert trousers…. and 92,750 desert lightweight jackets… were also ordered. Approximately 40 per cent of the additional clothing requirement was available in-theatre by 13 April 2003. The procurement was regarded as of limited effectiveness

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382 Q 954

383 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.17.

384 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.8.

385 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 8.6.

because few troops received their full complement, and mismatches in sizing remained in the post-conflict phase of the Operation.[386]

256. The NAO Director responsible for the report on Operation Telic is reported to have said that the lack of proper desert clothing was particularly resented by the troops. He said a typical reaction was—'we're out here fighting and you can't be bothered to buy us a proper uniform'.[387] We also heard similar sorts of reactions from service personnel during our visits. However, on the operational impact of not having desert boots and clothing, the Secretary of State told us that: 'The question is whether this affected their ability to conduct the operations and I have not seen any suggestion that it did.'[388]

257. **The issue of the availability of desert clothing and boots during Operation Telic has been both a confusing and worrying story. MoD should clarify its position on the circumstances in which desert clothing and boots are to be used and ensure that all service personnel understand the position. MoD clearly underestimated the impact on morale of failing to provide service personnel with the clothing and boots which they required and expected. We find it unacceptable that some two weeks after the start of the combat phase 60 per cent of the additional clothing requirement that had been ordered was not available in theatre. We understand that MoD has now increased its stockholding of desert and tropical clothing and boots up to a total of 32,000 sets.[389] We expect MoD to keep the level of stockholding under review.**

Enhanced body armour

258. *Lessons for the Future* reported that Enhanced Body Armour provided personnel with significant levels of protection.[390] It also reported difficulties surrounding the supply of body armour—'the decision (a change in policy) to equip all Service personnel whose role required it with Enhanced Combat Body Armour (combat body armour enhanced by the addition of ceramic plates) posed a challenge because there were insufficient stocks to meet the needs of a large-scale force'.[391] It noted that, through additional purchases, 38,000 complete sets of body armour were deployed to theatre, which should have met the requirement, but 'late delivery against an advancing timescale, coupled with difficulties in equipment tracking and control of issue, led to localised shortfalls. Priority was therefore given to those personnel on the ground who commanders judged to have the greatest need, principally dismounted infantry'.[392]

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386 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003-04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

387 *The Times*, 12 December 2003.

388 Q 2289

389 Q 2220

390 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.8.

391 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 8.7.

392 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 8.7.

259. The NAO report confirmed the position set out in *First Reflections* and noted that 'insufficient numbers were distributed in-theatre, largely as a result of difficulties with asset-tracking and distribution'.[393] It also noted that:

> 'the Department's Defence Clothing Integrated Project Team estimated that approximately 200,000 sets had been issued since the Kosovo campaign in 1999, greatly exceeding the theoretical requirement, but these seem to have disappeared. The Team questioned whether items should, therefore, be issued as part of an individual's personal entitlement for which they would be held accountable'.[394]

260. In respect of the change in policy concerning enhanced body armour, General Fry told the Committee of Public Accounts in January 2004:

> I need to go back first of all and say what the policy was under which we deployed. Every soldier at the outset of planning was equipped with conventional body armour, not enhanced combat body armour. This reflected a doctrine that the armed forces had had for a long time… We, therefore, took into the beginning of this conflict a doctrine which did not recognise the necessity for enhanced combat body armour and that is a perfectly legitimate position to start from. As we went into it, we saw a growing requirement for ballistic protection and, therefore, we initiated the urgent operational requirement procedure which then resulted in the knock-on procurement processes that derive from that.[395]

261. Some service personnel had told us that there was not enough body armour, but that centrally they were being told there was enough for everybody. We asked why this was the case. Brigadier Cowlam told us that 'a certain number are procured but it does take time to deliver into theatre and then within theatre… with the benefit of hindsight, we did not move it as far forward as quickly as we would have wished'.[396] The Chief of Defence Logistics told us that 'the lesson here is to revisit the assumptions we made so far as the numbers are concerned… to decide whether these should become personal issue and permanent and then change our policy accordingly'.[397]

262. **Body armour is another example of where MoD's in-theatre distribution and tracking led to shortages in critical equipment.** MoD has recognised the serious nature of these shortcomings—the Secretary of State told us on 5 February 2004 that 'there were also, as we know from the tragic case of Sergeant Roberts, problems in providing important equipment enhancements to all personnel in a timely fashion, even when the requisite quantities had arrived in theatre'.[398] **MoD should identify and implement solutions to address these shortcomings and ensure that service personnel receive the equipment they are entitled to.**

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393 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003-04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

394 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

395 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 11

396 Q 997

397 Q 1058

398 Q 2220

263. On the 200,000 sets which had disappeared, the Chief of Defence Logistics told the Committee of Public Accounts in January 2004 that 'we are engaged in an exercise at the moment to show exactly who was issued with those 200,000 component parts and that they still have them'.[399] The Secretary of State told the House on 13 January that 'the body armour components are held by individual units and are not, in fact, lost'.

264. MoD told us that the figure of 200,000 was an estimate of the 'equivalent' number of sets of body armour that would have been issued since 1999. MoD explained that the body 'ensemble' is not usually issued as a complete set, instead units request the number of components required to make up the sets they need. 'Fillers' and 'covers' are demanded as items of consumable stock and are disposed of locally when they wear out. The ceramic plates, because of their value, are returned to stock for re-issue when surplus to unit requirement. The body armour components, once issued, are not tracked centrally—responsibility for retaining and managing body armour components passes to the receiving units. MoD told us that it is highly likely that the 200,000 sets are held by units as individual components. It is undertaking an audit to establish the extent of the holdings.[400] **We will be interested to see the results of this audit and the action that MoD plans to take in response to the findings.**

265. The Secretary of State told us that he would welcome our views on whether enhanced body armour should become a personal issue item.[401] This is not a straightforward issue. With the ceramic plates, body armour vests are heavy and uncomfortable and seriously restrict individual mobility, as we discovered during our visit to Iraq. On the other hand, MoD's description of the current system clearly illustrates its inadequacies. We were told that one reason for the decision to issue enhanced body armour to forces deployed to Iraq related to the shift to the southern option. It was judged that there would be an increased likelihood of soldiers being involved in fighting in urban areas where they would be at relatively greater risk from sniper fire and this is what the ceramic plates provide protection from. **Before any firm decision is made, the views of service personnel, as well as the logistic implications of a change in policy, must be considered. If the conclusion is that enhanced body armour is not required for all operations, efforts should nonetheless be made to ensure that where it is required it is issued to personnel before their deployment.**

SA80 A2

266. Air Marshal Burridge told us that the SA80 A2 assault rifle[402] worked well and General Fulton told us that 'we were delighted with the performance… of the SA80 A2'.[403] We have heard concerns from some of the service personnel we spoke to and from those who contacted us. These related to problems with the safety catch and with the availability of

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399 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 113

400 Ev 428

401 Q 2303

402 Q 345

403 Q 1900

the oil needed to clean and lubricate the weapon. However, most service personnel told us that the modifications have made it a much better weapon.

267. The NAO reported that despite some isolated difficulties with the weapon, 'units' post-operational reports have indicated that there is now general acceptance that the SA80 A2 is an effective and reliable weapon system.'[404] However, it reported that not all troops were aware of the correct cleaning regime and that there were also problems supplying the additional quantities of cleaning oil needed—concerns which we have been told about. The NAO also reported that soldiers in both Afghanistan and Iraq had noted that the safety plunger tended to stick which resulted in the user not being able to operate the safety catch freely, although this problem was 'infrequent, quick to rectify and did not result in catastrophic failure'.[405] **The modifications to the SA80 have provided UK service personnel with a more effective weapon system. MoD must ensure that users of the weapon are kept fully aware of the cleaning requirements for different environments and provide the necessary cleaning material. Concerns about the weapon's safety catch must be monitored and, where necessary, appropriate action taken.**

Ammunition

268. During our visits some service personnel had told us of problems with the availability of ammunition, in particular small arms ammunition. This was raised forcefully by some infantry section commanders. General Reith told us that 'we had in theatre 30 days' worth of ammunition, with ten of them at intense rates… From day one, before we kicked off, that was in theatre'.[406] Air Marshal Burridge said that 'the highest priority was to get the ammunition in the right place'.[407] Brigadier Kerr told us that they had heard that the odd soldier had said that there was not enough ammunition, but overall there was enough ammunition in theatre—enough ammunition for every soldier to have up to 750 rounds of ammunition. However, he added 'that does not mean initially when they deploy into theatre; they may have had five rounds. That would have been a decision on the ground if that happened initially for a very short period of time'.[408] Brigadier Cowlam accepted that the amount of ammunition in theatre initially was limited:

> Moving on to the shortage of individual ammunition, on initial deployment when self-defence was the issue, the ammunition that was available in theatre which was limited at the very early stage, was spread across the force so that every unit had some ammunition.[409]

269. The NAO reported that 'the majority of the force's flat-racks (required for the movement of ammunition by specialist vehicles) were on the penultimate deployment ship, arriving in Kuwait on 17 March. This significantly limited the ability of logistic units

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404 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 4.7.

405 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

406 Q 963 and Q 964

407 Q 351

408 Q 1057

409 Q 1063

to move ammunition to the frontline and exacerbated a perception among troops that there were ammunition shortages'.[410]

270. **Our examination suggests that there were problems with the supply of ammunition when the fighting echelon began operations. MoD accepts that in the very early stages there were some problems and not all service personnel had the right amount. We expect MoD to establish the scale of the problem, to investigate any specific cases identified, in particular the tragic incident involving the six Royal Military Policemen, and to implement the necessary action to avoid any re-occurrence in the future.**

Night vision capability

271. *Lessons for the Future*[411] reported that the provision of a Head Mounted Night Vision System improved the ability of UK forces to operate at night—the systems, the majority of which were obtained as UORs, were used for surveillance and target acquisition in close combat and were found to be particularly effective in the urban environment. General Fulton told us that the SA80 A2 'was enhanced by the dismounted close combat capability, in particular the night vision capability, which we were able to extend from what we had learned in Afghanistan, and we were able to get some of that brought forward in time for some of the forces, though not for everybody'.[412]

272. During our visits we were shown some of the night vision equipment that was used during the operation. Service personnel told us that the equipment had performed well and had given them an improved capability. However, they also told us that all US troops were issued with the equipment, but this was not the case for UK service personnel. **We understand that MoD is currently reviewing the scales of issue of night vision equipment. We consider that the ability to operate confidently and effectively at night greatly enhances force protection and capability. We look to MoD to examine the case for providing night vision capability to all service personnel who are required to operate at night.**

NBC equipment

273. During our inquiry a Major in the TA deployed on Operation Telic, and who has a detailed knowledge and experience of NBC issues, told us about concerns he had about the NBC equipment used on the operation. He highlighted concerns about two pieces of equipment—CAM (a portable Chemical Agent Monitor) and NAIAD (a nerve agent detector). He told us that there were inadequate supplies of special batteries for both of these equipments and that vital cassettes for the NAIAD detectors were unavailable. He also raised concerns about respirators for service personnel and inadequate spares to replace any failures, and concerns about NBC suits. During our visits service personnel had also told us about similar concerns.

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410 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 3.13.

411 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.10.

412 Q 1900

274. We asked MoD whether there were any shortages of specialist equipment to deal with chemical or biological attacks. The Chief of Defence Logistics told us:

> NBC covers a whole series of effects from what I will call collective protection down to individual protection, warning systems and so on and so forth. It would be wrong of me to say that every one of those was what I would call perfect in its own right. To summarise, I think the collective protection elements were very successful… Moving to the other end of the spectrum… some of the respirators needed to be replaced because the fit was not as good as it should be… we had to move Combopens around in theatre to fulfil the specific requirement…. presentationally perhaps, one of the issues was that we did redate some of the pens, but legitimately, having scrutinised and tested their validity…. NAIAD and the new mobile testing system…. Some of the old stock on the shelf had not been maintained to the level that they might have been in anticipation.[413]

We find it alarming that MoD had to 'move Combopens around in theatre' to fulfil the requirement.

275. Brigadier Cowlam added:

> Not everything was everywhere all of the time, but there was various analysis done by NBC experts and we were confident that the crucial NBC items required to survive and fight in a dirty environment were available to those who faced that potential requirement.[414]

276. *First Reflections* acknowledged that despite sufficient numbers of NBC suits being acquired there were some difficulties in ensuring that the correct sizes were available.[415] *Lessons for the Future* reported that there were localised shortages of NBC protection and detection equipment, caused by sizing difficulties or equipment distribution and tracking problems.[416] It noted that other shortages were due to poor stock maintenance. During our visit to the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre at Chilwell we were told that 900 reservists were deployed without respirator canisters and there were no respirator testing systems available for Operation Telic 1.

277. Furthermore a number of respirator canisters were marked as having an effective life to 1998. MoD told the deployed troops that this had been extended in 1998, but even the Brigade commander noted that this seemed rather convenient.

> We were equipped adequately with NBC protection equipment, in terms of suits, albeit…some were not necessarily in desert camouflage. Also we were equipped adequately in terms of respirator canisters, albeit again some appeared, from the dates on them, to be out of date, although I was assured at the time, and have been reassured subsequently… they were not out of date, but they said on them 1988 with a life of ten years. As I said at the time, it is difficult to convince a Marine, or frankly

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413 Q 1006

414 Q 1006

415 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.18.

416 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 8.8.

even a Marine Brigadier, that actually that means they are still in date. At the time, we were told, quite correctly, that their life had been extended in 1998. I am not sure necessarily that message got round as fully as it should have done and I am not sure necessarily it was 100 per cent believed, because it seemed extraordinarily convenient. Subsequently, I do know now that instructions were put out in 1998, that indeed the life of these had been extended five years, so, in fact, we were using in-date protective equipment, although it was not apparent to us necessarily at the time that was the case.[417]

278. The NAO's report concluded that 'overall protection against chemical agents was good'.[418] However, it reported a 40 per cent shortfall of NAIADs; a severe shortfall in Residual Vapour Detector Kit availability; problems with NBC protective suits for certain sizes in sufficient numbers; and shortages of consumable items, such as batteries, required for detector kits such as CAM. It also reported that '7 Armoured Brigade armoured vehicles did not have viable Nuclear, Biological and Chemical defence filters throughout the warfighting phase of the operation'.[419]

279. The Secretary of State told the House on 13 January 2004:

> we have acknowledged in our own reports that there were deficiencies in the way stocks of some NBC equipment were managed. The Department is working hard to ensure that that does not occur again. However, as the NAO recognises in its report, mitigating action was taken through a combination of purchasing spare parts and rigorous re-testing of equipment. The operational requirement was consequently fully met.'[420]

280. We asked the Secretary of State how the 'operational requirement' was consequently fully met, given the shortfalls in equipment. He told us that:

> everyone who went over the line had a respirator and at least one correctly sized suit. One of the issues, and I know this has caused some controversy, is whether there were a sufficient number of suits available, whether each man had three suits available, which ideally should be the case. A judgement was made that it was sufficient for the conduct of the operation that initially at any rate as they crossed the line, the availability to each man of one correctly sized suit, was sufficient to allow them to conduct this particular operation.[421]

He later said that ideally MoD would have liked to have had as many as four suits per person available.[422]

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417 Qq 1522–3

418 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

419 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), Figure 6.

420 HC Deb, 13 January 2004, c690

421 Q 2305

422 Q 2325

281. **Given the potential threat posed by Iraqi armed forces, sufficient chemical warfare detection and protection were particularly important for this operation. However, there were serious shortcomings in the supply and distribution system and the required levels of detection and protection were not always available to everyone. Indeed, while MoD ideally would have liked each serviceman and woman to have had four suits available, only one suit per person was available, which MoD judged to be sufficient for this operation. Furthermore it is essential that personnel have confidence in the effectiveness of the equipment with which they are provided. It was fortuitous that service personnel did not suffer as a consequence, but had the Iraqis used chemical weapons systematically, as employed in the Iran-Iraq war, the operational consequences would have been severe. The lack of armoured vehicle filters seems to us to be a matter of the utmost seriousness. The lessons identified need to be implemented as a matter of urgency to ensure that servicemen and women serving on operations have complete and justified confidence that chemical warfare attacks will be detected in time, that their individual protection equipment will save their lives and that operational success will not be imperilled. This is particularly important given that UK service personnel are more likely to be operating in such environments in the future.**

Logistics and asset tracking

Operational logistic support

282. We acknowledged earlier in this report that the deployment of such a large force to the Gulf in the time taken was a significant achievement, but we also highlighted concerns about the reliance on UORs and problems with the in-theatre distribution of items of personal equipment and protection. MoD recognises that key lessons need to be learned relating to operational logistic support. *First Reflections* noted that the 'balance of ready stocks and those sourced from industry will need to be kept under review so that the most appropriate balance of risk (business versus operational risk) in stock holdings can be achieved'.[423] It also identified the need for 'a common, robust tracking system to enable equipment and stocks to be tracked throughout the supply chain in fast-moving, complex operations'.[424] Consequently, according to *Lessons for the Future*:[425]

- A two star post of Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Logistic Operations) has recently been created to improve the provision of timely and accurate logistics advice to the strategic planning process.

- The new procedures established by the Defence Logistics Organisation (DLO) for this operation, in particular the establishment of the DLO's Logistics Operation Centre proved particularly valuable.

283. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mr Adam Ingram MP, told the House on 26 January 2004 that a range of reviews are under way to examine how best to deliver operational logistic support in the most effective and efficient manner. These included the

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423 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

424 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

425 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 38.

work being led by the Chief of Defence Logistics, under the auspices of the end-to-end review. He emphasised that MoD was determined to learn the lessons of recent operations.[426] **Given how critical logistics are to operations, we expect MoD to implement the lessons identified in its reports on Operation Telic, and also those lessons identified by the National Audit Office. We intend to monitor closely the progress of MoD's end-to-end review.**

Asset tracking

284. The key logistics lesson identified from Operation Telic is the need for a robust system to track equipment and stocks both into and within theatre. This was confirmed by the Secretary of State when he told us on 5 February 2004 that:

> a major problem, in our analysis, was that there were serious shortcomings in our ability to track consignments and assets through theatre. Despite the heroic efforts of our logistics personnel, the system struggled to cope with the sheer volume of materiel with which it had to deal. As a result, there were too many instances of the right equipment sitting in containers and not being distributed to units as quickly as it should have been.[427]

285. Air Marshal Burridge told us that one of the areas where he would want to see change:

> is an aspect of logistics where we are not yet fully invested in a logistics tracking system which tells us, in the same way as a global logistic company would know where every bit of their kit is in transit, we have not yet got that system embedded. That is an area on which I place considerable emphasis.[428]

286. MoD reported that during the operation, the flow of logistic information between theatre and the UK was poor, which particularly affected the tracking of UORs into theatre. As a consequence, it was difficult to monitor the rates at which supplies were consumed thereby making it difficult to determine when re-supply would be required. These problems were caused by the continuing lack of firstly a robust tri-Service inventory system, secondly the ability to track equipment into and through theatre, and thirdly an information system capable of supporting this technology. As a result of lessons identified following the 1991 Gulf War, MoD procured two tracking systems—VITAL for the Army and RIDELS for the Royal Navy. These were MoD developed, bespoke systems, optimised for the individual Service. Both systems have been progressively improved and expanded, but MoD recognises that they 'have been limited by their dependence on other information systems which were never designed to be part of a 'joined-up' supply chain'.[429] MoD has identified the need to establish a coherent and effective consignment-tracking system on a number of previous occasions, but has cited affordability constraints and technical

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426   Oral answer 26 January 2004 (C 18)

427   Q 2220

428   Q 279

429   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), paras 8.15–8.17.

difficulties as the main reasons why this identified capability gap has not yet been addressed.[430]

287. The original plan for Operation Telic, in which UK forces would have deployed to southern Turkey, would have required the use of a 500-kilometre supply route over difficult terrain. Logistics support would have been provided by US forces. The United States Department of Defense originally stipulated that the UK forces should have a consignment-tracking system compatible with their own. It was expected that the US would loan the UK this equipment. In the event, this was not the case, the northern option was replaced by the southern option and MoD procured, as a UOR, elements of the United States' Total Asset Visibility (TAV) system to improve stores tracking. The TAV equipment was progressively installed at sites in the UK, Cyprus and the Gulf. MoD reported that the tagging of consignments, that is containers and pallets rather than individual equipment, using radio frequency signals, improved the efficiency of delivery, while reducing the manpower required. Cross-referencing with the existing VITAL system identified the contents of each container or pallet. TAV was not in place until the end of February 2003, part way through the deployment, with only a limited number of systems and trained users. The system also only allowed equipment to be tracked as far forward as the major bases in Kuwait. Once the containers and pallets were broken down, and the contents transported to individual units, this visibility ended. MoD acknowledged that 'as a consequence, large quantities of equipment, stores and supplies were reportedly 'lost' in theatre, including ammunition, body armour and NBC Defence equipment'.[431]

288. Sir Kevin Tebbit told the Committee of Public Accounts in January 2004 about MoD's decision to procure the system, the cost of the procurement, and the future plans for the system:

> We originally intended to lease it but there were problems in setting up the lease in terms of the amount of information we could get from them on that basis because it is linked with their wider IT system so there was a security issue. We decided it was much better to buy it and they decided to sell it to us and we have now spent £7 million on it, phase one about £3.67 million, which was in place and work by February—too late I agree—and it actually helped us track stores which we had lost visibility of, medical stores and other stores. It works, it is good. We like it and therefore we are extending it. That is the system we have now procured and we are linking up to our existing system VITAL and the systems at the other end in the deployed infantry. The plan is to make TAV one of the elements of this better system with better asset visibility that I have been describing.[432]

He added that:

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430 National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 3.17.

431 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq— Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), paras 8.18–8.19 and National Audit Office, Ministry of Defence: *Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 3.19.

432 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United kingdom military Operations in Iraq*, Q 123

my logistics colleagues plan to put proposals to us that we should extend and expand this and build over the next five years a system which includes TAV and links up our existing system with so-called smart IT front entry imaging and the totality of that is likely to cost a figure which we are waiting to hear from the DLO and that will go through the normal procedures.[433]

289. We were given a presentation by Savi Technology, the supplier of TAV technology, at which they provided an overview of the work they had done with the commercial sector and with the US Department of Defense (DoD). Their partnership with the DoD dates back to 1990. They told us that in 1996 a US General Accounting Office report said that DoD could have saved $2 billion if Savi's solution had been used in the 1991 Gulf War. The company were awarded a UOR contract with MoD in late January 2003 at which time half of the containers had already been shipped. Savi claimed that the system paid for itself within six weeks. They told us that they were confident that their system could integrate into the existing MoD systems at relatively low cost.

290. We asked the Chief of Defence Logistics where the requirements for 'real-time end-to-end material management and visibility, including deployed solutions', described in the DLO's Strategic Plan, came in his priority list. He told us that it was 'at the highest level of my priorities for all the reasons we are hearing and it stays very much at the level'.[434] This was confirmed by the Secretary of State on 5 February 2004 when he told us of the:

> need for us to make more progress in improving our asset-tracking systems, and this will be a high priority.[435]

291. **We are in no doubt that one of the key lessons to emerge from Operation Telic concerns operational logistic support and specifically, the requirement for a robust system to track equipment and stocks both into and within theatre—a requirement which was identified in the 1991 Gulf War. The lack of such a system on Operation Telic resulted in numerous problems with the in-theatre distribution of critical items such as ammunition, body armour and NBC equipment. MoD has told us that having such a system is top of its logistics priorities and we understandthat proposals will be submitted to Ministers in the spring.[436] We urge Ministers to provide the necessary funding. However, we find it deeply unsatisfactory that a full system is unlikely to be in place within the next five years.**

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433 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom military Operations in Iraq*, Q 139

434 Q 1098

435 Q 2220

436 Committee of Public Accounts, Evidence Session 21 January 2004, Ministry of Defence: *Operation Telic—United Kingdom Military Operations in Iraq*, Q 108

11 Personnel issues

Accommodation and food

292. During our visit to Iraq in July 2003, Armed Forces personnel told us that, even in the climate controlled Temporary Deployable Accommodation, they were unable to sleep during the day because of the heat (it only reduced the ambient temperature by about 10 degrees centigrade). Although they recognised that it was important to be exposed to such difficult environments in order to acclimatise, they believed that the number of heat-related casualties was a direct result of lack of investment in air conditioning.

293. MoD had identified a shortage of 'UK Expeditionary Campaign Infrastructure' [437] during recent operations and exercises, such as *Saif Sareea II* and, in order to address the shortfall, placed a number of UORs. However, the 'delivery of this equipment was not timed for use during the deployment and operational phases'.[438] During these phases of the operation UK Armed Forces personnel were accommodated using US contracted accommodation and more basic tented accommodation.

294. *Lessons for the Future* reported that 'since the end of the combat phase we have constructed…. two tranches of Temporary Deployable Accommodation, sufficient to house 5250 troops in air-conditioned tentage. To date, we have committed over £80 million to this accommodation.'[439] It reported that the quality of this accommodation had won much praise,[440] although it acknowledged that there were early problems with the contracts for portaloos, and sourcing problems with refrigerated containers and air conditioning units, which caused some hardship. MoD reported that these problems had been addressed[441] but nonetheless recognised that it needed to review the provision of Temporary Deployable Accommodation to ensure that adequate accommodation and human support services were made available to Armed Forces personnel, particularly in arduous locations.[442]

295. We asked MoD what its policy was on providing climate-controlled and air-conditioned accommodation. General Palmer told us that:

> the policy is relatively easily stated, which is that as soon as possible on completion of the conflict stage, all service personnel should be given the best accommodation that we can manage, and that is indeed what we tried to do…. it was a lot better than we managed to do in Afghanistan; we got much better accommodation up much quicker. So I think we did learn the lessons from that.[443]

Colonel Cowling added:

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437 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.12.

438 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq— Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.12.

439 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.29.

440 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 5.12.

441 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.19.

442 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 27.

443 Q 2197

If one goes back into theatre, I am reassured…. that the living conditions of the soldiers…. they are well placed in air-conditioned accommodations.[444]

296. **We are pleased to learn that the majority of Armed Forces personnel in Iraq are now in satisfactory air-conditioned accommodation. Such accommodation is vital in ensuring that Armed Forces personnel can perform their roles effectively when they are deployed to harsh environments. It should be a priority of any operation that appropriate accommodation is made available as quickly as possible.**

297. MoD acknowledged that the provision of high quality satisfying food was fundamental to physical and mental well being and was a key element in maintaining morale. *First Reflections* provided details of the catering arrangements for Operation Telic:

The mainstay of catering for UK troops was the Operational Ration Pack. This provides three full meals per day and a snack, with a variety of menus, and contains substantially more calories than the NATO minimum requirement. Where practical, troops are now provided with meals prepared using fresh provisions.[445]

298. In the early days of the operation, there were reports that some Armed Forces personnel were not happy with the food provided. We asked how the food for our forces compared with our allies, in particular the Americans. Air Vice Marshal Torpy told us that he thought 'our food was significantly better, and it was one of the huge morale boosters for our personnel—and, indeed, the Americans who used to come and eat in our food facilities.'[446]

299. The Secretary of State told us in May 2003 that 'There may have been the odd soldier who one day did not get his lunchtime ration pack. There may have been the odd soldier who did not like his ready-to-eat meal of the sort issued by the United States to their forces'.[447] In our meetings with personnel who served in Iraq we have not encountered any significant level of complaint over the quality of rations. **During our visit to Iraq we were impressed with the quality of the food provided to our Armed Forces, particularly given the difficult conditions, such as the very high temperatures in which catering personnel had to work.**

Operational Welfare Package and Families

300. An operational welfare package is an important means of providing for the emotional and physical well-being of deployed service personnel. MoD's operational welfare provision evolves to take account of the individual nature and circumstances of each deployment and 'is based on the principles enshrined in the Department's review of operational welfare in 1999'.[448] *Lessons for the Future* set out what was included in the operational welfare pack for Operation Telic:

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444   Q 2197

445   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 4.20.

446   Q 1248

447   Q 53

448   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.5.

The Operational Welfare Package in its present form was introduced on a tri-Service basis in 2001…. and, for this operation, included free telephone calls (20 minutes per individual per week), e-mail and internet access, 'blueys' (airmail letters) and 'e-blueys', TV and radio, books and newspapers, Combined Services Entertainment shows and a variety of recreational facilities. Whilst these measures were widely welcomed, a review of the package with a number of proposed enhancements is under way. The aim of the review is to ensure that, wherever possible, all forces—especially those deployed early to theatre—receive appropriate and timely levels of provision.[449]…. It was decided in conjunction with the Royal Mail Group to provide a free postal service to theatre for packets up to 2kg for family and close friends of personnel serving in the Gulf. This service was well received…[450]

We therefore regret the decision to withdraw the free postal service in February 2004.

301. We asked MoD about the outcome of its review of the operational welfare package. Group Captain Barbara Cooper, Deputy Director, Service Personnel Policy Operations and Manning, told us that:

In the main we are very happy that the constituent parts of the package we offer…. are about right to meet the needs of the individuals... The area we are most focusing on is filling the gaps, the most noticeable of which was the early entry forces… who really benefited hardly at all from the OWP to start with…. That is really our main focus at the moment.[451]

302. **The operational welfare package in place for Operation Telic worked well and was well received. However, we are concerned that early entry forces saw little benefit from the package. MoD acknowledges that this is an area where improvements are needed. We expect MoD to implement such improvements as quickly as possible.**

303. *Lessons for the Future* noted that 'Levels of expectation are increasing and there is continued pressure from Service personnel to expand and improve facilities. Such expectations need to be managed to reflect what can sensibly, safely and securely be made available in the early stages of an operation, particularly in a war-fighting theatre.[452] We asked MoD how it managed the expectations of service personnel. General Palmer told us:

one has to be very honest…. about what they can expect and the circumstances under which they can expect it…. the fact is that war is war…. it is a very robust environment and some of the creature comforts that you can expect when you are not in that environment need to be taken away….[453]

304. We were particularly interested in the support given to families during Operation Telic. General Palmer told us that 'families are such an important part of our consideration and have been throughout, particularly through Op Telic and now…. we have done quite a

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449 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.3.

450 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.4.

451 Q 2157

452 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.5.

453 Q 2144

lot to try and alleviate some of the concerns they have about separation'.[454] Group Captain Cooper set out the support which was provided to families:

> It has been a longheld ambition of ours to do something similar to the operational welfare package for families…. as Telic came to fruition we realised we needed to do something very quickly and the families element of the operational welfare package is now that, for every person on operations who qualifies for the operational welfare package, the sum of one pound per week will be paid to the unit commander of that person so that, at the end of quite a short period, there will be a pile of money that will help enhance primarily communication aspects—to buy more computers for the HIVEs so that families can keep in touch with their loved ones overseas…. Again, that has been very well received, and it sent exactly the right message that we were concerned about the welfare of families and about keeping in touch with them. [455]

305. During our visit to RAF Cottesmore we were told that extra computers had been provided to use for e-mail contact with deployed forces and this had been well received. **We are pleased to learn that the needs of families are being addressed and that there is now a families element to the operational welfare package.**

306. Early results from a survey undertaken by the Army Families' Federation (AFF) have suggested that communication between families and service personnel was good, but that families wanted more regular information on what was happening from the military unit.[456] **MoD is currently considering further ways of providing improved information to families. Given how important this is to families, MoD should implement the improvements identified as quickly as possible.**

307. An area of particular concern to us was the support given to the families of reservists. Such families often have little contact with the services and the survey by the Army Families' Federation (AFF) showed that they found it more difficult than Regular Army families to find the information and answers they wanted.[457] General Palmer told us that:

> The areas I would like to concentrate on for the future, the weak points, are probably the much smaller units and the reserves. One of the areas I was most concerned about was to make sure the families of the reserves who recruit locally who do not have the great support structure round them were getting the same degree of attention as the regulars, because they were certainly not in all cases.[458]

308. We asked the Secretary of State about the lessons that had been learned relating to reservists and their families. He told us:

> Overwhelmingly I think the real lesson has been about communication…. there is a family dimension to this because very often, unlike regular forces who are part of a unit and have all the right support elements in place to inform family members….

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454 Q 2114

455 Q 2114

456 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.6.

457 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.7.

458 Q 2117

often reservists were coming as single people, and I am not talking about their marital status, but simply the way in which they were deployed, and I do not think we did enough, in my judgment, to ensure that there was communication with their families who obviously and understandably were concerned about their welfare.[459]

309. **The families of reservists have not, in the past, received the same level of support as the families of regular service personnel. We recommend that MoD takes action to address this imbalance. This is particularly important given the increased contribution which reservists are now making and are expected to make to future operations.**

310. We were concerned to learn that service personnel were encountering difficulties in obtaining adequate life assurance that covered them comprehensively during conflict without exclusions.[460] **MoD needs to ensure that service personnel have access to the required level of life and accident insurance while on operations.**

Bereavement

311. A number of service personnel have lost their lives during Operation Telic. We were particularly interested in how MoD handled two specific issues—casualty reporting and welfare support for bereaved families.

Casualty reporting

312. Casualty reporting is a very sensitive area. MoD considered that for Operation Telic it was generally handled well, but accepted that there was one regrettable error. It confirmed that in future, all letters sent to bereaved families will be subject to 'additional scrutiny'.[461] MoD recognised that its casualty reporting procedures needed to take account of the increased speed of media and private communications,[462] but it also acknowledged the vital importance of relaying accurate information. General Palmer told us that:

> The policy was very clear on casualty-informing, and that was that it should be done as soon as possible, but that accuracy could never be sacrificed for speed. So there was a balance here between protecting the identity of the individual until the next of kin had been informed, and relieving the anxiety of families of all service personnel who take part in the operation.[463]

313. Group Captain Cooper told us that:

> the most important thing is for us to get it right, to identify the individual who was either killed or was notifiably injured, seriously injured, and to ensure that we inform the correct people. We do that as expeditiously as possible.[464]

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459 Q 2280

460 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.8.

461 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 31.

462 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.11.

463 Q 2203

464 Q 2203

We discuss the role of the media and MoD's arrangements for their handling in a later chapter. But there was particular concern over how the media reported on specific British casualties. MoD's handbook for relations with the media during conflict operations is known as the Green Book. It states:

> It may be necessary to identify an individual group, unit, or ship which has been lost and to give details of the scale of casualties and/or survivors before next of kin have been informed—either to minimise anxiety which might be caused to families whose loved ones are not involved, or to counter enemy propaganda. … However, the names of casualties will not be released or confirmed until the next of kin have been told officially.

314. The Green Book (last updated in December 2001) also notes that the Newspaper Society (which represents local newspapers) 'will continue to press MoD to release home addresses in greater detail'. This highlights the risk of the press harrying the families of injured or killed service personnel. The speed of modern communications and embedded media also raises the possibility that the press could be the first to tell the family that a particular member of the Armed Forces had been killed or injured.

315. MoD made 'strenuous efforts' to inform families before releasing details to the media, but accepted that there was a tension between that approach and the demands of modern reporting.[465] Delays of up to 12 hours were sometimes requested by families to allow more time to contact all those concerned and MoD tried to agree to this whenever possible.[466] MoD found the media 'pretty responsible' in waiting for next of kin to be informed, generally being prepared to wait up to 24 hours, but no longer.[467]

316. MoD has reviewed its policy and procedures for informing next of kin and casualty reporting, as it recognised that these needed to be 'timely and sympathetic to the needs of the family'.[468] In *Lessons for the Future* MoD states that 'the review has resulted in harmonised and simplified tri-Service procedures that are more sympathetic to the needs of the bereaved family'.[469] **We conclude that, overall, MoD's casualty reporting arrangements worked well during Operation Telic. We emphasise the critical importance of ensuring that next of kin are informed of any casualty by the MoD and not the media. We welcome the improvements in the revised arrangements introduced, which now better reflect the needs of bereaved families.**

Support to bereaved families

317. The provision of appropriate welfare support to bereaved families is particularly important and MoD has procedures in place which are adapted to the circumstances of

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465 Q 1384

466 Q 2205

467 Q 1441

468 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 47.

469 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.11.

each family.[470] Operation Telic saw the introduction of ex-gratia payments to unmarried partners of those who lost their lives.[471] Additionally an:

> 'extension of widows' benefits to unmarried partners of service personnel was announced in September 2003. In order to ensure that these benefits were available during the Iraq campaign, an *ex gratia* arrangement was introduced in anticipation of this change for deaths relating to conflict. Six awards arising from the operation have been made'.[472]

Another important change now allows bereaved families to stay in service accommodation for as long as they feel they need to in order to assess their longer term housing requirements. A tri-Service review of bereavement policy is in hand to determine whether further changes are appropriate.[473]

318. **We welcome the fact that widows' benefits have been extended to unmarried partners of service personnel who die in conflict, and that bereaved families can now remain in their service accommodation until they are ready to leave. We look to MoD to implement any further improvements which are identified by the current tri-Service review of bereavement policy.**

Training

319. We asked MoD how the pace and number of operations had impacted upon training. General Palmer told us that 'one of the implications of not achieving a reasonable tour interval, 24 months, is that the unit and the collective training that is done in that period does not get done'.[474] He was in no doubt that commitment and stretch had an impact on the UK's ability to do other operations and added that 'quite clearly there are operations we cannot do at the moment while we are recuperating from Telic'.[475] In terms of recuperation, he told us that he was:

> Concerned to make sure…. that the pace of life of personnel is reduced and if that means the odd exercise has to be cancelled because otherwise people have not got the breaks they require from operations and they cannot take their leave and have some time with their families, then I would be all in favour of that…. If we do not get the recuperation aspects right, which may mean cancelling the odd exercise, then we will not have Armed Forces to conduct exercises because they would all leave….[476]

320. **The high number of operations which UK service personnel have been involved in has had an adverse impact on their training. We expect MoD to ensure that service personnel returning from operations catch up with their training as soon as possible and that promotion opportunities are not adversely affected because of their**

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470 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 5.10.

471 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), para 5.10.

472 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.12.

473 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 31.

474 Q 2218

475 Q 2120

476 Q 2126

operational deployment. But we recognise that, in the short term, the most important point is for service personnel to recuperate properly and that this includes the opportunity to take the leave to which they are entitled. However, the Government must recognise that the Armed Forces are simply not large enough to sustain the pattern of operational deployment since the Strategic Defence Review permanently without serious risk of damage to their widely admired professional standards.

Post operational health

321. *Lessons for the Future* reported that 'UK forces began to withdraw from the Gulf theatre of operations in early May 2003, with the original 46,000 personnel reducing to some 10,500 over a period of, around three months.'[477] On their return, those who had served during the operation underwent a programme of recuperation including post-operational leave before they restarted training and other routine activity. A small proportion also had to focus on further planned operational deployments, both in Iraq and elsewhere'.[478]

322. **We are pleased to hear that MoD has commissioned research[479] into the physical and psychological health of personnel who deployed and that the initial research is being followed up in a major study to commence early this year. We look forward to seeing the outcome of this work and expect MoD to take appropriate action in response to its findings.**

Medical records

323. In our inquiry on the Armed Forces Pensions and Compensation Bill,[480] we raised once again the issue of the accuracy and completeness of military medical records, and concluded that it would be unfair if claimants for compensation were unable to make a successful claim because of the inadequacy of the records held by MoD. A new operational medical form was issued to each individual deployed on Operation Telic. **We are pleased to learn that the take up and use of the new medical form appears to have been high and that, despite the increased administrative burden, it has proved popular with users. We note that MoD is reviewing the format in order to ensure even greater utility for future operations.[481]**

Gulf War illnesses

324. Our predecessors have produced a number of reports on the incidence of chronic illnesses among veterans of the 1991 Gulf War. In a memorandum submitted on 9 May 2003, MoD told us that it expected to publish its paper on the main health lessons identified since Operation Granby (the 1991 Gulf War) 'within the next 8–12 weeks'. On 23 July 2003, the Minister for Veterans wrote to our Chairman explaining that, in the light

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477 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.1.

478 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.2.

479 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.44.

480 First Report of Session 2003–04 (HC 96-I), paras 71–72

481 Ev 444

of MoD's examination of Operation Telic, he believed that a paper which only examined Operation Granby would be incomplete and of limited value. The paper would, instead, cover not just the health lessons which MoD learned during Granby, but what MoD did about them, and how successful the changes introduced were in Operation Telic. He expected the paper to be published 'some time after the summer recess'. MoD's *Lessons for the Future* states that the paper will be published "in the New Year [2004]"[482].

325. We asked MOD about the precautions taken for Operation Telic relating to possible Gulf War illnesses. General Palmer told us that in respect of post traumatic stress disorder:

> there is now a tri-service directive on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Briefings and leaflets are given out pre-deployment and post-deployment; and indeed we even give them to the families to explain that their loved ones are going on a potentially difficult and dangerous operation, and that they may see things that may cause them problems, and how they should deal with this if it happens. That is the policy on directives. Then, at the end of the conflict, we insisted on every person who had been involved having a period of what we call decompression, which basically meant off-duty time within their own unit to discuss and reflect on what they had seen *et cetera* and what they had done. That has happened. Now the emphasis is on the chain of command being able to recognise any servicemen or women who may be suffering those symptoms, so there is briefing in that regard as well. That covers the regulars. Of course, there is a whole issue of the reserves, first of all the Territorial Army, who have got a chain of command, albeit not the same as the regular one. They are being looked after by their own units through the Reserve Forces Cadets Association, and are having explained to them that even when they leave the TA they have still got access to the Gulf Veterans medical assessment package, which has been set up specifically to monitor those people who think they may be affected. For the regular reserves, who we just called up – they are not volunteers – they are being written to, because it is quite difficult to keep in touch, at the 6, 12 and 18-month point, with a view to finding out whether they have got any problems or any issues that they want to report back to us. So there is a whole panoply, ranging from documents to information being given. I think, very importantly, we try to make sure that the sort of macho ethos, which in some ways we want to encourage, does not prevent people, if they feel they have got a problem associated with something they have seen or done, coming forward to report it.[483]

326. General Palmer said that about 32 service personnel had 'reported with symptoms associated with post traumatic stress disorder'[484], but none had been admitted as in-patients. They were being 'treated with a series of drugs but also counselling as well…. whichever is deemed to be the most appropriate'.[485]

327. **We welcome the measures relating to post traumatic stress disorder which MoD introduced for Operation Telic. We look to MoD to monitor this aspect closely and also other illnesses experienced as a result of being deployed on Operation Telic. We are**

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482 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 9.44.

483 Q 2207

484 Q 2208

485 Q 2208

disappointed by the delays to the publication of MoD's paper covering the health lessons from Operation Granby and the experience of Operation Telic. Given the level of interest in these matters, we expect MoD to publish this paper as soon as possible.

12 Costs and recovery

Net Additional Costs

328. *First Reflections*[486] states that 'under longstanding Government arrangements, operational expenditure is met from the Reserve on the basis of net additional costs (in other words, excluding costs that would have been incurred anyway such as Service salaries)'. MoD's Finance Director, Mr Trevor Woolley, set out the basis for calculating net additional costs:

> The costs that are included are the additional costs of, for example, pay; the allowances of servicemen who are deployed that would not otherwise have been incurred had the operation not taken place; the cost of the salaries of mobilised reservists that would not otherwise have been incurred; the cost of movements, air and sea charter; the costs of stock consumed—ammunition, fuel, clothing, food— that would not otherwise have been incurred. We also take into account certain non-cash costs, such as the depreciation of equipment, for example of urgent operational requirements that have been procured for the operation. The depreciation of those capital items would be included in the overall net additional costs. We net off against that any savings that we identify of activities or consumption that did not take place as a result of the operation—although that is a relatively small figure. In terms of compensation claims, yes, we would seek to capture any such costs and claim for those as part of the additional cost of the operation.[487]

329. Mr Woolley told us that both the principle and the practice for identifying net additional costs were 'straightforward'.[488] The NAO reported that 'the Department issued guidance on capturing the costs of the Operation to its top level budget holders in December 2002. There were marked differences between top-level budget holders' interpretations of what should be included, or what costs should be deducted, to arrive at the net additional costs of the Operation'.[489] Mr Woolley said that he was 'slightly surprised by that statement…. [and] did not feel that there was any ambiguity or any room for differences of interpretation'.[490] MoD subsequently told us that, in its view, the statement reflected the different circumstances of the top-level budget holders, not any ambiguity in the guidance as to what constituted a net additional cost.[491]

330. We asked whether MoD had any plans to make an assessment of the full cost of Operation Telic, Mr Woolley told us that MoD's view was that 'attempting to calculate the notional full cost of the operation would not actually provide any very useful information

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486   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 37.

487   Q 1851

488   Qq 1853–4

489   National Audit Office, *Ministry of Defence: Operation TELIC—United Kingdom Operations in Iraq* (HC 60 Session 2003–04: 11 December 2003), para 6.8.

490   Q 1861

491   Ev 430

…. It would be attributing costs that the defence budget would in any case have incurred and simply attributing them to an operation.'[492]

Resource Accounting and Budgeting

331. *First Reflections* notes that 'this was the first major operation to be costed under full Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) principles, which created some additional challenges for finance staff.'[493] Mr Woolley outlined the 'additional complications…. additional considerations…. to take into account in resource accounting and budgeting'.[494] He said that in terms of improvements and lessons it is 'principally a case of ensuring that our finance staff are properly trained…. and the need to ensure that all operational costs are properly identified.'[495]

332. We asked whether RAB had led to MoD running down its stocks to reduce the cost of capital charge. Mr Woolley told us that:

> I fully accept your point that the cost of capital charge that is applied to all assets, including stocks, is intended to give visibility to the notional cost of holding assets in the form of stock rather than in the form of cash, and therefore the notional interest that you might be able to earn on that cash if it was in the form of cash rather than the form of stock. So, yes, it is indeed there to identify the cost of holding stock. Having said that, I am not aware that that in itself has significantly affected decisions about levels of stock-holding.[496]

333. **Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) is a complex financial process and MoD needs to ensure that its staff are appropriately trained in its application. We remain concerned that the application of RAB may, perhaps through a misinterpretation of its aim, have led to stock holdings being reduced too far. We recommend that MoD undertakes a review which assesses whether RAB is leading to poor decision making, in particular in relation to stock level holdings.**

Cost of the operation

334. *Lessons for* the *Future*[497] provides a breakdown of the cost of the conflict for 2002–03 (actual costs) and 2003–04 (estimated costs). These are shown at Table 4.

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492 Q 1856

493 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 37.

494 Q 1891

495 Q 1891

496 Q 1897

497 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), p 71.

Table 4 Cost of the Operation 2002–03 and 2003–04

	2002–03	**2003–04**
	£ million	£ million
Service and civilian manpower costs	34.6	195.1
Accommodation (includes IT and communications)	83.6	77.2
Defence equipment, plant machinery and vehicles	160.6	167.5
Air and sea charter	89.6	108.9
Stock consumption	170.2	243.2
Depreciation and write-off of fixed assets	73.9	83.1
UORs and other capital items	217.7	219.9
Other costs (Op Welfare, currency gains / losses)	17.0	92.7
Total	847.2	1,187.6

Source: Ministry of Defence, Operations in Iraq: Lessons for the Future (December 2003), page 71

335. *Lessons for the Future* states that:

> Our latest estimates suggest that the cost of equipping and deploying our forces to the Gulf up to the point of starting active operations was close to £700 million. The costs of the actual conflict include the large quantity of equipment (including guided weapons, munitions and bombs) and a huge range of other stores deployed to the Gulf.[498]

> The cost of the conflict (including combat operations up to 31 March 2003) was £847.2 million (this includes the £700 million above for equipping and deploying our forces). It will take time fully to assess the costs of stock consumption, and of damage and losses to equipment. However, initial estimates suggest that the cost of recuperation may be in the region of £650 million; this figure will be subject to revision as the inspection and maintenance programme continues. For Financial Year 2003-04 MoD intends to seek a further £1.2 billion in the Winter Supplementary Estimates to cover the likely costs of the operation. This will cover, primarily, the cost of post-conflict operations and associated UORs. It does not include the cost of recuperation of MoD's operational capability mentioned above.[499]

336. We asked Mr Woolley whether the cost estimate for 2003–04 had changed since December 2003. He told us that 'the figure that we are likely to be asking for in the spring supplementary estimates is a total cost of the order of £1.5 billion for this financial year… an increase of around £300 million from that which we had sought and had voted in the winter supplementary estimate'.[500] He explained:

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498 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.7.

499 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.8.

500 Q 1857

the main reason for that increase is, partly, we have included some estimate of the costs of recuperation that we will be incurring this year which had not previously been included in the figures, and we have also included some provision for the non-cash costs of the depreciation of the urgent operational requirements which we procured for the operation and which had not been included in the previous figures'.[501]

In terms of certainty, Mr Woolley told us that 'we do not really get certainty… until our accounts are audited by the National Audit Office… a definitive figure will not be available until our resource account in published in around August [2004].[502]

337. The Spring Supplementary Estimates 2003-04 presented to the House of Commons on 23 February 2004, requested an additional £309 million (£231 million Resource and £78 million Capital) in MoD's Departmental Expenditure Limit to reflect the costs of peacekeeping in Iraq.[503]

338. We asked Mr Woolley why it was taking so long to assess the costs of stock consumed and equipment lost or damaged during the conflict phase. He told us that:

> One of the reasons is that when, for example, ammunition is returned from the theatre to this country, it is often not clear whether or not it is still usable or whether it may have been damaged in some way…. A second reason is that when we are looking at capital assets we have to consider the extent to which the life of the asset, and therefore the amount of depreciation, may have changed as a result of damage in the conflict, which is also not entirely straightforward. I think that it is also fair to say that those engaged in theatre, unsurprisingly, do not regard it as their highest priority to make these assessments…. The costs of recuperation are then slightly different in any case, because the issues there are not so much about the impact on the value of the assets: it is about the cost of repairing assets and the extent to which we decide to replace assets. These often give rise to different procurement decisions in different cases. So it is quite a complex judgement, quite a complex calculation; but I would accept that we are not as far advanced as we might be in bringing this to a conclusion.[504]

339. **It will be some time before the costs of the operation in 2003–04 are known—perhaps not until late summer 2004 when they are published in MoD's Annual Report and Accounts. MoD acknowledges that it has taken longer than expected to assess the costs of stock consumed and equipment lost or damaged during the conflict phase. We expect MoD to ensure this work is advanced as quickly as possible and for the outcome to be reported to Parliament as soon as it is completed.**

340. In terms of recovering costs from other nations, Mr Woolley told us that 'there are longstanding arrangements by which, where we buy or sell fuel between countries that are on operations, this is reimbursed'.[505] We asked about the arrangements for recovering the

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501 Q 1857
502 Q 1859
503 HC (2003–04) 330
504 Q 1870
505 Q 1888

cost of fuel provided to the United States by the UK air tanker fleet. Mr Flaherty told us that 'in Cyprus we had a fixed amount of fuel that was there and we know exactly how much the US used. We have spoken to them and have an agreement with them that they need to give us that money back.'[506] **We expect MoD to recover these costs as soon as possible.**

Funding of the Operation

341. Consultations between MoD and the Treasury on the resource requirements of the operation started early in the planning process and have continued on a regular basis. The Chancellor announced in his pre-Budget Report to Parliament in November 2002 a '£1 billion special reserve in 2002–03 to ensure that resources are available to meet overseas and defence needs in the fight against global terrorism.' In March 2003 the Chancellor increased this figure to £3 billion, to take account of the military campaign and the need for immediate humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people.'[507] We asked MoD whether there was any conflict between the Treasury and MoD about the costs of the operation. Mr Woolley told us that 'the principle—which…. the Treasury is fully subscribed to—is that if a cost is incurred as a consequence of the operation…. then it is a cost of the operation that is reasonably charged to the reserve.'[508] We discuss relations between MoD and the Treasury in respect of UORs at paragraphs 171–7.

Equipment recovery

342. *Lessons for the Future* reports that:

> After the end of the major combat phase, significant quantities of equipment, vehicles and stocks were shipped back to the UK. A rigorous inspection programme then began to assess maintenance requirements after the equipment's exposure to harsh conditions during active service in the heat and dust of southern Iraq. An assessment of the quantities of stores and supplies consumed on the operation was also set in hand so that stockholdings could be restored to their pre-operational levels or in accordance with revised target levels. Initial inspections are for the most part now complete, and the recuperation process is well underway through a graduated and cost-effective refurbishment and replacement programme.[509]

343. MoD estimated that the cost of recuperation may be in the region of £650 million (paragraphs 335–6). Some equipment has already been replaced. For example, the stocks of some guided weapons have been replaced through the use of UORs.[510] In respect of the items of major equipment that were lost in the operation, MoD told us:

> the Sea King helicopters will be replaced, in the sense that Sea King airframes that we already have will be equipped with the Searchwater radar to perform the role that the lost Sea Kings undertook… we are not planning to replace the Challenger 2 tank that

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506 Q 1890

507 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.6.

508 Q 1852

509 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 12.3.

510 Q 1872

was lost… or an additional Tornado to replace the Tornado that was lost. We will be planning at some stage to have additional UAVs to replace the Phoenix that were lost, but they will not be Phoenix. We have not yet made a decision on the precise equipment.[511]

344. **We expect MoD to replace the equipment, and the stores and supplies, necessary to restore the operational capabilities consumed or lost during Operation Telic as soon as possible, to ensure that Armed Forces personnel can undertake their roles effectively.**

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511 Q 1880

13 Transition and Reconstruction

The Government's objectives

345. The UK's overall objective for the military campaign was to create the conditions for Iraqi disarmament. One of the tasks flowing from this objective was to 'secure essential economic infrastructure, including for utilities and transport, from sabotage and wilful destruction by Iraq'. The Government's wider political objectives included:

a) to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that our quarrel is not with them and that their security and well-being is our concern;

b) to work with the United Nations to lift sanctions affecting the supply of humanitarian and reconstruction goods, and to enable Iraq's own resources, including oil, to be available to meet the needs of the Iraqi people …

e) [to]… help create conditions for a future, stable and law-abiding government of Iraq.

346. The immediate military priorities for the coalition in the wake of hostilities were set out as follows:

a) to provide for the security of friendly forces;

b) to contribute to the creation of a secure environment so that normal life can be restored;

c) to work in support of humanitarian organisations to mitigate the consequences of hostilities and, in the absence of such civilian humanitarian capacity, provide relief where it is needed;

d) to work with UNMOVIC/IAEA to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;

e) to facilitate remedial action where environmental damage has occurred;

f) to enable the reconstruction and recommissioning of essential infrastructure for the political and economic development of Iraq, and the immediate benefit of the Iraqi people; and

g) to lay plans for the reform of Iraq's security forces.[512]

347. In a press statement on 16 March 2003, the Prime Minister made the following 'pledge to the people of Iraq':

> we will help Iraq rebuild, and not rebuild because of the problems of conflict, where if it comes to that we will do everything we can to minimise the suffering of the Iraqi people. But rebuild Iraq because of the appalling legacy that the rule of Saddam has

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512 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), Annex A.

left the Iraqi people. And that in particular Iraq's natural resources remain the property of the people of Iraq and that wealth should be used for the Iraqi people.[513]

In a document published on the following day, *A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People*, the Government stated:

> Our presence in Iraq if military action is required to secure compliance with UN resolutions will be temporary. But our commitment to support the people of Iraq will be for the long term. The Iraqi people deserve to be lifted from tyranny and allowed to determine the future of their country for themselves. We pledge to work with the international community to ensure that the Iraqi people can exploit their country's resources for their own benefit, and contribute to their own reconstruction, with international support where needed. We wish to help the Iraqi people restore their country to its proper dignity and place in the community of nations, abiding by its international obligations and free from UN sanctions.[514]

And in an article in the Arab press on 29 March 2003, the Prime Minister made clear that:

> Our quarrel is not with the Iraqi people but with Saddam, his sons, and his barbarous regime which has brought misery and terror to their country. I recognise that the Iraqi people have been the biggest victims of Saddam's rule. This is not a war of conquest but of liberation.[515]

348. Thus the Government made clear before hostilities commenced that any military campaign would be directed against the Iraqi regime, rather than against Iraq as a country or against the Iraqi people. It is right to judge Operation Telic not only by asking how successfully the campaign against the Iraqi regime was prosecuted, but also by asking whether the Government took all reasonable steps to meet the pledges made to the Iraqi people through the UK's published objectives for the military campaign and through statements made by the Prime Minister and others.

349. The rules of international humanitarian law apply when a territory comes under enemy control during an armed conflict. According to Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations 'territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army.' This only applies to territory 'where such authority has been established and can be exercised.' The Fourth Geneva Convention contains provisions applicable in occupied territories. The duties of the Occupying Power include restoring and ensuring public order and safety; providing the population with food and medical supplies; maintaining medical facilities and services; ensuring public health and hygiene; and facilitating the work of educational institutions. Prohibited actions include forcibly transferring protected persons from the occupied territories to the territory of the Occupying Power; compelling protected persons to serve in the armed forces of the Occupying Power; and looting.[516] As MoD states, 'the UK has not been an Occupying

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513 On-line at www.number-10.gov.uk

514 On-line at www.pmo.gov.uk

515 Ev 440

516 International Committee of the Red Cross

Power in another country for many years and in the meantime international law has changed dramatically.'[517]

Plans and preparations

350. As we have discussed, British involvement in the planning for military operations in Iraq began around the middle of 2002. Planning for the aftermath of any conflict began at much the same time. This was the point at which the Government 'really started to focus on the sort of planning that we should have in place if a conflict was to take place, the situation we would be left with after and how it should be handled'.[518] We took evidence on two occasions from representatives of three of the most heavily involved Departments—MoD, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DfID)—on their respective roles, the effectiveness of the Government's planning for the post-conflict situation, and any lessons that the Government had learned in the light of the months succeeding the combat phase of operations.[519]

351. Initially, Whitehall planning was co-ordinated through the Cabinet Office, the Department generally responsible for joined-up Government.[520] Then, on 10 February 2003, an Iraq Planning Unit[521] was set up in FCO to bring together people from across Government in what had by then become a 'fairly constant' planning process.[522]

352. DfID was a key player in planning for the post-conflict situation in Iraq. It therefore worked 'closely with the Ministry of Defence in its planning to minimise the humanitarian consequences of the conflict; deploying humanitarian advisers to work alongside the UK military; posting staff to Iraq to liaise with humanitarian agencies; and pre-positioning humanitarian supplies in the region.'[523] DfID provided two humanitarian advisers to work alongside the UK military both before and during the conflict, with a third adviser deployed at the end of the combat phase.[524] DfID seems to have been very active in ensuring that it was able to feed not only into the British military structures but also into US-led structures intended to provide for the needs of the Iraqi people:

> We had people embedded with the military before the conflict started, during the conflict and after. In addition, we had people seconded to ORHA[525] and the CPA who were working alongside the military, working in ORHA and the CPA. So as well as actually embedded people (and we were giving advice more than anything else), once we had our own staff and consultants deployed they were working alongside, in the same structures and very closely with, the military. Similarly, contractors, that we

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517 Ev 440

518 Q 2014 (Mr Chaplin)

519 Ev 297–298, 324–343

520 Q 1778 (Mr Chaplin)

521 Subsequently, the Iraq Policy Unit.

522 Q 1782 (Mr Chaplin); HC Deb, 10 Jun 2003, c 794W

523 Minutes of Evidence taken before the International Development Committee on Iraq, HC 780 (2002–03), Appendix 8, para 13.

524 Q 1808 (Ms Miller)

525 The US-led organisation which preceded the CPA.

funded to get things up and running in the south, were also, I believe, working very closely with the military, who were doing some of that work.[526]

353. DfID's active pre-conflict preparations centred on channelling funds (initially some £16.5 million) and co-ordinating relief through UN agencies, NGOs and the International Committees of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Most of their preparations were focussed on averting a humanitarian crisis 'possibly as a consequence of large-scale refugee flows or disruption to essential services such as water and food distribution'.[527]

354. As well as co-ordinating work on post-conflict planning and reconstruction across Government from February 2003, FCO took measures to influence US planning. Initially this involved 'drafting planning papers and sharing with the Americans', but FCO:

> fairly quickly realised … that the most effective way to feed our thoughts in was to have people seconded alongside the Americans and so we did that. So while that organisation [ORHA] was still in Washington, we had people working alongside, people like Major General Tim Cross and some people from the FCO who then moved with that organisation when it deployed forward to Kuwait and then moved again with them up to Baghdad and all the time we were adding secondees as the situation was seen to demand it.[528]

A less operational Department than DfID, FCO did not have members of staff embedded within the military before or during the combat phase.[529]

355. Our witnesses put it to us that joined-up British involvement in coalition planning helped to 'raise the profile' of post-conflict issues in Washington, and stimulated 'inter-agency discussions' in the US that might not otherwise have taken place,[530] although it seems to be the case that British civil servants only plugged into US planning at a relatively late stage, certainly long after they were aware that it was happening. **Being a junior partner in a coalition constrained the British Government in its ability to plan independently for after the conflict.**[531]

Constraints

Domestic

356. We have already seen how the need to keep open (and to be seen to be keeping open) the option of a solution other than through military action imposed certain constraints on military planning and pre-positioning for a conflict. *Lessons for the Future* claims that planning for a post-conflict Iraq was even more constrained:

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526 Q 2088 (Ms Miller)

527 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.4.

528 Q 2014 (Mr Chaplin)

529 Q 1810 (Mr Lee)

530 Q 2015 (Mr Lee)

531 See paras 359–65

> In the run up to the launch of the operation, it was important to avoid giving the impression that conflict was inevitable, as we still hoped for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Contingency planning for a post-conflict Iraq was particularly sensitive as it necessarily had to start from the assumption that a conflict would eventually take place.[532]

357. This may be true in those areas in which planning might have been seen to imply not only the intent to take military action, but also the intent to stage a prolonged occupation. But, in general, we would expect the knowledge that the coalition was undertaking planning to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in the aftermath of a military conflict to be reassuring, rather than controversial, both domestically and internationally. Furthermore within Iraq it could have been seen as a further sign of the coalition's genuine intent to use military force if required to. We do not understand why the Government did not make the case in these terms for undertaking proper planning and preparation for the post-conflict phase and why the Department for International Development did not make greater preparations for post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq at an earlier stage. We discuss below the efforts made to bring together a coherent and over-arching information campaign, but **we believe that it was a misjudgement by the Government to have decided that planning to meet the needs of the Iraqi people following a conflict was particularly sensitive—more sensitive, even, than the deploying of military forces. This misjudgement unnecessarily constrained planning for the post-conflict phase.**

358. **It has also been suggested that DfID's role in post-conflict planning was constrained by the attitude of the then Secretary of State towards the prospect of military action. Although our witness from DfID denied that this was the case,[533] we remain to be convinced.**

International

359. It had always been the stated aim of the coalition to ensure the continued existence of a single Iraqi state. Plans for the governance of a post-conflict Iraq would therefore necessarily have to be co-ordinated between the coalition partners, even though British forces had a territorially distinct area of operations in the south-east of the country. However joined-up British plans were, this would be of limited effect on the ground, unless US plans were similarly joined-up.

360. There were persistent rumours in the media before and immediately after the conflict of wrangling between the US State Department and the Department of Defense (DoD) over plans for a post-conflict Iraq. When we visited Washington in February 2003, we gained the impression from the State Department that planning for the future of Iraq was well under way. Yet, in the event, this planning seems not to have been implemented on the ground. Essentially, the planning of which we heard in the State Department seems to have been discarded by the DoD, as our British Government witnesses came close to admitting:

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532 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.1.

533 Qq 1790–7 (Ms Miller)

The State Department had already done a lot of work and a future of Iraq project where they had produced a lot of quite detailed plans about what should happen in the civilian sector if there were a change of regime and military occupation and so on. We plugged into that and we fed in thoughts, questions and so on. It is no secret that the process of the US administration consulting each other in Washington is less joined up than the one we enjoy here. In the end this was a DoD plan for the aftermath.[534]

In the end the decision on what arrangements should be put in place was an American one, this was a US plan informed by our participation, but we were very much the junior partner … I do not think we had been consulted in great detail about what the structure of ORHA should be. It was an organisation that focussed largely on the suspected humanitarian problems in the aftermath of the military conflict. I do not think we were consulted very closely about what that organisation should look like, but what we did find effective was to respond to American requests to join in the process and once we had people there that was a good way of influencing US decisions day-to-day.[535]

361. Mr Lee also told us that US planning was concentrated on the conflict phase rather than on planning for a post-conflict Iraq:

To be fair to the US, they themselves were thinking about the nature of a post conflict or a day after planning task, but at that stage clearly an awful lot of energy was going into the preparations for a potential conflict and it was quite difficult for anyone to leap over that and have plans of equal specificity for an unknown period afterwards.[536]

Yet this was supposed to be an effects-based operation, where the desired effects involved creating stability in Iraq and a better quality of life for the Iraqi people.

362. It is a truism that reconstruction is far more difficult than destruction, and to plan for the unknown aftermath of a conflict involves difficult guesswork. But this implies that planning for a precarious post-conflict situation requires more effort and thought, not less. We detected in the answers of our witnesses a certain frustration at the failure of the US Administration to conduct joined-up planning. As we have noted elsewhere, difficulties in achieving joined-up working in the US Administration were not limited to post-conflict planning. **Nevertheless, the poor co-ordination of planning within the US Administration meant that better co-ordinated British input into the process had less impact than it should have had.**

363. During our visit to Basra in July 2003 we encountered an issue which epitomised the careful balance to be struck between making economic and social improvements in one part of Iraq and the unity of Iraq as a whole. This was the question of whether and when to reopen Basra airport to civilian traffic. It highlighted for us the limits to British freedom of action in the south-east of the country. As was explained to us:

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534 Q 1811 (Mr Chaplin)

535 Q 2015 (Mr Chaplin)

536 Q 2015 (Mr Lee)

The decision about opening Basra airport might be seen to have a consequence for what happens in other airports in Iraq … Any decisions which have the effect of dividing the country up prematurely, or at all in fact, into different almost sub-states, might be viewed as being a not entirely desirable thing to do. From a UK point of view, as we said earlier on, one of our objectives is to maintain the entire territorial integrity of Iraq.[537]

364. In general, British freedom of action in the south-east of Iraq since the combat phase has been significantly constrained by the need to act within a political and financial framework set from Baghdad:

there is an overall situation here that the CPA is trying to lead policy now, in conjunction with the Iraqi Governing Council, for the whole of Iraq … As long as you are not trying to do things which interfere with some of the broader principles, we probably have a lot of freedom of action. There are certain issues where you do stumble across that and then of course there are financial issues, where the larger amounts of money at the moment are under the control centrally of the CPA and therefore there is a constraint in that dimension.[538]

The need to maintain a unified Iraq under central control has been a constraint—usually a reasonable constraint—on British freedom of action in the south-east of the country.

365. A further factor which made effective action more difficult during the post-conflict phase (far more than the combat phase) was the failure to bring together a widely based coalition of nations with United Nations backing. Ms Carolyn Miller, Director, Europe, Middle East and Americas Division, DfID, told us that the Government 'had envisaged that the international community would play a stronger role earlier on' and noted the absence of the 'international agencies which are able to do these things better and more quickly than bilateral donors'.[539] **Perversely, the failure of the wider international community to support the coalition's military action did little or nothing to constrain that action, but did make it more difficult for the coalition to restore law and order and to administer Iraq once hostilities were over.**

Planning assumptions for the transitional phase

366. Plans were made for a wide variety of scenarios. But a number of assumptions which underlay the planning turned out to be mistaken.

367. The Government's preparations to assist the Iraqi people concentrated largely on seeking to avert a humanitarian crisis. As our witnesses told us:

With hindsight, we did a lot of our thinking about what might happen post conflict influenced by the fear that there might be humanitarian or environmental disasters of various sorts, refugee flows, shortage of food, collapse of the UN *Oil for Food*

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537 Q 1814 (Mr Lee)

538 Q 1814 (Mr Lee)

539 Q 1840 (Ms Miller)

programme's, distribution systems and those kinds of issues. We had made assumptions and included remedies in the planning so far as we could for those situations; emergency ration packs and so on. Fortunately many of those scenarios did not come to pass.[540]

There was an assumption that there might be a very large humanitarian problem, so a lot of emphasis was put on that and that happily turned out not to be right.[541]

Similarly, planning in the US concentrated on humanitarian issues:

ORHA was really designed, as far as we could see, to prepare mainly for humanitarian issues. It did not have a great focus in the early stages on the other issues which needed to be addressed.[542]

368. There was no humanitarian crisis, and the Government's preparations for such a crisis proved to be in excess of what was actually needed.[543] This has been attributed in part to the speed of the coalition's military success. But the Government has also argued that coalition efforts to pre-position supplies helped. DfID has written that 'an effective UK military effort, with DFID advice and support, helped to avoid a humanitarian crisis in southern Iraq', and we were told that 'getting food pre-positioned and all those things will have made a difference'.[544] MoD claims that 'a combination of coalition preparedness and the sheer speed of the operation meant that a humanitarian crisis did not have time to develop; in most areas, for example, the fighting passed so rapidly that there simply was no time for significant refugee flows to become established.'[545] Mr Edward Chaplin, Director, Middle East and North Africa, FCO, agreed that the absence of a crisis was brought about 'partly by the skill of doing things like seizing the oil fields early, partly by the swiftness of the campaign, so there were no huge flows of refugees'.[546]

369. In evidence to us, the Government has argued that it was 'quite right' for it to have planned for a humanitarian disaster, even though this did not materialise: 'that might have been the outcome and we would have been criticised if we had not done so'.[547] We agree. **The Government was right to plan for a humanitarian crisis. Such a situation might have arisen, and the Government would have been rightly condemned if its preparations had been inadequate.**

370. It is another question, however, whether the Government planned adequately for other eventualities. The Government has come in for particular criticism for its preparations for maintaining law and order in Iraq, especially in the immediate aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Our witnesses indicated that they had not

540 Q 1816 (Mr Lee)

541 Q 1816 (Mr Chaplin)

542 Q 1813 (Mr Chaplin)

543 Q 1826 (Mr Lee)

544 Minutes of Evidence taken before the International Development Committee on Iraq, HC 780 (2002–03), Appendix 8, para 13; Q 2016 (Ms Miller)

545 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.5.

546 Q 1816 (Mr Chaplin)

547 Q 2016 (Ms Miller)

anticipated the extent to which the security situation would deteriorate: 'It was certainly something we discussed and we had flagged up. It was just the absolute extent to which it broke down that perhaps we had not quite anticipated.'[548]

371. One of our earlier witnesses, Mr Mark Urban of the BBC, told us that he was aware of planning in Government some weeks before the conflict for the possibility of what he called 'catastrophic collapse' ('a planning assumption that because of the nature of the state, the whole thing just implodes and there is absolutely no authority, no order or whatever').[549] But when pressed on this point, witnesses from MoD said that they were unaware of planning having taken place in these 'stark terms'.[550]

372. It is evident that the Government expected to be able to rely to some extent on existing Iraqi administrative and security structures to govern the country, at least in the immediate post-conflict phase:

> There was an assumption in our plans that there would be Iraqi police and to some extent Iraqi Army who could be used to provide a certain level of security. I do not think we assumed, certainly in the case of the Iraqi civil police, that they would all melt away to the extent they did and that we would have to start again from scratch in putting together a police force.[551]

> In terms of stability after the conflict, as has already been mentioned, we made an assumption which turned out to be an underestimate, about the extent to which you would still have Iraqi administrative structures to deal with, both in the civil service and in the police. We perhaps also underestimated the extent to which the total dysfunctionality of Iraqi society after years of suffering under Saddam Hussein meant that the looting problem turned out to be a larger problem, going on for longer than we had perhaps assumed.[552]

373. MoD has stated that 'it was only after the fall of the regime that the extent of Baath party domination of nearly all aspects of the Iraq state and society became clear' and implies that 'the impact of the sudden collapse of the regime … with the removal not just of top officials, but the whole of senior and most of middle management' could not therefore have been predicted. This argument was repeated by Mr Lee, who told us:

> What I do not think was clear before the event and I am not sure whether it could have been clear to anyone, was the extent to which the people on the receiving end of this state apparatus were oppressed by it and there was a difficulty in predicting their behaviour after the state apparatus was removed.[553]

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548 Q 1817 (Ms Miller). See also Q 1822

549 Q 792

550 QQ 1821–2 (Air Vice Marshal Loader and Mr Lee)

551 Q 1827 (Mr Lee)

552 Q 1816 (Mr Chaplin)

553 Q 1997 (Mr Lee)

The argument is that the Government did not and could not be expected to understand the extent of Baath party domination of Iraq or the effects of this domination on the people of Iraq.

374. A draft resolution adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 2002 (and following other resolutions in similar terms) condemned 'the systematic, widespread and extremely grave violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law by the Government of Iraq, resulting in an all-pervasive repression and oppression sustained by broad-based discrimination and widespread terror'. In his speech to the House of Commons on 18 March the Prime Minister described the Iraqi regime:

> The brutality of the repression—the death and torture camps, the barbaric prisons for political opponents, the routine beatings for anyone or their families suspected of disloyalty—is well documented… I recall a few weeks ago talking to an Iraqi exile and saying to her that I understood how grim it must be under the lash of Saddam. 'But you don't', she replied. 'You cannot. You do not know what it is like to live in perpetual fear.' And she is right. We take our freedom for granted. But imagine what it must be like not to be able to speak or discuss or debate or even question the society you live in. To see friends and family taken away and never daring to complain. To suffer the humility of failing courage in face of pitiless terror.[554]

An intelligence-derived paper, used to inform the Government's dossier of February 2003 is entirely devoted to showing the total extent of the influence of the Baath regime and the fear that this engendered in the Iraqi people:

> Commentators compare Iraq with the repressive regimes in Syria and Egypt but these are mild in comparison. The best analogy is to Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s with show trials, the terror and the systematic deceit of all foreign visitors by all who meet them, on pain of torture and death.[555]

375. While the repressive nature of Saddam Hussein's regime was not the reason for going to war with Iraq, it was much used by the Government in persuading the public that the campaign would be to the ultimate benefit of the Iraqi people. **For the Government to argue that it was unaware of the extent of the repressive brutality of the Iraqi regime strains credibility. It was widely known, not least because of information published by the Government.** A separate question, which we examine below, is whether the Government and Armed Forces should have predicted the effect that the removal of such a repressive regime would have on the Iraqi people.[556]

Insecurity and disorder in the transitional phase

376. Significant looting took place in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The impact of this looting on the task of post-conflict reconstruction has been enormous. Not only has the security situation remained precarious at best, but also the goodwill of the Iraqi people, their ability to return to work and to education, and their willingness to assist in

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554 HC Deb, 18 March 2003, c772–3

555 Intelligence and Security Committee, *Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Cm 5972, Annex A, p 46

556 See paras 381–99

reconstruction were compromised. Facilities and infrastructure, including hospitals, were looted and damaged. A variety of administrative records were also destroyed which would have assisted in governing the country. Once the state apparatus of the Baath regime had dissolved away, there was, in the words of our MoD witness 'pretty much a vacuum' which the Government 'had not expected … to be quite as fundamental as it was'.[557]

377. Air Vice Marshal Clive Loader, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Operations), viewed the looting, particularly in the south east of Iraq, as people wanting to 'get their own back':

> They ransacked schools, hospitals and took away things they never had in their houses, beds, chairs, and so on, or they just wrecked things. It was not just the state that it had been in for 20 years or so of neglect, state-sponsored neglect, as it were, they produced a cocktail of difficulties with which we found it very difficult to cope.[558]

378. A representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr Balthasar Staehelin, told us that 'the impact of the breakdown of law and order was massive' and that 'the destruction and the insecurity after the conflict probably had a greater humanitarian impact than the hostilities themselves.'[559] In his view, at the time he was speaking[560] people in Iraq were not better off than they had been under Saddam Hussein, because of the state of insecurity:

> What struck me was the number of people who do not go to work because they feel that insecurity obliges them to stay at home with a gun to protect their property. People feel that the insecurity is so great that they do not dare to venture out. I was sleeping in a residence where the neighbour is up all night with a machine gun in his hands, in fear of being looted. I think that the insecurity … also has a negative impact on the possibility of the population to conduct economic activities. In this sense the situation is certainly not better right now than the situation before the war.[561]

379. Mr Staehelin was keen to show how security and proper administration were linked to other humanitarian issues:

> What we face is a situation in which insecurity, a certain absence of administration, has created a precarious situation; but that if security can be re-established, if salaries can be paid again, if local administration, et cetera, can resume its function, then we do not have a major humanitarian crisis. So we are at a moment where ICRC feels the evolution could go in two ways, and it is critical to have improvements in the spheres I have mentioned.[562]

Much has been made of the many Iraqis who were involved in looting and destruction in the immediate aftermath of the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. It should not

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557 Q 1997 (Mr Lee)

558 Q 2030 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

559 Q 436 (Mr Staehelin)

560 June 2003

561 Q 451 (Mr Staehelin)

562 Q 435 (Mr Staehelin)

be forgotten that thousands more were locked up indoors, fearing for their security and for their lives.

What more could have been done?

380. The Foreign Secretary, in evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, stated:

> no one is at fault, it is just an inevitable consequence of that kind of warfare. It is greatly to be regretted that there was disorder and looting on that scale. If anybody is at fault, it was the fault of the Saddam regime for there being so little consent and natural law and order in the country.[563]

MoD, however, has been less dismissive. According to *Lessons for the Future*, 'looting was not unexpected, but the scale of the problem was greater than envisaged and particularly difficult for forces to address while still committed to combat operations'.[564] Air Marshal Burridge, speaking to us in June 2003, was equivocal: 'As we saw, there was significant looting, although perhaps not as much as the media made out, both in Baghdad and Basra. Could we have predicted that? I do not know.'[565]

381. Air Vice Marshal Loader was prepared to admit to a 'miscalculation' of the popular reaction 'when the yoke of Baathism was lift from an oppressed people', but told us that this was a result of 'things which were not plain and there for everybody to see', namely: the total melting away of Iraqi security structures; the way that popular 'ire and frustration' had unexpected targets—'hospitals, schools, police stations and so on'; and the release of 'several thousands' of criminals from prison by the Baathist regime. This had resulted in 'a completely different situation to the one we had envisaged', and the Air Vice Marshal was 'not sure how foreseeable that really was'.[566] As he later told us, 'if it was a failure of planning then so be it'.[567] Mr Chaplin took a similar line, noting in addition that others had not predicted what would happen any more accurately than the Government: 'I do not think anyone was making better guesstimates at that than we were.'[568]

382. Commentators outside Government and the military have been less sympathetic. Mr Fergal Keane of the BBC, speaking to the Foreign Affairs Committee in June, put this argument succinctly:

> 'Did we know there was a possibility of a serious breakdown of law and order…? Yes, of course we did. We knew this was one of the most heavily armed societies on earth. In any situation where you remove central control, whether that is Yugoslavia, Rwanda or indeed Iraq, where you remove what has been a heavily repressive centralised control there must the danger of an upsurge in violence and lawlessness.

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563 Tenth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2002–03, HC 405, Q 228

564 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.6.

565 Q 312 (AM Burridge)

566 Q 1818 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

567 Q 2030 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

568 Q 2033 (Mr Chaplin)

Having known that, were adequate preparations taken to combat that? Of course not.'[569]

Mr Alex Thomson of Channel 4 News, while understanding of the military's position, spoke persuasively of why a breakdown in law and order should have been predicted:

When there has been a kleptocracy in place for that long, which has been thieving from the people and depriving them of what they need, then one afternoon a very small number of heavily armed soldiers comes in tanks and sits in a compound, of course people are going to set fire to things and steal everything and remove everything—and I mean everything—that can be removed.[570]

383. DfID's claim on 21 March, before the battle for Basra, that 'the need for the maintenance of law and order has been fully appreciated and incorporated into campaign planning' certainly rings hollow in the light of what happened. But it is only fair to note that before the conflict, the focus of concern in the media and wider community, as well as in Government, was the risk of a humanitarian disaster, rather than the risk of lawlessness and disorder.

384. Speaking after the conflict, our expert witnesses were unanimous in believing that the coalition did not have sufficient forces in theatre for transition to the post-conflict phase.[571] Professor Bellamy told us that Phase 4 issues were not sufficiently the focus of planning before the conflict. He noted that the British armoured division seemed only to realise in the midst of warfighting operations that it would be useful to have a senior police officer to help with security issues: as a result, no civilian police officers were found to help until May 2003. He also told us that 'with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight there should have been battalions of military police' available.[572]

385. Quite apart from whether the scale of public disorder should have been predicted, it would have presented enormous practical difficulties for the United Kingdom to have provided the quantity of forces that some have called for. Forces vastly in excess of those deployed would have been required to maintain public order in Basra alone. As MoD told us:

Basra is a city of about 2.2 million people, as I recall, so one third of London. Imagine how many people you would have to flood in militarily to stop a large proportion of that city wanting to go and loot their local police station, hospital, library, school and so on. It just made for an impossible task. Once the indigenous Iraqi organs of suppression had melted away, it was just too much for the available military forces.[573]

386. Dr Posen reminded us of the evidence given by the Chief of Staff of the US Army, who told the US Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2003 that the requirement to police Iraq after the combat phase would be 'several hundred thousand soldiers', which he

569   HC 405 (2002–03), Q 342

570   Q 790

571   Q 182 (Dr Posen, Prof Bellamy and Mr Beaver)

572   Q 182

573   Q 1835 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

described as 'from a political point of view … the wrong answer'. He also reminded us of the formula devised for the US Army by James Quinlivan in *Force Requirements in Stability Operations*.[574] As Dr Posen explained:

> 'You can police the United States with about two people per thousand and when things were pretty bad in Northern Ireland it took about 20 soldiers and police per thousand, you can do the math for a country of 22 million and you end up with big numbers'.[575]

These 'big numbers' are, doing a rough and ready calculation ourselves, a few thousand short of half a million for Iraq as a whole, or a little short of 50,000 for Basra alone—nearly twice the size of the entire initial British land deployment. In Dr Posen's view, 'this [calculation] was a fact that was devastating politically and needed to be suppressed'. [576]

387. A swift and undoubted military success is not enough on its own. This was an effects-based operation. **The scale and shape of the force provided were best suited to achieving the coalition's desired effects in the combat phase, but not to carrying those effects through into the post-conflict phase. We acknowledge, however, that the scale of force which might have best achieved these effects was beyond the Government's means.**

388. **Indeed a harsh critic might argue that coalition planning assumed that it would be possible to employ elements of the Iraqi police, army and administration to maintain law and order, because the alternatives were too difficult to contemplate. That assumption was not only incorrect, but incautious. A realistic judgement, based on good intelligence, should have warned of the risk of serious disorder.**

389. Was best use then made of the force that was provided? Measures were taken to ensure that some key infrastructure was protected, oil infrastructure in particular: we were told that this was 'an enormous success', with only 'six oil well heads … actually fired out of the many hundreds which were there'.[577] The Secretary of State told us that in fact 'one of the entire purposes…of the planning of our operations in the south was to prevent Saddam Hussein destroying the oilfields.'[578] And General Reith told us that priorities for securing essential infrastructure were well established:

> when we attacked in the south, the first priority, whenever we took anywhere, was to ensure that we got the pumping stations, the electricity, distribution system, controls, and everything else, to secure those without damage.[579]

He also claimed that damage to this infrastructure was 'minimal', but that the infrastructure itself was 'crippled' owing to lack of investment and noted that Saddam Hussein had 'used the delivery of power as a weapon' and that therefore Shia areas of Basra were difficult to supply with electricity. However, according to Air Vice Marshal Loader,

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574 Published in *Parameters*, Winter 1995, pp 59–69.

575 Q 185 (Dr Posen)

576 Q 185 (Dr Posen)

577 Q 1837 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

578 Q 2311

579 Q 887 (Lt Gen Reith)

the looting produced a 'cocktail of difficulties', including damage to electrical infrastructure, and, in his words 'it was not just the state that it had been in for 20 years or so of neglect'.[580] The Secretary of State has noted that 'electricity infrastructure is an enormously difficult thing, even today, to protect.'[581] This is certainly the case for power lines, but is less true of power stations and other key sites such as hospitals, banks and government buildings.

390. **It was indeed crucial to protect Iraq's oil infrastructure from damage, as the main potential source of future Iraqi wealth. But it was a mistake not to have identified and protected (and to have been seen to be protecting) other key buildings and infrastructure as a priority.** In presentational terms, this failure made claims that this was a war for oil appear more valid. In substance, it had negative effects both on the standard of living of Iraqis and on the coalition's ability to govern them effectively.

391. As Air Vice Marshal Loader acknowledged, 'maybe in retrospect we should have put a few more [troops] to the banks or hospitals and schools, but that would have been at the expense of something else.'[582] Mr Lee argued that it is difficult for forces to deal with looting while still engaged in 'low level war-fighting', while also suggesting that the 'limited numbers' of troops on the ground made it difficult to deal with looting over a 'short and intense period' in a large city such as Basra.[583]

392. We have already acknowledged that it would not have been reasonable to have expected the military to be able to prevent the vast majority of the looting and damage that took place in Basra. However, commanders should not have been placed in the position of lacking the capability to protect key sites. This is not a question of preventing mass looting through the provision of an impossibly large force. **If 'a few more' troops were needed to protect key sites, this should have been identified as a scenario at the planning stage, and these troops should have been found and deployed with this specific task in mind.**

393. Yet the implications of the looting and damage that were being carried out seem not always to have been fully understood by commanders on the ground. General Brims spoke of the looting as in part caused by 'euphoria', which he seemed to believe was understandable because of the degree to which Iraqis had been 'brutalised' by the regime.[584] General Reith told us that 'looting might not be the exact, right term, because in many ways what was happening there was what the population there would have seen as a fair redistribution of wealth'.[585] According to Mr Alex Thomson, the military attitude was 'Looting? Civil unrest? Let it go',[586] and according to Human Rights Watch, some British troops 'tolerated, and even encouraged, the looting of government buildings as the population's cathartic reaction to the fall of Saddam Hussein's government'.[587]

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580   Q 2030

581   Q 2313

582   Q 1837

583   Q 1816 (Mr Lee)

584   Q 694

585   Q 937

586   Q 792

587   Human Rights Watch, *Basra: Crime and Insecurity under British Occupation* (June 2003). Available on-line at 222.hrw.org

394. Widespread lawlessness did not help to give the impression to the Iraqi people that coalition forces were able to provide for their security. As DfID noted in June 2003 'Insecurity on the streets has deterred many people, particularly women, from returning to work, or education'. And Mr Staehelin noted how the lack of security, the absence of public transport and the fact that public servants were not being paid made it difficult for key (but perhaps not obviously key) workers such as hospital cleaners to go to work.[588] There was much talk of 'a window of opportunity'.[589] The ongoing lawlessness made it much harder for coalition forces to take advantage of this window.

395. Another aspect of the looting seems not to have been fully understood by the forces on the ground. Attacks on Government buildings were not merely a question of symbolic revenge by the Iraqi people on a repressive regime; these attacks also led to the destruction of important administrative records. In a war, it may not be obvious why records matter. But records enable the authorities to identify who they employ and how much they are to be paid. In a society, like Iraq, in which the state was the principal employer, it would have been an important tool in restoring normality and winning hearts and minds to have had access to records allowing ordinary employees to be paid, and showing whether the situation in Iraq for ordinary people was indeed improving.

396. The Government itself told the International Development Committee in June that:

> The sacking of government buildings and banks has made it difficult to resume normal administrative functions in many areas … Partly as a result of this breakdown in public administration, data is very patchy and it is often difficult to make reliable comparisons between service provision and living conditions before the conflict and the situation in its immediate aftermath, or at present.[590]

And as the then Secretary of State added:

> There were real problems with the Iraqi ministries because the looting that happened meant that key records, and so on, were not available for use. ORHA, as it then was, which became the CPA, had no information. People mentioned the issue of making payments, but they had no idea who they should pay because those records were simply not available … if some Iraqis had not taken home essential discs with information on them we would still be facing significant difficulties in terms of being able to pay public service workers.[591]

397. It is also likely that the records which were destroyed might have assisted the coalition both in identifying past crimes by members of the Baathist regime, and possibly in providing evidence of elusive weapons of mass destruction. Mr Bill Neely of ITN told us of his experience in Basra, where:

> at the secret police headquarters there was not a single Marine for days and days and days. I went there, I think, within a day or two of arriving in Basra and people were

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588 Q 442 (Mr Staehelin)

589 eg. Q 742 (Mr Hewitt)

590 HC 780 (2002–03), Appendix 8, para 16

591 HC 780 (2002–03), Q 52 (Baroness Amos)

pulling out files. We said we wanted to prosecute the Iraqi leadership for war crimes, but there seemed to be no attempt to gather the evidence; there was not a single British soldier covering the headquarters. There were some very interesting things being pulled out. One man pulled out a book which was an account of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the taking of Kuwaiti prisoners. For the Kuwaitis this was a huge issue: where are the prisoners? It became part of the post-1991 conflict negotiations. No one was going to the intelligence headquarters to retrieve those documents, and they were just being pulled apart by people, who were taking vast files home with them to show their friends. That is what surprised me, not that British troops were not stopping the looting of electrical equipment.[592]

The Government should have taken more care to identify in advance sites in Iraq likely to contain records of use to the coalition, and should have ensured that forces were provided to protect these sites from damage and looting.

398. It would not have been possible without a very large increase in the numbers of troops available for the military to have prevented the looting of schools (of which there are about 700 in Basra). But in fact, the rehabilitation of schools is a relatively straightforward matter. The coalition's failure to protect hospitals is less excusable. Some hospitals at least should have been a priority. There are very real difficulties in securing sites in urban areas, not least force protection, and also the ability to identify the sites when only patchy intelligence is available. But the failure to protect these facilities did nothing to 'demonstrate to the Iraqi people that our quarrel is not with them and that their security and well-being is our concern'.[593] **While coalition forces successfully removed Saddam Hussein's regime with remarkable speed, they were not able to establish themselves on the ground with sufficient speed and precision to avoid a damaging period of lawlessness during which much of the potential goodwill of the Iraqi people was squandered.**

399. **None of these criticisms, however, should be seen to detract from the thoroughly impressive way in which individual members of Armed Forces personnel demonstrated their ability to accomplish the transition between warfighting and peacekeeping operations swiftly and effectively.** One of our witnesses noted that this flexibility 'is one of the great strengths of the British Armed Forces.'[594] General Reith commended forces for their 'versatility', noting in particular how in Az Zubayr 'at one end of the town they were still fighting, and at the other end they were already in berets and dealing with the population'.[595]

400. The responsiveness of the British military to the needs of the civilian population was praised by Mr Staehelin from the ICRC. He noted in particular the co-operation received by the ICRC from the Armed Forces, the speed with which contacts were established

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592   Q 736 (Mr Neely)

593   Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), Annex A.

594   Q 2038 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

595   Q 914 (Lt Gen Reith)

between the ICRC and the military,[596] the understanding the military showed of the role of the ICRC and the level of access granted to the ICRC.[597]

401. It is worth drawing attention to specific instances of such co-operation. The loss of water supply to Basra very nearly did cause a humanitarian catastrophe. It was only thanks to the efforts of the ICRC and the co-operation of the British forces outside Basra (as well as that of the Iraqi forces inside Basra) that such a disaster was avoided. As we were told 'we would have seen hundreds of thousands of people looking for water and we could have seen a problem on a major scale.'[598]

402. The ICRC also pointed to an occasion on which the British authorities in Az-Zubayr secured a warehouse containing the remains of hundreds of people, enabling the identification and repatriation of these remains. This was cited to us as 'an example of a successful operation'.[599] **We commend the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the performance of its humanitarian role in Iraq, before, during and after the combat phase of operations, and we commend British forces for the way in which they co-operated with the ICRC.**

Prisoners of War

403. Fewer prisoners of war were detained by coalition forces during and after the conflict than had been expected. The UK was responsible for 2,203 Prisoners of War (PoWs) and others captured and detained by UK forces. Guarding responsibilities were split between the coalition partners, although the UK retained responsibility as Detaining Power for all UK-captured PoWs. At the end of March 2003 about 1,500 prisoners were held by coalition forces at Camp Bucca at Umm Qasr in southern Iraq. Throughout April, there were approximately 2,000 prisoners held at the camp. The release of PoWs began in early May, with the number decreasing to 620 by 10 May, and to 58 by 15 May. By the beginning of July only one PoW remained.[600]

404. One of the ICRC's responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions is to visit and monitor the conditions of people deprived of their freedom, including PoWs. The results of such visits are confidential between the ICRC and the detaining authorities. On 31 March 2003, the ICRC began visiting PoWs captured by coalition forces. By the beginning of May it had visited more than 6,000 PoWs and interned civilians. Mr Staehelin of the ICRC specifically remarked on the co-operation the ICRC had received in visiting prisoners of war held by British and other coalition forces.[601]

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596 Q 464 (Mr Staehelin)

597 Q 460 (Mr Staehelin)

598 Q 458 (Mr Staehelin)

599 Q 456 (Mr Staehelin)

600 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003) para 5.14.

601 Q 458 (Mr Staehelin)

Lessons for future campaigns

405. Increasingly, our Armed Forces are asked to carry out peace support operations around the world, operations which can prove more difficult than, and just as dangerous as combat operations. MoD has suggested to us that there is a need for 'a much more rapidly deployable force of international policemen' or 'carabinieri type of forces who are part military and part police'.[602] Currently, the deployment of British civilian police is on a voluntary basis, and occurs at the expense of local policing in the United Kingdom. Mr Lee put it too us that 'whether countries should have more police contingency forces which are maintained for deployable purposes, I feel, is obviously a question that does need to be addressed in the light of recent experiences.'[603]

406. The idea of a deployable international gendarmerie is a very fine one. But it would in fact have been of little assistance in Iraq, given that the lack of international agreement over the decision to take military action would almost certainly have prevented the deployment of such a force. We are also not convinced that the problem is one of lack of capability: British forces on the ground have shown themselves to be superb at carrying out peace support operations around the world.

407. **We recommend that the Government should consider closely, in the light of operations in Iraq, how the United Kingdom provides peace support capabilities, and in particular how the transition is managed between warfighting and peacekeeping. We further recommend that the Government should consider whether either a dedicated part of the Armed Forces, or even a separate organisation altogether, could be specifically tasked with providing these capabilities.**

Continuing commitment

408. The ongoing peace support operations have meant that to date there have been two roulements of the military personnel in theatre. We have already discussed how this has affected the troops themselves, in terms of training and operational welfare.[604] We heard during our visit to Iraq from troops in 3 (UK) Division taking part in Operation Telic 2 that the previous tour had been hampered (not unsurprisingly) by having to change its focus from warfighting to peace support. These troops believed that arriving in Iraq with peace support as their primary mission enabled them to carry out these tasks more effectively.

409. The need for the military to continue to provide various functions which would elsewhere be carried out by civilians has had an effect on roulement. MoD has told us that the assumptions under which they were working meant that they did not have the capacity to carry out civilian expert functions 'on a very large scale' or 'for a very long period of time':

> our assumption had been that once security had been restored after the end of actual fighting then it would have been possible to hand over a lot of those tasks to NGOs

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602 Q 2062

603 Q 2066

604 See paras 292 and 327.

and to the UN agencies. In practice, of course, the security situation remained difficult for longer.[605]

410. Something of a 'Catch-22' situation seems to have developed, in which the security situation inhibited the deployment of non-governmental and international organisations, while the absence of these organisations helped to perpetuate the circumstances in which insecurity thrives. As a result, the military has been 'stretched to perform tasks of various sorts which are not strictly speaking military tasks', to which they will 'turn their hand', but for which they are 'not actually designed', such as 'taking control of and re-constructing a fairly large area of the country.'[606] The deterioration of the security situation in August 2003, most obviously and tragically with the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, made the task of the military even more difficult.[607]

411. The delayed arrival of civilian government and of British civil servants also put strain on the Armed Forces. FCO told us that 'there was frustration on the military side' because of the 'expectation that they would be able to pass this task over to a civilian structure headed by a Foreign Office person more like quickly than happened to be case'.[608] **We are concerned about the continuing requirement on the ground for specialists from the military in areas which would under other circumstances be provided by civilian organisations. Many of these specialists will be reservists, and their prolonged deployment may have adverse consequences for retention in specialisms which are already suffering from undermanning.**

412. For its part, FCO has 'had difficulty in continuity of providing people for long enough'.[609] Given the relatively fast turnover of civilian personnel, there are clearly issues here about preserving and passing on knowledge and experience.

Understanding

413. The cultural and linguistic divide is one of the main potential obstacles to forces wanting to demonstrate goodwill to the Iraqi people, needing to explain what they are doing and seeking information and assistance. FCO has picked up as one of its lessons learned from Operation Telic 'the whole question of civil liaison, in other words people to work alongside the military who have some knowledge of the country, perhaps the language and so on'.[610]

414. British forces sent to Iraq receive basic training in social laws and customs to help them avoid causing unwitting offence.[611] But they had only very limited access to Arabic language interpreters. Only 28 military interpreters deployed alongside Operation Telic forces (of the 57 trained Arabic speakers available within the Armed Forces[612]), a ratio of

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605 Q 2001 (Mr Lee)

606 Q 2009 (Mr Lee)

607 Q 2010 (Mr Chaplin)

608 Q 2037 (Mr Chaplin)

609 Q 1810 (Mr Chaplin)

610 Q 1810 (Mr Chaplin)

611 Q 2038 (Air Vice Marshal Loader); Ev 441

612 Ev 441

one interpreter for approximately every thousand troops deployed forward to Iraq.[613] MoD has admitted that this affected forces' 'ability to engage with the local population', and noted that shootings of locally engaged interpreters early on in the campaign had 'a pretty negative effect' on the willingness of others to serve in similar roles. Attempts to engage additional Arab linguists from Gulf States were unsuccessful.[614] We heard in Iraq that locally engaged interpreters were of varying reliability, both in terms of their skills and their personal political agendas. Armed Forces interpreters cannot be the only answer, but they are, of course, 'totally on side'. We have been told that the provision of language training will need to be re-examined if the Armed Forces are to be more involved in expeditionary operations in the future.[615] **We agree. In an effects-based operation aiming to win over hearts and minds, an ability to communicate with the local population is vital.**

Security

415. We have already discussed the security situation in the immediate aftermath of the combat phase of operations. The failure to establish law and order swiftly has made it more difficult for the military to transfer the responsibility for these tasks to others.

416. UK Ministry of Defence police officers first visited Basra in April 2003 to provide policing advice to UK forces in control of the city, but an initial policing assessment mission to Iraq, led by Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan of Hampshire Police, did not take place until May. Professor Bellamy told us that commanders only realised that such advice would be useful in the midst of the warfighting phase.[616] **Preparations should have been made in advance of the military campaign to ensure that police advice on maintaining law and order would be available as soon as possible after the end of the combat phase.**

417. In some parts of Iraq, British forces have allowed local people to provide for their own security. In Maysan province in particular, where the Baath regime was removed by local Iraqis before the arrival of British troops, militias have been allowed to operate. MoD told us that this was a matter for the judgement of commanders on the ground in the light of the dynamics of the local situation,[617] and that it was a 'classic example of the British way of doing things on the ground'. We were assured that initiatives are not introduced if they would 'clearly get the back up of the majority of the population'.[618] However, according to press reports, the militias in Maysan 'answer only to a self-appointed provincial council of Shiite religious groups, which wants no one else to deal with the British' and that 'local people appeared fearful of criticizing the brigades, but those who did said the militiamen were mainly outlaws'.[619] **While we support entirely the notion that Iraqis should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own security, we are concerned that local militias which have been allowed to operate in the south-east of Iraq may represent**

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613 HL Deb, 8 July 2003, c WA 31

614 Ev 441

615 Q 2046 (Mr Lee)

616 Q 182

617 Q 2067 (Mr Lee)

618 Q 2067 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

619 *International Herald Tribune*, 15 July 2003.

vested interests. There is a danger that these may seek to use their position to pursue agendas which might not be to the advantage of the people of Iraq more generally.

418. Important steps have been taken in recent months towards the establishment of national security institutions staffed by Iraqis. Recruitment appears to be good for the various police, facilities protection and civil defence organisations being established, although the exact numbers quoted to us in January and more recent figures provided in February do not seem to tally.[620] Recruitment for the New Iraqi Army was less advanced in January, with only about 25 per cent recruited of the 3,000 sought.[621] Retention in the New Iraqi Army has apparently not been "a significant problem" since the introduction of hazardous duty pay.[622] However, we have not been provided with the information we have requested on retention in other Iraqi security organisations.

419. We were encouraged to hear that some of these institutions appear to be well regarded on the streets of Iraq.[623] This is crucial if they are to be a success. It is a matter of concern that in recent months, those who oppose the coalition haven been targeting Iraqis working for these institutions; according to MoD, however, the police service continues to be regarded as "an attractive occupation".[624]

Reconstruction

420. Iraq was a country in desperate need of reconstruction before the coalition military campaign. The combined effect of the hardships imposed on the Iraqi people by thirty years of Baathist tyranny, exacerbated by sanctions imposed by the international community under United Nations Resolutions and the policy of containment following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1991 had left the south-east of the country in a particularly poor state. The most basic infrastructure operated only thanks to decades of repair and cannibalisation, as we saw for ourselves in July 2003. Two kinds of reconstruction were called for in the aftermath of combat operations. Firstly, civilians needed to be provided with basic resources such as power and water as a matter of urgency. Secondly, a structured programme was needed in the longer term to provide for less immediate needs and to allow Iraq to re-emerge as a functioning, thriving state. In this report, we concentrate on the more immediate needs of the Iraqi people in the aftermath of combat operations. We will look in the future into longer term reconstruction efforts, and the role of the British military in facilitating and co-ordinating these, and indeed in carrying them out.

421. As far as immediate needs were concerned, coalition efforts were thwarted by the appalling state of the infrastructure, and by the looting (including of copper wire from electrical cables) and sabotage, which had a much greater effect than would have been the case if the infrastructure had been more sound. Added complications were the absence of experienced international organisations, largely due to the security situation. As Ms Miller

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620 Q 2054 (Mr Lee); Ev 442

621 Q 2054 (Mr Lee)

622 Ev 442

623 Q 2068 (Mr Lee)

624 Ev 442

told us, 'there are international agencies which are able to do these things better and more quickly than bilateral donors can do them. Not everyone can be geared up to do this'.[625] And she confirmed that 'it was the security issue that was really the problem [for the NGOs].' and that the Government 'saw no constraint whatsoever, other than the security situation which was worse than had been anticipated, for them [the UN] to come back in'.[626]

422. Air Marshal Burridge suggested, and Mr Chaplin agreed, that

> what we would like to have called on, as military people, was some civilian organisation that could come in and in a big way fix electrical grids, in a big way fix water. We do not have that and I do not think many nations do. That would have made a big difference. In dealing with the infrastructure in Basra, we reached a plateau ultimately beyond which we could not go with our expertise or without quite significant investment.[627]

Some such organisations do exist, in the form of the UN and NGOs, but because of international disagreement, and because of the security situation, they were not able to contribute as much as coalition forces would have liked them to. Iraqi expertise was also presumably available, but difficult to identify. **The circumstances of the conflict in Iraq were particular: operations without broad international consensus in a country with a relatively advanced but extremely decrepit infrastructure. While MoD is right to assess whether a national capability to repair infrastructure is required, it would be wrong to assume that a capability which might have been useful in Iraq will necessarily be required in future operations.**

Quick Impact Projects

423. We were impressed during our visit to Basra by the work of a Territorial Army Captain and a sergeant, were responsible for the implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). MoD had been allocated some £10 million, in order that the Armed Forces could begin small but important reconstruction projects without needing to wait for other larger-scale organisations to arrive. The projects also provided much needed local employment for Iraqis, and, according to those we met, the need to put together proper tenders for projects would stand local firms in good stead in a future more competitive climate.

424. According to *Lessons for the Future* the funding in Iraq 'was sought as a direct result of lessons learned from Afghanistan and elsewhere':

> At the end of October 2003 some 620 projects had been carried out or were being planned, totalling some £9.4 million. These included over 200 projects in the education sector, in schools, colleges and universities; over 50 projects in the health sector; and over 140 in the law and order field. With other projects improving water, sanitation and power provision, QIPs have had a positive and widespread local impact in helping to start security, education and health activities, thereby helping to

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gain the consent of the Iraqi people, and to increase security and normality in the UK area. The QIP funding scheme has also enabled the UK to be pro-active in addressing developing areas of concern and potential causes of discontent.[628]

425. Things had clearly been moving on apace since July, when we visited Basra, at which time 284 tasks had been approved. We were also pleased to be told by the Prime Minister that when the current £10 million allocation had been used further funds would be provided.[629] **Quick Impact Projects are, as one of our interlocutors told us in Iraq, a 'band-aid' solution, which cannot hope to approach the scale of the reconstruction effort required in Iraq. But they have been a vital tool for showing that there are immediate benefits from the presence of coalition forces and the end of Saddam Hussein's rule. We commend all those involved.**

Clearing up the mess (Unexploded ordnance)

426. It was well known before the conflict that Iraq was one of the most heavily armed and heavily mined places on earth. As the Minister of the Armed Forces explained to the House in November 2003, 'unexploded ordnance in Iraq includes munitions from the Iran-Iraq war, mines laid by Iraqi forces, stores of ammunition and other ordnance left by Iraqi military and paramilitary forces as well as ordnance fired or dropped by both sides during recent hostilities'. He assured the House that 'the provision of a safe, secure and risk free environment for the Iraqi people is a key aspect of restoration activity for all members of the International Coalition in Iraq' and that 'the United Kingdom takes seriously its obligations as a member of that coalition to deal with unexploded ordnance'.[630]

427. As the occupying power, the coalition has a legal and moral responsibility to provide security for civilians in Iraq, including protection from unexploded ordnance (UXO). The coalition has been involved in marking and securing sites, clearing and disposing of the ordnance and educating civilians on the dangers of unexploded remnants of war.[631] The House was informed on 17 November 2003 that in the UK's area of responsibility about 1,600 sites had been cleared, containing about 619,000 munitions.[632] The same figures were quoted to us more than two months later.[633] As of February 2004, UK Forces had disposed of around 680,000 individual items of UXO, NGOs had disposed of 227,000 items and other multinational partners operating within the UK Area of Operations had disposed of a further 113,000 items. We sought an indication from MoD of what proportion of UXO within the UK area of operations this represented. We have been told, however, that "it is not possible to estimate the amount of UXO left in Iraq". The MoD has, however, noted that of the 62 Captured Enemy Ammunition (CEA) sites recorded within the UK area of

628 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 11.9. See also Q 2084 (Mr Lee)

629 Ev 403

630 HC Deb, 17 November 2003, c 504W

631 Q 2040 (Mr Lee)

632 HC Deb, 17 November 2003, c 504W

633 Q 2040

Operations, around 13 have been cleared.[634] This may give an indication of the scale of the clearance task still to be completed.

428. A report published in December 2003 by Human Rights Watch (HRW) sets out starkly the scale of the problem in the south-east of Iraq. Many Iraqi stockpiles were kept in or near populated areas, most of them in civilian buildings such as schools and mosques. Because many of the munitions were old, they lacked modern safety features. Shortages of fuel meant that Iraqi civilians would 'empty crates of ammunition for firewood' and 'remove the warheads of artillery shells in order to collect brass casings or gather propellant for fuel'.[635] The risk to life and limb from such activities is clearly horrifying.

429. According to HRW, the first priority for dealing with abandoned ordnance should have been securing sites:

> Keeping civilians away from caches, particularly large ones like the site in Basra that Human Rights Watch visited, removes the temptation to search for scraps or playthings and helps protect civilian lives. It also ensures that the ordnance does not end up in the hands of those that threaten both civilians—local and foreign—and Coalition troops. Finally, properly securing explosive ordnance sites facilitates later clearance by keeping the ordnance in its proper containers.

But HRW found that 'six weeks after the end of major hostilities, the Coalition's efforts in this area were still inadequate':

> The British forces in Basra made little or no effort to secure the large sites near its posts in the city. The storage facility Human Rights Watch visited was about 600 meters (.4 miles) from the headquarters of the First Fusiliers Battle Group. According to a briefing by Lieutenant Colonel Alan Butterfield on May 3, the British had no plans to secure the sites because of a lack of manpower. Human Rights Watch criticized this failure in a May 6 press release. At the time, Basra's al-Jumhuriyya Hospital was receiving five victims a day from unsecured ordnance. A month later, little had changed. The storage facility remained unsecured, and the U.K. forces were handing over clearance responsibility to UNMACT [the United Nations Mine Action Clearance Team].[636]

Coalition sources told HRW that Iraqi looters had interfered with efforts to secure and clear sites, and that there was a shortage of clearance experts. However, according to HRW, 'the Coalition … did not need specially trained EOD experts to secure sites. To speed up efforts, regular soldiers could provide security for abandoned munition caches'.[637]

430. We questioned MoD on their planning for dealing with unexploded ordnance, and the speed with which they had been carrying out these tasks. We were told that difficulties were caused by the scale of the problem compared to the manpower available, coupled with the unstable security situation. This was 'just a problem across the board of resources'

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634 Ev 442

635 Human Rights Watch, *Off Target: The Conduct of the War and Civilian Casualties in Iraq*, Chapter IV. Online at http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/usa1203/index.htm

636 HRW, *Ibid*

637 HRW, *Ibid*

and 'the reality of only having so many military people on the ground and what you can do with them'.[638] The security situation meanwhile was limiting the presence of NGOs on the ground and their ability to operate.[639]

431. HRW makes the point that securing sites containing UXO does not require the presence of experts. Once again at issue is the size of the force sent to Iraq, coupled with the mistaken expectation that some elements of the Iraqi army and security forces would be available to carry out basic guarding tasks. There were simply not enough people on the ground to secure munitions sites for some time after the combat phase, even when these sites were in populated locations. **Coalition efforts to clear unexploded ordnance throughout Iraq will make the country a far safer place for the people who live there. But the failure to provide sufficient forces to guard and secure munitions sites in the weeks and months after the conflict cost Iraqi civilian lives, and also provided potential enemies of the coalition with a ready stock of easily accessible weaponry.**

432. In recent months, most clearance has been undertaken through NGOs and commercial demining organisations. But between the start of the conflict and February 2004 the Government's funding of NGOs for this task in Iraq amounted to only £5 million, although this was 'set to rise in the coming months.'[640] In the context of wider expenditure on the conflict in Iraq and on the post-combat phase, this is surprisingly little. Indeed, the Government's funding of mine clearance worldwide in 2003–04 appears according to the Government's own figures to have decreased compared with the previous year.[641] **The Government should look again at whether the relatively modest funds that it has dedicated to supporting the clearance of unexploded ordnance in Iraq are adequate for the task at hand.**

Institutions

433. Our Government witnesses have been unanimous in their view that it is for Iraqis to decide how they should be governed.[642] The key milestones on the road towards self-government agreed by the coalition and Iraqi Governing Council include the establishment of an Iraqi Transitional Legislative Assembly and Government by the summer of 2004, elections for a Constitutional Convention by March 2005, and a popular referendum on the constitution and full national elections by the end of 2005. On 1 March 2004, the Iraqi Governing Council agreed to a draft interim constitution for the country. We have not sought during this inquiry to investigate how Iraqis are being enabled to make these longer-term choices. But the steps taken by coalition forces to involve Iraqis in political institutions and decision-making in the immediate aftermath of the conflict have had repercussions for the formation of any more permanent institutions that may follow.

434. One of the preconceptions upset by political realities on the ground was the notion that middle-ranking Iraqis would be able to remain in post and provide administrative

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638 Q 2042, Q 2044 (Mr Lee: Air Vice Marshal Loader)

639 Q 2042 (Mr Lee)

640 Ev 442

641 HC Deb, 12 November 2003, c314W

642 eg Q 2075 (Mr Chaplin)

continuity. In fact, it swiftly became clear that enough people in Iraqi society were opposed to those associated with the former regime remaining in post, that a more radical 'De-Baathification' process was instituted. This was complicated by the coalition's lack of reliable information about individuals' associations with the former regime, which meant that on occasion decisions were made about appointments that had to be swiftly reversed. The first man appointed to form civilian leadership within Basra province turned out to be a former brigadier in the Iraqi army and a member of the Baath party. His successor was accused of being an associate of Uday Hussein, and he too was replaced. The current governor, Abdulwahid Latif, a judge, seems to be widely respected, as we heard during our visit last July.

435. Mr Chaplin told us that 'a much finer grained understanding of the local politics' would have helped in making this kind of decision, but that the coalition 'could not realistically have expected to have that.'[643] As we heard:

> There is a tension that exists between, on the one hand, wanting to get some contact with local, responsible people quickly and, on the other hand, not choosing someone who turns out to be the wrong person just because you want speed. That is, I am afraid, something that can only be judged in a particular circumstance at the time. I think, in fact, the first person that was chosen as being the *de facto* mayor in Basra turned out to be not acceptable.[644]

436. It was always going to be difficult to establish a functioning administration after the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Most people of any prominence in Iraq would have needed to be associated with the regime in one way or another to attain that prominence. It is hardly surprising, given how cowed the Iraqi people had been by the regime, that most of those who came forward in the first instance were not the kind of dedicated middle managers the coalition was looking for.

437. It was often asserted that not all former Baathists were Baathists by choice: Iraq was a society in which membership of the Party was necessary to prosper. But the coalition was not always in a position to distinguish between those who were more closely associated with the former regime, and those who were members of the Baath party in name only. It seems also to have been the case that in some cases popular resentment of the former regime led to the ousting of officials who might profitably have remained in post. As we heard,

> you cannot impose upon people who have certain views about ex Baathist people who in their perception have benefited from the previous regime. It did not matter about the skill sets, their leadership qualities and other things; if they were not acceptable, we could not use them.[645]

> There were very strong feelings, particularly from those who had suffered most under Saddam Hussein, which included of course in the south where we were operating. They were simply not going to accept that someone who had visibly

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643 Q 1830

644 Q 2074 (Mr Lee)

645 Q 1827 (Air Vice Marshal Loader)

benefited from the rule of Saddam Hussein could be back in a position of power, even though they might have other qualities which would mean they could run an efficient administration. So we were starting from scratch in a more fundamental way than we had perhaps expected.[646]

Mistakes were made in identifying potential local leaders, and without better intelligence and a better understanding of Iraqi society, such mistakes were probably inevitable.

438. There is a risk that a flawed understanding of Iraqi society coupled with the need to be seen to be transferring authority to the Iraqi people will leave the new political and administrative structures open to capture by unrepresentative interest groups. In Mr Chaplin's view, 'one of the things that the British Army is very good at is getting alongside local leaders and feeling their way as to how to get the administration going again'. He referred to 'a process of shuttle diplomacy' to ensure when creating the provincial council in Basra 'that one group was not completely unacceptable to the rest and arriving at a provincial council which was broadly acceptable'.[647] But Dr Toby Dodge, who has advised us during this inquiry, has written how:

> informal and highly personalised networks undermine the creation of an effective and transparent bureaucracy, and have a flexibility and resilience that makes them very difficult to root out. Thus, coalition forces run the danger of inadvertently bolstering the networks of the shadow state created by the regime they ousted. The more this happens, the harder it will be to build stable state institutions with infrastructural power.[648]

439. When we put this point to Mr Chaplin, he reassured us that 'the military and civilians of the CPA who are engaging with local authorities are very alive to the risks you have outlined and take every possible precaution to ensure they are seen as objective and not favouring one faction over another.'[649] But without a deeper and better understanding of Iraqi society it will be hard for them to know whether this is occurring.

440. The Armed Forces have substantial experience of encouraging local governance, and of managing this function themselves where necessary, from peace support experience around the world. We were told of a 'direct read-across' from experience in the Balkans in the establishment of *ad hoc* local councils, as a 'stop gap' before the establishment of more permanent structures.[650]

441. **The Armed Forces have done their utmost to fulfil their responsibilities to the Iraqi people as the occupying power, and we applaud them. But they have been under-resourced for this enormous task. It is unreasonable to expect the military to have a fine-grained understanding of how an unfamiliar society operates; but without this understanding, and without substantial civilian support in the form of experts and**

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646   Q 1829 (Mr Chaplin)

647   Q 2076

648   Toby Dodge, 'US Intervention and Possible Iraqi Futures', *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 3, (Autumn 2003), pp 103–122.

649   Q 2080 (Mr Chaplin)

650   Q 2024 (Mr Lee)

interpreters to help them to gain this understanding, mistakes were bound to be made which would make it more difficult to construct the kind of Iraq that the coalition wants to see: stable, secure and prosperous; a threat neither to its neighbours nor to the wider world.

14 Information Operations

Victory is rarely achieved purely through the destruction of an adversary's material; the key is to destroy an adversary's Will to fight. Info Ops is the primary means by which Will and the ability to impose Will and exercise command is attacked.[651]

442. In any operation MoD provides support to the information campaign through the co-ordinated use of military capability in order to influence audiences. This has two parts: Information Operations and Media Operations, which are supposed to be mutually supporting. The Cabinet Office provides strategic direction and objectives for the information campaign and responsibility for MoD's contribution rests with the Director General, Operational Policy and the Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations (DTIO).

443. Air Vice Marshal Mike Heath, who was Director of DTIO during Operation Telic, described information operations as follows:

> the concept of Information Operations for the military is to garner cross-government activity, not just military activity, to contribute towards influence and persuasion. I like to think of it as a continuum, that if you get it right it starts during pre war fighting where you are looking towards dissuasion and coercion; it continues into military operations; and, of course, it then wraps up and it is just as essential that you carry it through into post conflict restoration and reconstitution.[652]

DTIO provides strategic guidance on targeting and the cross-government information campaign, as well as advice to Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff. In DTIO itself, the staff of 98 includes a psychiatrist, an anthropologist and other specialist staff.[653] At the strategic level the British have been paying an American consultancy firm, the Redon Group, to provide advice on information campaigns for some five years.[654] DTIO also has contacts with a variety of experts in the United Kingdom in universities and other institutions.

444. The Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) carries out analysis to support military operations and the DIS Operations Support Group, following priorities set out by the Targeting Board, will conduct analyses of both infrastructure and human factors. These analyses are then brought together by the National Infrastructure Assessment Team (NIAT) into a Target Systems Analysis (TSA) identifying key vulnerabilities in 'will' and 'capability'. 'Human factors' analysis looks at the 'will' of adversaries, allies, coalition partners and key uncommitted parties. Infrastructure analysis, as well as addressing physical infrastructure, also includes information networks, C4I (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence) capabilities and processes to identify 'critical nodes' and linkages in order to identify vulnerabilities. At the operational level the Joint Task Force Commander sets boundaries and provides direction.

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651   Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, *Information Operations—Joint Warfare Publication 3–80* (June 2002), hereafter JWP 3-80, para 106.

652   Q 1571

653   Q 1643

654   Q 1630

445. MoD has put considerable effort into making this activity truly cross-departmental.

> as far as Information Operations is concerned [MoD] is willing to talk to anybody and everyone who will listen…the major interlocutor is the Foreign Office, and through the process of Kosovo and Sierra Leone…we have had a meaningful and constant dialogue with the Foreign Office. We have also had dialogue with the Cabinet Office, and through Iraq we had conversations on a daily basis with the Campbell group in No 10. On an ad hoc basis we have included DfID in our discussions and the Home Office, although…those are infrequent. The advantage we have had in the Ministry of Defence is that we have a directorate that stood up for constant engagement in this area.[655]

The Information Campaign objectives are contained in an Information Operations Annex to CDS's Directive which identifies the 'Master Info Campaign Messages' that must be put across. The Master Messages are so important that they 'must not be compromised by the conduct of lower level Info Ops.'[656] The annex may also list target audiences and additional messages.

Information Campaign Objectives in Operation Telic

446. *First Reflections* states that the aim of the information campaign was to influence the will of the Iraqi regime and the attitudes of ordinary Iraqi people and to articulate the Government's strategy to allies and others in the region. Air Vice Marshal Heath set out the objectives in Operation Telic as follows:

> Initially, the key objective was to deter the deployment and use of weapons of mass destruction. It was to deter wilful damage to the Iraqi infrastructure either by the people or by the regime; it was to promote the coalition's aims and objectives in terms of deterrents, potential hostile action and the reconstitution that came afterwards. All three were equally important. It was to prevent or limit civilian casualties, predominantly through creating an understanding with the population that they were not the target group if we moved into conflict, and how they could remain relatively safe, and also to convey to military personnel how they could surrender and remain safe throughout the process once again if we went into conflict. Those, widely, are the grander, strategic concepts.[657]

447. Issues which were identified as having a potentially negative impact by the coalition information operations planners included oil, perceptions of the Bush administration's ulterior objectives in going to war with Iraq and the very obvious divisions within the UN Security Council. The Iraqi regime also had its own information operations campaign which tried (with some apparent success) to characterise the crisis as Bush family revenge for the 1991 Gulf War and part of an expansionist American policy of pre-emptive military action. It also argued that the UN inspectors should be given more time to do their job properly. The information operations picture was complicated by the failure to get Turkish support for a northern option and the fact that in the 1991 Gulf War the use of covert

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655 Q 1579

656 JWP 3–80, para 112.

657 Q 1592

propaganda may have encouraged uprisings within Iraq which were not then supported by the coalition. This had left a legacy of mistrust among Iraqis, particularly in the south of the country, about the motives and commitment of the US and its allies.

448. In some respects an information campaign directed at Iraq had been conducted since the early 1990s. It had certainly had been an important part of operations such as Desert Fox (when British and American aircraft bombed Iraqi military facilities in the no-fly zones following the withdrawal of UN inspectors in December 1998). But information operations began in earnest in October 2002 when an American A10 Warthog dropped 120,000 leaflets warning Iraqi forces not to fire on US and UK aircraft in the no-fly zones. By 13 January 2003, fourteen leaflet drops had been undertaken.

449. According to one source, in advance of the first attack on 20 March over 40 million leaflets were dropped on Iraq, with another 40 million dropped during the major combat phase.[658] Most appear to have been dropped in the south.

450. American aircraft began broadcasting radio messages in Arabic in December 2002.[659] The US has admitted that it undertook a number of bombing missions in the no-fly zones in the second half of 2002 targeting elements of the Iraqi's command and control communications networks, in Operation Southern Focus.[660] The coalition's effort at the strategic and grand-strategic level appears to have been to concentrate its information campaigns on the regular Iraqi Army, ordinary citizens, religious leaders and scientists connected with the WMD programmes, ahead of pillars of the Baath regime including the Republican Guard and the Special Republican Guard. On 11 January the US began an email campaign, targeting political and military leaders in Iraq. Some of the messages were:

> If you provide information on weapons of mass destruction or if you takes steps to hamper their use, we will do whatever is necessary to protect you and protect your families. Failing to do that will lead to grave personal consequences.

> Iraqi chemical, biological and nuclear weapons violate Iraq's commitment to agreements and United Nations resolutions. Iraq has been isolated because of this behaviour. The United States and its allies want the Iraqi people to be liberated from Saddam's injustice and for Iraq to become a respected member of the international community. Iraq's future depends on you.[661]

451. The test detonation of the 21,000lb MOAB (massive ordnance airburst bomb) on 11 March by the USAF in Florida is believed by some to have been an example of preparatory psychological operations for a conflict in Iraq, demonstrating the full destructive power available to the US from a conventional weapons system, should it need to retaliate to the use of WMD against its deployed forces. It has been claimed that the decision in Operation Telic to eschew an aerial bombardment phase at the start of the campaign was an example of information operations objectives influencing the conduct of military operations. Our evidence, however, suggests that other factors were as important (see paragraph 33).

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658 'Mind Games', Lt Col Steven Collins, *NATO Review* (Summer 2003).

659 'Commando Solo Messages over Iraq', www.psywarrior.com.

660 US Bombed Iraq before war', *Toronto Star*, 20 July 2003.

661 Herbert Friedman, 'No-fly Zone Warning Leaflets to Iraq',www.psywarrior.com/IraqNoFlyZone.html.

UK psychological operations capabilities

452. Psychological operations (psyops) can be seen as the tactical end of the strategic information operations whole. Air Vice Marshal Heath explained it as follows:

> Psychological Operations is very much a part of Information Operations: its place really is at the tactical level, but without the coherence of strategic advice, operational development and then tactical practitioning, you do not have coherent psychological operations. Psychological Operations, if you like, is the more public part of military activity. It is specifically military and I cannot say that about most of the rest of Information Operations—that is cross-government. It is specifically tactical, and it is specifically targeted by military means into target audiences, so I saw it as the end instrument of what we were crafting in London.[662]

The UK's psyops capability is provided by the 15 (UK) Psychological Operations Group (15 (UK) PsyOps) based at the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre, Chicksands. Its role is to provide psychological operations and information support capabilities for operations.[663] The Reserve element of 15 (UK) PsyOps includes personnel from civilian radio stations some of whom were used in the setting up of a local radio station in Basra—Radio Nahrain. The group uses equipment that was bought commercially and which is therefore not 'ruggerised' i.e. built to the robustness appropriate for military operations.[664] 15 (UK) PsyOps is supported by information officers at battalion and regimental level within the operational units.[665]

453. Americans psyops are supported by dedicated Hercules E-130Es (the Commando Solo[666]). As well as the basic capability to broadcast radio and TV signals these aircraft are also able to jam existing radio and TV signals and replace them with their own. They were used in advance of the 1991 Gulf War and during the Grenada and Haiti operations. All of the US Secretary of Defense's press conferences from January 2003 onwards were broadcast by Commando Solo aircraft in theatre. Other output was produced by the 4th Psychological Operations Group based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, aided by Iraqi exiles. The US Congress has given budget approval for a replacement EC-130J version of the aircraft. There are however no plans to provide the British forces with a similar capability. As Air Vice Marshal Heath told us:

> when we make the balance of investment judgements, as worthy as 15 Psyop is, it still is a small capability to be delivered. At the moment, 15 Psyop will double in size, just about, over the next year. I hope that in the lessons learned out of Telic we will deliver them an AM radio, but today there is no plan that I am aware of… and I do

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662 Q 1590

663 There is a small cadre of 8 regular personnel drawn from all 3 services, 2 civil servants and the Reservist group of 28 provides the Unit with its media, broadcasting and publishing specialists. The skills that the reservists bring to the Group include desktop publishing, video camera work, television editing and production, and market analysis. When deployed operationally the regular and Reservist personnel form an Information Support Team, which would deploy in support of a national or NATO operation. Stephen Jolly, 'Wearing the Stag's Head Badge: British Combat Propaganda Since 1945', *Falling Leaf: The Journal of the Psywar Society*, 172 (March 2001).

664 Q 1640

665 Q 1628

666 The 6 Commando Solo aircraft are flown by the 193rd Special Operations Wing of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and are generally tasked by the State Department.

not believe that you will see a massive expansion in this capability. If I had an open cheque book, yes, I would buy an E-130E and, yes, I would buy a TV station.[667]

454. The US is well provided for in terms of resources but there has been criticism of their lack of cultural sensitivity compared to the British. Air Vice Marshal Heath told us:

> We have a softer, smaller footprint than the Americans. I think we are better at understanding the needs of the people, rather than the needs of the war fighter. The Americans today very firmly see themselves still at war in Iraq.[668]

More importantly perhaps he argued that the cross-government approach in the UK was a strength which the Americans did not have:

> The Americans have a different approach to this whole concept and indeed all of their operations…the Americans envy our concept of joined up, cross government activity in this area…The Americans broke this out into separate parcels. Until the war was over, there was very little information operations effort into the reconstitution and the aftermath; whereas from our point of view, when we were getting towards the end state, my staff were directed to lose complete interest in the war fighting piece. We needed to start moving into the reconstruction piece.[669]

455. Planning for the British information campaign began in October, but nothing was initiated until the first day of the combat phase. According to Air Vice Marshal Heath this was 'too late' and he recommended that a lot of the activity that followed should have been undertaken in the preparatory phase.[670] Given that the Americans were undertaking extensive messaging in the months leading up to the conflict, this contrast in the British approach is surprising. **Our evidence suggests that if information operations are to be successful, it is essential that they should start in the period when diplomatic efforts are still being made, albeit backed by the coercive threat of military force through overt preparations. This would allow for the full potential of information operations to be exerted in advance of the start of hostilities and might even contribute to their avoidance.**

Effectiveness

456. The coalition message seems to have had limited effect on world opinion. Favourable views of the US fell dramatically from the start of 2003 to March 2003. (According to the Pew Centre the figures fell from 63% to 31% in France; 70% to 36% in Italy; 61% to 28% in Russia; 30% to 12% in Turkey; and 75% to 48% in the UK.)

457. Co-ordination of the information campaign between the combat phase and post-conflict phase was weak, as is admitted in *Lessons for the Future*:

> While co-ordination of the information campaign activity across Government and the agencies was extremely good at the working level during the campaign phase, this

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667   Q 1639

668   Q 1637

669   Q 1663

670   Q 1619

declined during the early part of the post-conflict phase. This led to a dilution of its effectiveness and coherence, despite the importance of the contribution it can make to maintaining the consent of the Iraqi people.[671]

This is an important issue since information operations must be directed to the achievement of strategic objectives (see paragraphs 445–6 above). Air Vice Marshal Heath told us:

> … we were unable to counter the high level of cynicism and hostility that we were meeting in open forum, predominantly in the media. We had no eloquent answer to most of that. We believed that unless we could have a demonstrator that confirmed our line, we felt it was better to say nothing rather than to say, 'They are wrong; we are right.' That largely undermined our position in a number of areas.[672]

458. Measuring the effectiveness of Information Operations is a significant challenge: 'the whole concept of measures of effectiveness is taxing us and we are trying to come up with a methodology.'[673] *Information Operations* refers to 'Measures of Effectiveness' which will have been included in the Information Operations plan and which must be constantly monitored. However, influencing a target audience is not an exact science. The DIS contracted a private company to carry out an analysis of the effectiveness of information operations in Kosovo. *First Reflections* noted that it was difficult to measure the effectiveness of the information campaign, but added that:

> the largely quiescent reaction of the bulk of the Iraqi population and the disappearance or surrender of the most of the Iraqi armed forces may indicate its positive effects…[674]

However, *Lessons for the Future* makes no such claims.

459. Air Vice Marshal Heath explained to the Committee how difficult assessing success was:

> If you cannot measure it and you cannot demonstrate that you are delivering capability, you cannot demonstrate that you are enhancing capability. You cannot demonstrate ultimately that if you get it right you will avoid conflict.
>
> I had one individual who was a reservist. This was his full time job in terms of trying to analyse where we might see demonstrators of capability. He trawled every resource he could: newspapers, the media, the internet, reports coming out from prisoners of war, reports from people on the streets. We are pulling together as much as we can in terms of that human assessment. In terms of further assessment the PJHQ, towards the end of the campaign, came back with an embryonic matrix of

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671 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 10.5.

672 Q 1664

673 Q 1591

674 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003) p 18.

trying to do a scientific analysis of where you think there are indicators and what level of effect they were demonstrating.[675]

460. Having said that, there were areas that appeared to have shown some success. Air Vice Marshal Heath claimed:

> prisoners of war who were interviewed were persuaded by leaflets not to open valves in the oilfields: we saw battalions that took up defensive surrender positions that came directly out of the psyops messages; we had people in Basra who, when they were asked to go out into the streets and riot against the Baath Party, said, 'No, the reason we are staying indoors is because you have been telling us on the radio for the last month to keep out of the way and we will be out of harm's way and we will be safe'. …In some small way I see those as measures of effectiveness.[676]

461. The Secretary of State told the Committee that a range of efforts had been made to demonstrate to the Iraqi people that it was the regime that was being targeted, not them.[677] He had had reports that the clear and precise targeting of the regime and buildings was noticed by people inside Iraq. He added:

> warnings were given that use of weapons of mass destruction by senior Iraqi military would be regarded as a war crime, and the fact that they were pursuing higher orders would not be an acceptable explanation, so a very clear and stern warning was given to the Iraqi military about that.[678]

Nonetheless, speaking in May 2003, he accepted that the effectiveness of the information campaign was hard to assess—'I cannot properly answer the impact of information operations without consulting my Iraqi counterpart, and since I have no idea where he is…'[679] He believed that the fact that Iraqis did not use chemical or other unconventional weapons was due more to the rapidity of the coalition advance and its effect on Iraqi command and control capability than to information operations—'I place much greater weight in terms of rapidity of effect of the operations…'[680]

462. One specific success for information operations was suggested by Rear Admiral Snelson who told us that the information operation conducted by him and the American Maritime Commander successfully deterred attacks on coalition shipping by publicly stating that they were prepared to deal with such attacks.[681] Other examples that might be identified include that the regime did not use non-conventional weapons against the coalition, the absence of any widespread destruction of the Iraqi oil industry infrastructure. Both had been targets of leaflet drops by the coalition.

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463. On the other hand, Saddam Hussein himself commented on the futility of the coalition leaflet campaign in a speech on 27 January to senior army officers. Iraqi state television broadcast excerpts of the meeting. Saddam stated, 'The enemies think that people are eager to read their leaflets...' and 'Your brothers among the people and the armed forces stage what resembles a ceremony after collecting and burning these leaflets...' There is an argument that when a nation publicly attacks psychological operations it is a sign that the propaganda is effective.[682]

464. But Air Vice Marshal Heath was prepared to acknowledge areas of weakness:

> I suppose that the weakest area of our performance was our ability to counter either the negative press or the negative messages that in fact were coming out of Baghdad. There was no doubt that Saddam Hussein is a seasoned practitioner of Information Operations.[683]

Indeed, in this respect, as in Kosovo, the coalition came 'second', which is a worrying conclusion for future operations:

> actually we came second most of the time. Okay, we managed to make the Minister of Information a comedy or a parody character but in the very first stages he was quite coherent and issuing messages that were doing us harm, and the weakness in our performance which we are now addressing is we were not very good at responding in a timely fashion to the criticism being issued around the world.

> The BBC were at pains to tell me that they were not an instrument of government and they were independent, and therefore no matter how much we would like a story to be carried, a riposte to be carried into the public domain, if they were not interested because that was not the sexy story this year, week or day, then you would find it nigh impossible to counter some of the messages being used against you. It is an area of weakness, and it is a critically important area that we have to address in the coming months.[684]

465. Nonetheless, overall he believed that the information campaign had had an effect:

> I have no doubt whatsoever that we did have an effect…Had we gone on during the persuasion stage for another year, would we have avoided conflict? I do not know…It is the most difficult aspect of the whole information piece. You need to find a way of delivering messages of effectiveness…[DTIO] has the best minds trying to address this very issue because we see it as essential. There is no doubt that we delivered an element of persuasion, an element of dissuasion and an element that affected war fighting in terms of regiments or battalions giving up and making sure that we did not attack them. There is no doubt that we are having an influence in the reconstitution of Iraq today, but I am not capable of quantifying that in terms of is it very good; is it high or is it low. [685]

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682 Herbert Friedman, 'No-fly Zone Warning Leaflets to Iraq',www.psywarrior.com/IraqNoFlyZone.html.

683 Q 1601

684 Q 1602

685 Q 1669

In conclusion, we believe that the British information operations campaign did not begin early enough. We are concerned that the lessons of the Kosovo campaign were not better learned in this important area. It is disappointing that the coalition is widely perceived to have 'come second' in perception management. However we recognise that 'coming second' may be inevitable if a conflict of choice is being pursued by liberal democracies with a free media. We are, however, persuaded that information operations are an activity which can be expected to become of increasing importance in future operations. There were a number of successes which provide evidence of the potential effectiveness of information operations. We recommend that the Government should consider significantly enhancing our capabilities in this area.

15 Role of the Media

466. The Iraq conflict generated unprecedented levels of media interest and coverage both in the UK and across the world.[686] Almost 5000 journalists were in the region covering the war. The coalition took the decision to embed[687] around 700 journalists in front line units. This was partly in order to be able to exercise some control over the many journalists who would otherwise have been trying to follow events in theatre, as 'unilaterals'. Even so the conflict has been claimed to have been the most costly in journalists' lives in history—at least 16 were killed in a two week major conflict phase—a historically high per day casualty rate.[688]

467. The embedding of journalists was one of the more novel aspects of the media campaign, not least because of the scale of the practice—158 were with British forces compared with a total pool of journalists with the task force in the Falklands War of 29.[689] However, the media operation was not only on the frontline; it also involved journalists in Forward Transmission Units attached to major headquarters in the field, in Centcom in Qatar, and in the relevant capitals (principally London and Washington). In some cases journalists in capitals knew more about particular incidents from their colleagues on the ground than the officials answering their questions did from the communications available to them.

468. Some have suggested that the mass of tactical level detail which formed the bulk of the reports from the embedded journalists obscured the overall strategic picture and that the result was to give disproportionate importance to minor engagements. A senior TV editor recently said in public that 24 hour news editors had no time to 'fact check' before transmission and this was a problem that was compounded by embedded journalists' reports, which editors felt they had to broadcast if available.

MoD's media strategy

469. The Ministry of Defence began working on its media strategy in September 2002 in consultation with the Americans.[690] In December, media operations were practised in Exercise Internal Look held at Centcom.[691] Practical arrangements began in January 2003 once the southern option had been decided upon and the British land package started to become clearer.[692] In preparing for Operation Telic, MoD claimed to be building on the lessons of the 1991 Gulf War and the Kosovo campaign during both of which it had attracted some criticism. In fact, as far back as the Falklands war, media operations were

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686 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003) p 16.

687 ie place individual journalists with specific combat units for the period of operations.

688 According to the International Federation of Journalists, 62 journalists died in Bosnia, 23 were killed in the whole of the Kosovan conflict of 1999, 4 journalists were killed in the Gulf War of 1991 and 9 died in Afghanistan between 2001-02, Byrne, Ciar, 'Media Casualties of other conflict', *The Guardian*, 9 April 2003.

689 This figure includes broadcast technicians. Annex C, Note to the Committee from MoD, 13 January 2004, Ev 421–2. See also Carruthers, Susan L. *The Media at War* (London, 2000), p 122.

690 Q 1359

691 Ev 420

692 Q 1360

identified by MoD and our predecessors as an important area of weakness.[693] In Kosovo, MoD admitted that 'there was a lot of improvisation' during the campaign.[694]

470. MoD's handbook for the procedures for dealing with the media in times of conflict is known as the 'Green Book'. It states in its introduction:

> During a military crisis, or a period of tension, or in war threatening the United Kingdom, at home or overseas, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) will aim to provide for the media a range of facilities to enable first hand reporting, in addition to an accurate, objective and timely information service.[695]

The provision of facilities and information, however, is subject to operational and security constraints.

471. *First Reflections* describes the primary aim of MoD's media effort in Iraq as being 'to provide accurate and timely information about UK military involvement.'[696] They judge themselves to have been 'largely successful' in this:

> Building on the experience gained in previous conflicts, coalition media operations were much improved compared to recent operations and the extensive resulting coverage was generally well informed and usually factually accurate.[697]

472. The Director General Corporate Communications, Mr Tony Pawson, told us that the main aims of the media strategy were to be as open as possible and to meet the practical needs of the media in terms of substance and timeliness. He also wanted the information provided by MoD to be accurate, but admitted:

> There is of course a tension between being quick and being accurate. That tension was present there throughout the conflict.[698]

473. The media plan was 'an integral part of the overall military plan'.[699] However, the Government's media strategy was coordinated across Whitehall with a daily interdepartmental media coordination meeting chaired by No. 10. MoD had to fit in with the broader objectives of that co-ordinated policy.[700] As Mr Pawson explained:

> In relation to media, there is…coordination on a daily basis now, not just for Iraq, across Whitehall. We play our role in that. Policy has a particular meaning in the Ministry of Defence. We define it quite narrowly in terms of defence policy. Much of what we do is execution of grand policy.[701]

693 HC 347-I, *Lessons of Kosovo*, (1999–2002) para 239.

694 HC 347-I, *Lessons of Kosovo*, (1999–2002) para 239.

695 http://www.mod.uk/news/green_book/maintext.htm

696 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003) p 16.

697 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003), para 10.10.

698 Q 1359

699 Q 1360

700 Ev 420–2

701 Q 1371

474. In all some 200 additional press officers were deployed by MoD in theatre and in London to support the media campaign effort.[702] But, even with this additional capability, the sheer scale of the media contingent stretched their resources. *Lessons for the Future* acknowledged these problems and highlighted the shortage of trained media operations personnel. The result was that 'most' positions were filled by double-hatted Regular or Reserve personnel.

> This delayed the establishment of a robust media operations capability sufficiently early in theatre…we need to address how to provide an early media capability in an era of high profile, high readiness expeditionary operations.[703]

475. One consequence, described to us by Audrey Gillan of The Guardian, was a degree of unnecessary interference by non-expert media handlers that could appear very like censorship:

> everything that I filed to The Guardian had to be read by somebody there, and initially there were specially appointed media ops officers around… There was also within the regiment an officer who did media ops. He actually was with 16 Air Assault Brigade HQ so he did not come to the front line, therefore the sort of censorship came down to the commanding officer and second-in-command. I do not imagine that they would have had that much media training…They did change things, and an MoD official acknowledged to me last week that it was not censorship but meddling, and there was some of that…I think the solution to it would be to have a proper media ops officer.[704]

476. *Lessons for the* Future also identified weaknesses in the transition from the conflict to post conflict phase. Many media operations personnel left theatre shortly after major hostilities had ended, which resulted in a loss of initiative in the media campaign during a period of significant (and negative) media coverage of the coalition's activities in seeking to stabilise the country.[705] As we have noted above, this was also a period when information operations more generally were seen as having been weak.

477. **We believe that the importance of the media campaign in the modern world remains under-appreciated by sections of the Armed Forces. The early establishment of a robust media operations capability in theatre must be a priority for any operation. Where an operation is perceived to be a 'war of choice' the ability to handle multiple media organisations in theatre with professionalism and sophistication is essential.**

Taste and Impartiality

478. The media's role has attracted much comment. Air Marshal Burridge publicly questioned the motives and values of the media in general, at one point commenting:

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702 Q 1406

703 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003) para 10.12.

704 Q 757

705 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—Lessons for the Future* (December 2003) para 10.13.

> The UK media has lost the plot. You stand for nothing, you support nothing, you criticise, you drip. It's a spectator sport to criticise anybody or anything, and what the media says fuels public expectation.[706]

He also commented on their effect on morale and motivation to the Committee:

> I believe that the position that the UK media has taken, for a number of reasons, is extremely counter-productive as far as individual motivation goes.[707]

479. But the media coverage was by no means all negative. The embedded media provided pictures of the coalition forces professionally approaching their tasks. The Secretary of State wrote that the embedded media helped secure public opinion in the UK.[708] While the BBC was criticised by pro-war and anti-war campaigners alike for bias, some American networks were strongly taken to task for allegedly acting as 'cheer-leaders' for the coalition. Despite vigorous criticism in the UK of one US network, Fox TV, for its coverage, a recent Independent Television Commission (ITC) ruling said that it had not breached ITC rules requiring 'due impartiality', noting that impartiality did not mean that a broadcaster had to be neutral on every issue.[709]

480. On the other hand Air Marshal Burridge publicly attacked the Arabic TV station Al Jazeera for broadcasting images of dead British troops. 'The decision to broadcast such material is deplorable'.[710] As embedded journalists draw on more and more sophisticated technology, the possibility of a live TV broadcast of a person or persons being killed increases. We raised this question with our witnesses, but no-one had a solution.[711] Whether live feeds should be required to be on a 'loop' system with a time delay, allowing for the intervention of editorial judgement to prevail is a question for the broadcasters and the media machinery of government. **We strongly believe that the live broadcast of the death of service personnel would be utterly unacceptable. We recommend that MoD begin discussions as a matter of urgency with media organisations to find a solution to this very real possibility in a future conflict.**

Attitudes to the embed system

481. Some journalists chose to be unilateral—that is not accepting the restrictions of being embedded with a particular unit and therefore able to move about as freely as conditions would allow. Mr Jeremy Thompson of Sky News told us how he crossed the border between Iraq and Kuwait on 22 March through a hole in the fence. However, soon after crossing he attached himself to the 7th Armoured Brigade for security reasons—Mr Terry Lloyd, who was working for ITN and was a friend of his, was killed a few miles from where Mr Thompson was operating:

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706 *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 April 2003.

707 Q 406

708 *The Times*, 28 March 2003.

709 Gibson, Owen, 'War News Not Biased, says ITC' *The Guardian*, 19 June 2003.

710 Statement by Air Marshal Brian Burridge, 27 March 2003,
http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/burridge_27march.htm

711 Qq 763–6

he had turned right and I had turned left, pretty much within a few hours of each other, and that is how these things often go, and so I think security was more of an issue. But we were self-contained, self-reliant. We did not have to rely on the military for fuel, water, food, communication or anything like that.[712]

Few journalists were totally unattached, not least as they needed to have passes to operate within Kuwait. The flood of unilaterals and webcasting freelancers, that some had predicted would be drawn to Iraq, did not in fact materialise.

482. Broadly speaking the British commanders in the field expressed themselves satisfied with how the system operated. Air Marshal Burridge felt that taken in the round the system had 'proven just positive':

> … given that we went into this campaign with 33% public support and given the need to generate greater public support, then the media become such an important aspect.[713]

The main concern he had was the need for better context—an issue which is discussed below.

483. The British land force commander, General Brims, said that he was happy with the way the embed system worked:

> The embedded journalists were absolutely fine, from my point of view….None of them let the side down, as far as we were concerned, that I am aware of…I used a spokesman at my level and talked to them on an all-day, daily basis, as it were, obviously I was in touch with the spokesman. I only engaged with [the media] myself, live, as it were, quite sparingly. I did give them quite a lot of background briefings, to help them be able to report as best they could.[714]

This view was shared by the air component commander, Air Vice Marshal Torpy:

> We had embedded media journalists on a number of our deployed operation bases…I think we got pretty good coverage actually and I think, from talking to my own people, they were very satisfied with the coverage that they got.[715]

484. However, the maritime commander, Rear Admiral Snelson, raised some concerns, the most important of which, from his perspective, was that the maritime picture did not appear in as timely a manner as the land or air picture:

> I was sitting in the Middle East tending to watch American channels because I was in American Headquarters and not watching British ones…I think, for the most part it was balanced, but…there was not a lot of media coverage, and that reflects a couple of problems. One is the business of getting television pictures back from ships in a timely fashion. We have invested a certain amount of money in this, in devices that

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will take a tape out of a camera and then send it back via Imarsat commercial satellite. All of that takes time, and our experience was, in this operation, that when television pictures from sea eventually got back it would be some six to eight to ten hours later. As far as the editors were concerned, on the rolling news channels, that was old news, so frequently, I think, we missed opportunities to get the maritime dimension in the news.[716]

Also, there was a rigidity in the placing of journalists on particular ships which he did not find helpful,

The coverage itself that we got, I think, largely was balanced… We had embedded journalists in different maritime units. That in itself was not a problem, but we were not permitted to move them round to different ships after the initial allocation had been done from London… A lesson we learned, and I have put forward and I think the Department has accepted, is that I wish I had been delegated control of where I could move the journalists round.[717]

485. For the journalists who were embedded there was always the danger of their objectivity being influenced by living in close proximity to the troops with whom they were embedded. Audrey Gillan, who was attached to a cavalry squadron of 105 people, explained to the Committee what it meant to live with the troops:

when you are embedded…when you are living inside their vehicles, travelling with them, relying on them for food and water and electricity, you doss down, get your sleeping pack out, roll it down beside them…you do become incredibly close…you cannot help but become close to the subject that you are living with…[718]

Mr Gavin Hewitt of the BBC, who was embedded with the American 3rd Infantry Division, and witnessed some of the most intense fighting, agreed:

There is a powerful bond between yourself and the unit you are travelling with. It is unavoidable. The principal reason is you are dependent on them for your safety.[719]

He also noted what all of our journalist witnesses told us, that they did not know what they would have done if they had to report a serious failure or setback for the troops they were with:

The big question for me… was, say my unit had been involved in an attack on a school bus by mistake and there had been real serious casualties, would I, knowing that I would have to continue my journey with this tank unit, have reported it as robustly as I would report any other story? The answer is I hope so. But I suspect that all of us who were embedded ultimately knew that there could come a point when there was something of a clash between your loyalty to tell what you saw and your loyalty to the people with whom you were sharing this experience.[720]

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486. **Overall the embedding of journalists with combat units worked well. The experience is likely to be seen as a precedent for future operations. Problems arose, however, firstly with the shortage, particularly early on, of properly trained and experienced media officers in some units and secondly because of the inflexibility of the deployment arrangements of the journalists. We recommend that MoD take steps to avoid these problems arising in future operations.**

Setting the context

487. Many of the journalists who were embedded were not defence or diplomatic/foreign affairs experts and the product of their work was often raw and unsophisticated. As Mr Alex Thomson, of Channel 4 News, told the Committee: 'television is a crude beast, it needs the pictures, we live or die by that and frankly whether there is a journalist behind who can understand what is going on is in some senses not the main thing.'[721]

488. The results could be, to put it mildly, misleading. Air Marshal Burridge told us:

> … the description of individual events should be pretty accurate, with one major proviso…I was horrified at how profligate with language some of the embedded journalists were. You may remember a Sunday morning when 1,000 people started coming out of Basra to the south over one of the bridges and they talked about poor people being caught in cross fire. They were not caught in cross fire, they were being machine gunned by the Baath party militia. Nobody was firing back…Words that fall readily off the tongue but actually do not accurately describe what they are seeing. [722]

The problem was reports from individual embedded journalists both over-dramatised the events they were part of and were broadcast without sufficient effort to place them in the context of the operation as a whole:

> what I think was lacking, and I have given a lot of thought to how this might be redressed, was a decent method of putting that into context…there was a tendency for a pinprick to be reported as a mortal haemorrhage, the notion that things were bogged down, all dreadfully inaccurate. Had there been a better method of placing those things in context, then a more accurate picture would have been painted.[723]

489. Furthermore, MoD was clearly surprised by how the embedded journalists reports distorted what they saw as the 'true' picture. According to Sir Kevin Tebbit:

> there was an awkward period after the very rapid initial success… It looked as though the embedded media were getting amazing pictures, something which has never happened before, almost warfare as it occurred, and it was therefore very difficult indeed for the media itself to put this in context. It was difficult to know whether what was one tiny little incident in one place was in fact representative of the overall campaign. We found ourselves in a situation where it looked much more brutal and much less successful than in fact was the case. It was quite difficult for the

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media as well as for us to put that in context. In that sense there was a complication.[724]

490. According to *First Reflections*, 'MoD's intention from the outset was to enable UK personnel in theatre to brief the media on operational issues, leaving overarching strategic and political issues for London' and 'the National Contingent HQ Media Centre and press information centres, all of which had MoD spokesmen attached, helped provide context.'[725] It seemed that the intention was that the strategic picture should be provided by US and UK commanders in Centcom in Qatar, but this did not work very well.

491. Mr Urban told us:

> It is interesting when you hear in this debate post war from people in the military or MoD this idea about the mosaic or the snapshot or whatever. Clearly from their point of view, the media operations plan involved having this Centcom central briefing. I know there was some discussion about whether they should do something in Kuwait on a similar pattern and it was decided to keep it in Qatar. I think it disappointed the military.

> One of the responses in London centrally was that MoD started putting on briefings and making certain people available for interview more often. The Secretary of State was able to appear on Newsnight quite a few times…my understanding was that they had to do more here (in London) than they had originally anticipated doing because Centcom had disappointed in terms of being the central, whatever you want to call it, rebuttal or information point that people had thought it might be before the war.[726]

492. Some context was provided by expert commentators (analysts, academics and retired military personnel) who were employed by the media organisations as 'presenters' friends' to give some broader perspectives to the raw feed from the embedded journalists. In MoD's opinion this was not always helpful because the context provided was not always more accurate than the impressionistic reports from the front line. One suggestion that has been floated on various occasions has been for some of these 'experts' and journalists to be briefed on a confidential basis by the MoD (as a number of journalists in theatre were) so that they could better inform the media's analysis of operations.

The Forward Transmission Unit

493. Another source of context was supposed to be the Forward Transmission Unit (FTU) which was a media facility attached to the rear of the 1st (UK) Armoured Division headquarters. In the event many editors chose to use information direct from the embedded journalists with front-line units rather than from the journalists who were attached to the FTU. One of the journalists placed in the FTU, Mr Alex Thomson, described it as a situation in which they were 'transmitting but not particularly forward'.[727]

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724 Q 1730

725 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003), p 16.

726 Q 851

727 Q 770

Though nominally attached to the British Land Forces HQ, it never got further than just over the Iraqi border. Audrey Gillan told us:

> I think you will find some that were incredibly frustrated…with the people embedded in the forward press information centre, who did not get access to anything.[728]

494. The intention seems to have been that these journalists would 'editorialise' the feed from the frontline embedded journalists, placing their reports in a bigger picture and providing a degree of context, but that did not happen. MoD accepted that the operation of the FTU was something that might have to be reviewed, as Mr Pawson explained:

> This is one of the areas of the Green Book we will have to look at with the media because…technology has moved on, we can see it moving on even further in terms of lighter weight vehicles, easier satellite communication, better quality pictures and if there is a preference for 'action' material over the more considered material then whether there is a place for a Forward Transmitting Unit between embedded journalists, unilateral journalist and a press information centre, say the Coalition Press Information Centre, that is something that we would want to look at.[729]

495. **Whatever the intentions, it is clear that the arrangements to provide a broader context for individual reports from embedded journalists did not work in Operation Telic. In part this was a consequence of advances in technology and of the growth in 24 hour news channels, both of which can be expected to apply at least as forcibly in any future conflict. MoD needs to consider how better to support the context setting of battlefield information in the future.**

The tempo of operations

496. The tempo of operations in Iraq has been a recurring theme of this inquiry. As *First Reflections* states, 'The overwhelming success of rapid, decisive operations in Iraq reflects the deployment of fast moving light forces, highly mobile armoured capabilities and Close Air Support, which made use of near real-time situational awareness by and by night.'[730] At the same time live 24 hour news coverage meant that the public in the UK (and throughout the world) could watch the operation as it unfolded to an unprecedented degree. As we have noted above, in some cases journalists in national capitals knew more about particular incidents from their embedded colleagues than the officials answering their questions did from the communications available to them. Indeed we were told that this was not just a problem for official spokesmen—the intelligence which forces in theatre received was not infrequently 24 hours behind the television reports. This speed of operations made it very much more difficult, if not impossible, for MoD to control the media agenda or to influence the stories which the media chose to give prominence to. Mr Jeremy Thompson told us:

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728 Q 747

729 Q 1423

730 Ministry of Defence, *Operations in Iraq—First Reflections* (July 2003) p 19.

The technological advances this time meant that, in effect, we out there reporting were ahead, really, of Downing Street, Whitehall, Qatar, Pentagon and everywhere else, as they said repeatedly in their briefings: 'We cannot confirm what your guys have just reported live from the field'. The technology, in a way, is maybe galloping ahead of how we all deal with it and how we all cope with it and what our sensibilities are, and certainly galloping ahead, in some cases, of how politicians and military people respond to that. I think it is going to be very difficult to restrain and constrain that technology now.[731]

In an address to RUSI, Mr Richard Sambrook, Head of News, BBC, said:

There is now a new media, with new journalists producing new news, who have little regard for those of us in the traditional media. With a laptop and a phone connection websites can 'broadcast' from anywhere, unregulated. The Guardian ran the 'Web log' of an unknown man in Baghdad reporting his daily diary from the city under attack; there was a Russian intelligence site offering raw intelligence briefings; there were many dozens of anti-war web sites offering a different perspective and challenging the messages of the coalition on not just a daily but an hourly basis. All this was accessible from anywhere in the world....[732]

497. Military planners have been slow to keep up with changes in the journalistic profession, often applying the lessons of the last conflict to the next one. Military information planning has only just come to terms with the 24 hour news cycle. But the media has taken another quantum leap. It has even been suggested that in a future conflict media organisations might try to deploy their own UAVs to acquire live pictures of combat operations.

Perception Management

498. MoD denied that perception management was a direct objective of the media campaign and argued that accuracy and credibility were more important in an era when the public were less aware of defence issues than in previous generations.[733] MoD officials emphasised that they were in the business of presenting the truth. Nonetheless there are evident tensions between the objectives of the two complementary or related activities of information operations and media operations. The Assistant Director of Media Operations Policy in MoD, Colonel Paul Brook, told us of the need to keep them separate:

We are quite clear to separate out media operations from, if you like, information and deception type of work. There is some American doctrine that tends to see the world as a global whole. There is a conceptual view that might say if you are in wars of national survival perhaps that is the right way to look at things, but in our terms the relationship for us with the media and the media in turn with the public, which

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731 Q 765

732 Published in, *RUSI Journal*, vol 148, no. 4 (August 2003).

733 Q 1373

we appreciate, it is more important to be accurate and credible than it is to have a particular line at a particular time on a particular issue.[734]

However, the head of British information operations, Air Vice Marshal Mike Heath, told us that he also was in the business of providing the truth and that the coordination and removal of barriers between information and media operations was necessary for effective campaigning:

> The problem with Information Operations…is that most of the people who are peripheral or outside of the art believe that a large element is focussed on deception or deceit. With the very specific exception of that bit where we would try and lie or dissuade or persuade military commanders, the entire art of Information Operations is based on truth.[735]

> that is why media operations were very reluctant to talk to us, because if you have this perception, 'Well, you do not want to talk to Mike Heath because all he is going to do is persuade us to lie to the public or the press', then you are intuitively at loggerheads, so we had to persuade people that my remit under both law and the direction of my Secretary of State was that we were to be truthful at all times.[736]

499. If press officers are to retain the credibility necessary for them to do their jobs, those they brief must be confident that what they are being told is accurate. But journalists have told us that that was not always the case. A persistent criticism has been that successes were announced before they had actually been achieved. A frequently quoted example was the taking of Umm Qasr. Mr Pawson admitted there had been shortcomings and explained:

> The sort of situation where I think our people on the ground had a very difficult time was if you had, to take an example, a company commander going into Umm Qasr and it looks to him to be clear and safe and he has an embed with him who reports it clear and safe; the embed reports back to Qatar and Qatar asks the people there, 'Is it safe?' 'We do not know, but your man says it is.' It is very difficult for him to continue to say, 'We do not know' until it is absolutely safe and something unexpected happens in these situations. It was the first time we had seen the irregulars in a major way, operators in civilian clothes and so forth, so yes, in a sense it was wrong, but it was not deliberately wrong. It was done in good faith.[737]

He added that:

> the fact that in the Umm Qasr area the fortunes of war changed during that period did not mean…that we in any way misled with this implication of deliberately giving false information. The information that we gave was given in good faith the best we knew it at that time and we had no reason at that time to doubt it.[738]

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734 Q 1373

735 Q 1583

736 Q 1584

737 Q 1382

738 Q 1448

MoD did not fully appreciate how the embedding system, coupled with rolling 24 hour news programmes, would undermine their ability to manage the information coming out of the combat theatre. Nor were they successful in managing the expectations of the different journalists in different centres such as the FTU and Qatar. We believe that failure to support the media presence swiftly enough with enough adequately trained and skilled media relations personnel was a serious shortcoming and one that MoD should not allow to happen again. It is also the case that this campaign went the coalition's way most of the time—in the circumstances of a more difficult military campaign it is not clear how the Ministry of Defence would cope with the pressures of unfavourable coverage from the front line.

16 Cause and effect

500. In our report, *A New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review,*[739] we considered the legal aspects of military operations in the war against terrorism. We concluded:

> It is of fundamental importance that our Armed Forces can be confident, whenever we call upon them, that they are operating on the basis of, and within, applicable international law.

In their response the Government agreed:

> We will always act in accordance with legal obligations but also effectively to defend the UK's people and interests and secure international peace and stability.[740]

501. The legal basis for the military operation in Iraq was set out on 17 March 2003 in a written answer by the Attorney General in the House of Lords and the Solicitor General in the House of Commons. The core of the argument is as follows:

> In resolution 1441 the Security Council determined that Iraq has been and remains in material breach of Resolution 687 (which set the ceasefire conditions after Operation Desert Storm). A material breach of 687 revives the authority to use force under Resolution 678 (which authorises force against Iraq to eject it from Kuwait and to restore peace and security in the area).

> The Security Council decided in Resolution 1441 that if Iraq failed at any time to comply with and co-operate fully with the implementation of Resolution 1441 that would constitute a further material breach.

> It is plain that Iraq has failed so to comply and therefore Iraq was, at the time of Resolution 1441 and continues to be, in material breach.

> Thus the authority to use force under Resolution 678 was revived and so continues today.[741]

502. The Secretary of State assured us that he had received no representations at all from senior officers about the legitimacy of the operation.[742]

503. Before the commitment of British forces to combat operations, debates were held in both Houses of Parliament on motions endorsing that commitment. The motion which the House of Commons agreed to on 18 March set out the legal argument and went on to assert that the House:

> …believes that the United Kingdom must uphold the authority of the United Nations as set out in Resolution 1441 and many Resolutions preceding it, and therefore supports the decision of Her Majesty's Government that the United

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739 Sixth Report of Session 2002–03, HC 93

740 Third Special Report of Session 2002–03, HC 975, p 11

741 HC Deb, 17 March 2003, c515w

742 Q 20

Kingdom should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction

504. The decision to commit British forces to war is perhaps the most serious decision a Prime Minister can take. It is a decision which almost inevitably foreshadows the deaths of British service personnel. 33 service personnel lost their lives during the combat phase of Operation Telic. On this occasion the decision to commit forces followed resolutions of both Houses of Parliament supporting that action. **We welcome this development and believe that it should be seen as an explicit precedent for future combat operations.**

505. Under the Resolution agreed to by Parliament, the need for military action in March 2003 and the need for British Armed Forces to be involved in that action was based on the requirement that the UK uphold the authority of the UN and ensure the removal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In his speech the Prime Minister argued that the coming together of the potential capabilities of modern international terrorist movements and the determination of a number of countries to develop and abet the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction 'is now in my judgement, a real and present danger to Britain and its national security.' He accepted that the association between the two was currently loose, but he believed it to be hardening.

506. Dr Mohammed ElBaradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has recently written 'Eventually, inevitably, terrorists will gain access to [nuclear] materials and technology, if not actual weapons. If the world does not change course we risk self-destruction'.[743]

507. By its very nature, evidence of the existence of a present threat of the type set out by the Prime Minister will probably derive in large part from clandestine sources. The measure of a threat is classically defined as a combination of capability and intent. In this case both are likely to be subject to every effort to keep them secret. States do not advertise their WMD programmes; terrorist organisations depend on secrecy to be effective. Consequently among the sources for that evidence, the output of intelligence agencies can be expected to be a significant, if not the chief, element.

508. The decision to commit forces to combat operations, particularly when those operations are not in self defence against an actual or imminent attack, is fundamentally a political decision. In the case of operations in Iraq, the decision to take military action came at the end of a process of diplomatic and political pressure including the use of military preparations and deployments for coercive effect. It is right that those who make such decisions are held politically accountable for them. It is essential that decisions which commit British service personnel to combat are taken only as a last resort and when that combat is both legal and justified. However, no decision can be taken other than on the information available at the time.

509. It is arguable that the justification for military action taken in the context of an effects-based operation depends upon an assessment of the effects achieved. Air Vice Marshal Mike Heath argued that the effects-based approach meant that the combat activity could be

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743 *New York Times*, 12 February 2004.

seen as part of the information campaign. As an example he set out how the approach to Basra changed:

> the whole of the conflict period was an information campaign…all of the kinetic activity, both on the ground and in the air, was in direct support of the information piece. We started off with the dissuasion…moved through the persuasion and ended up with the restitution and reconstruction…all military activity was crafted towards an information campaign. [744]

510. He suggested that when true effects-based planning was embraced, the need to treat information operations and kinetic operations as separate would disappear:

> The sooner we move away from information operations and kinetic operations, the better. What we are trying to deliver now is effects-based operations that embrace the whole gamut of military and cross government capability. I believe we have arrived and delivered a force multiplier—not MoD but Whitehall—and it is important we understand that…[745]

Judging the effectiveness of an effects-based approach, however, as one observer has put it, is more an art than a science.[746]

511. In the case of operations in Iraq, the strategic effects sought by the coalition included that Iraq become 'a stable, united and law abiding state, within its present borders, co-operating with the international community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours or to international security, abiding by all its international obligations and providing effective representative government for its people.' It is clearly too early to assess the achievement of those objectives.

512. On the other hand, as we have described, the precision of much of the targeting during the campaign did ensure that the civilian infrastructure (although it was already decrepit beyond the coalition's expectations) was largely undamaged at the conclusion of operations. There is clear evidence that leaflet drops and radio broadcasts successfully persuaded many Iraqis in Basra to stay indoors. And the oil wells (bar a very few) were not set alight; the industry's infrastructure was not sabotaged. In the case of the last example, the whole shape of the campaign was constructed with the achievement of this effect as a priority.

513. In many ways these 'effects' are indistinguishable from more traditional military objectives. The manoeuvrist approach to operations, which has long been at the heart of British defence doctrine, 'is one in which shattering the enemy's overall cohesion and will to fight, rather than his materiel, is paramount.'[747] At one level the current focus on effects-based operations is not so much a fundamental change in doctrine as a reflection of the far greater discrimination and precision which modern weapons systems and sensors are capable of achieving. Furthermore those very technological advances place an increased

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744 Q 1621

745 Q 1672

746 Cordesman, *The Iraq War, Strategy Tactics and Military Lessons*, p 29.

747 Ministry of Defence, *British Defence Doctrine*, JWP 0-01, 2nd edition, (October 2001), p 3–5.

responsibility, on the forces which have them, to avoid civilian casualties. The core obligations of international law (specifically of the Geneva Conventions) are that combatants should at all times be distinguished from the civilian population, that only legitimate military targets may be attacked, and that such attacks must be proportionate (ie that any civilian casualties and damage expected to be caused should not be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage expected as a result of an attack).[748]

514. **Thus the crafting of the targeting set to minimise civilian casualties was not only a choice made by the coalition in order to achieve a particular effect, or deliver a particular message; it was also a requirement of international law.**

515. The Defence White Paper, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, states:

> Effects-Based Operations is a new phrase, but it describes an approach to the use of force that is well-established—that military force exists to serve political or strategic ends… Strategic effects are designed to deliver the military contribution to a wider cross-governmental strategy and are focussed on desired outcomes.

Judging how far the military operations have served political ends is not easy. Although the White Paper states that it is 'strategic effects' that deliver a contribution to the cross-governmental (ie political) strategy, in modern operations a strategic effect can be the product of actions taken at the lowest tactical level, indeed of the actions of a single service person.

516. Again this is not entirely a new development, but the huge increase in media coverage and the immediacy of reports from journalists embedded with front line units has unprecedented potential to give disproportionate importance to isolated incidents. We have seen this, for example, on the occasions where American heavy-handedness (or worse) in particular circumstances has been presented as defining the American, or even the coalition, approach to the Iraqi civilian population. The measurement of the effect is a measurement of perceptions. In this respect Air Vice Marshal Heath was right to characterise the military operation as part of the wider information campaign.

517. But the argument, that, because military operations can contribute effects to the overall political context, military planning should be aware of and indeed should explicitly seek to create effects that support the over-arching political objectives, can be taken too far. The need to find a solution to the problems of Israel and Palestine have been explicitly linked to the operations in Iraq, not least by the Prime Minister in his speech to the House of Commons on 18 March. Although measures were taken to protect Israel from possible missile attack, we have no reason to believe that the military plans were devised with the need to find that solution in mind. **The priority for military planning must be the achievement of military objectives. We are concerned that too great a focus on effects-based planning and on the part military action can play as one component in a spectrum of political and diplomatic activity may further complicate the tasks of military planners and commanders who are already operating in an ever more complex battle space and under more intense and intrusive scrutiny than ever before.**

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748 *Ibid*, p 5–4.

518. On the other hand, as we discussed in considering the reconstruction of Iraq, the ultimate success of a military operation of this type can be determined only as part of an assessment of the success of the overall process of which it was part. The risk is that in making that assessment the military is judged against a range of outcomes which are beyond their control and which are likely to be too complex and abstruse to be capable of being sensibly made a part of military planning.

519. Debate over the 2003 invasion of Iraq will continue. We intend to pursue issues related to the continuing responsibilities of British Armed Forces in Iraq in the coming months. Any military operations on the scale of those in Iraq can be expected to reverberate through a wide range of political agendas for a long time. Those reverberations may in turn have a significant influence on how British forces are required to conduct military operations in the future. Thus, although we have called this report *Lessons of Iraq,* we recognise that, in the areas where political intentions and military capabilities meet, some of the most fundamental lessons may be yet to emerge.

Annex: List of Abbreviations

16 AAB	16 Air Assault Brigade
AFF	Army Families' Federation
ANGLICO	Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, United States Marine Corps
AS90	Self-propelled gun, Royal Artillery
BATUS	British Army Training Unit Suffield (Canada)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMA	British Medical Association
CAM	Chemical Agent Monitor
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Centre
C4I	Command, control, communications, computers and intelligence
CDL	Chief of Defence Logistics
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CEA	Captured Enemy Ammunition
Centcom	Central Command (US)
CFLCC	Coalition Force Land Component Commander
CIS	Command and Information Systems
CJO	Chief of Joint Operations
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DfID	Department for International Development
DIS	Defence Intelligence Staff
DLO	Defence Logistics Organisation
DMS	Defence Medical Services
DoD	Department of Defense (US)
DTIO	Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations
DTMA	Defence Transport and Movements Agency
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FRES	Future Rapid Effects System
FTRS	Full Time Reserve Service
FTU	Forward Transmission Unit
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFF	Identification Friend or Foe
Info Ops	Information Operations
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ITC	Independent Television Commission
ITN	Independent Television News
JDAMs	Joint Direct Attack Munitions
JRRF	Joint Rapid Reaction Force
KI-CAS	Kill-box interdiction – close air support
LCVP	Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel
LPD	Landing Platform Dock
LPH	Landing Platform Helicopter
MAW	Marine Air Wing (United States Marine Corps)
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force (United States Marine Corps)
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit (United States Marine Corps)
MOAB	Massive Ordnance Airburst Bomb (US)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NAIAD	Nerve Agent Immobilised-enzyme Alarm and Detector
NAO	National Audit Office
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBC	Nuclear, Biological and Chemical
NEC	Network Enabled Capability
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NHS	National Health Service
NIAT	National Infrastructure Assessment Team
NSW	Naval Special Warfare (US)
NUMAST	National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport officers
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (US)
OSMDS	One-Shot Mine Disposal System
OWP	Operational Welfare Package
PGM	Precision guided munitions
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters
PoW	Prisoner of War
PsyOps	Psychological Operations
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RAB	Resource Accounting and Budgeting
RAF	Royal Air Force
REME	Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
RoE	Rules of Engagement
ro-ros	Roll-on roll-off ferries
RN	Royal Navy
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SA80 A2	Individual weapon, British Army
SEALS	Sea Air Land Teams (US Navy)
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
SWIMS	Shallow Water Influence Mine-Sweeping System
TA	Territorial Army
TAV	Total Asset Visibility
TLAM	Tomahawk land attack missile
TSA	Target Systems Analysis

UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Air Vehicle
UOR	Urgent Operational Requirement
UN	United Nations
UNMACT	United Nations Mine Action Clearance Team
UNMOVIC	United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
UXO	Unexploded ordnance
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Formal minutes

Wednesday 3 March 2004

Morning sitting

Members present:

Mr Bruce George, in the Chair

Mr Crispin Blunt   Mike Gapes
Mr James Cran   Mr Frank Roy
Dai Havard   Rachel Squire
Mr David Crausby   Mr Peter Viggers

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Lessons of Iraq), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

The Committee deliberated.

[Adjourned till this day at 2.30 pm

Wednesday 3 March 2004

Afternoon sitting

Members present:

Mr Bruce George, in the Chair

Mr Crispin Blunt   Mr Kevan Jones
Mr James Cran   Mr Frank Roy
Dai Havard   Rachel Squire
Mr David Crausby   Mr Peter Viggers
Mike Gapes

The Committee deliberated.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report (Lessons of Iraq) be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 519 read and agreed to.

Annex [List of Abbreviations] agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (select committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

Ordered, That several memoranda be reported to the House.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 17 March at 2.30 pm

Witnesses

List of written evidence

Volume III

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London SW1 (Tel 020 7219 3074); hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Ann Pettitt
Lindis Percy
OSHKOSH Truck UK

Reports from the Defence Committee since 2001

Session 2003–04

First Report	Armed Forces Pensions and Compensation	HC 96–I & II
Second Report	Annual Report for 2003	HC 293

Session 2002–03

First Report	Missile Defence	HC 290 (*HC 411*)
Second Report	Annual Report for 2002	HC 378
Third Report	Arms Control and Disarmament (Inspections) Bill	HC 321 (*HC 754*)
Fourth Report	The Government's Proposals for Secondary Legislation under the Export Control Act	HC 620
Fifth Report	Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2001, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny	HC 474
Sixth Report	A New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review	HC 93–I & II (*HC 975*)
Seventh Report	Draft Civil Contingencies Bill	HC 557
Eighth Report	Defence Procurement	HC 694 (*HC 1194*)

Session 2001–02

First Report	Ministry of Defence Police: Changes in jurisdiction proposed under the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Bill 2001	HC 382 (*HC 621*)
Second Report	The Threat from Terrorism	HC 348 (*HC 667*)
Third Report	The Ministry of Defence Reviews of Armed Forces' Pension and Compensation Arrangements	HC 666 (*HC 115*)
Fourth Report	Major Procurement Projects	HC 779 (*HC 1229*)
Fifth Report	The Government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls for 2000, Licensing Policy and Prior Parliamentary Scrutiny (Joint with Foreign Affairs Committee, International Development Committee and Trade and Industry Committee)	HC 718 (*Cm 5629*)
Sixth Report	Defence and Security in the UK	HC 518 (*HC 1230*)
Seventh Report	The Future of NATO	HC 914 (*HC 1231*)

Government Responses to Defence Committee reports are published as Special Reports from the Committee (or as Command papers). They are listed here in brackets by the HC (or Cm) No. after the report they relate to.