



RESEARCH PAPER 03/50
23 MAY 2003

The Conflict in Iraq

Military operations to remove the Iraqi regime from power (Operation *Iraqi Freedom*) began officially at 0234 GMT on 20 March 2003. Coalition forces advanced rapidly into Iraq, encountering sporadic resistance from Iraqi military and paramilitary forces. By mid-April major combat operations had come to an end, with coalition forces in effective control of the whole country, including the capital Baghdad.

This paper provides a summary of events in the build-up to the conflict, a general outline of the main developments during the military campaign between 20 March and mid April 2003 and an initial post-conflict assessment of the conduct of operations.

Claire Taylor & Tim Youngs

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE SECTION

HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY

Recent Library Research Papers include:

List of 15 most recent RPs

03/35	Direct taxes: rates and allowances 2003-04-11	10.04.03
03/36	Unemployment by Constituency, March 2003	17.04.03
03/37	Economic Indicators [includes article: The current WTO trade round]	01.05.03
03/38	NHS Foundation Trusts in the <i>Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Bill</i> [Bill 70 of 2002-03]	01.05.03
03/39	Social Care Aspects of the <i>Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards Bill)</i> [Bill 70 of 2002-03]	02.05.03
03/40	Social Indicators	06.05.03
03/41	The <i>Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Bill</i> : Health aspects <u>other than</u> NHS Foundation Trusts [Bill 70 of 2002-03]	06.05.03
03/42	The <i>Fire Services Bill</i> [Bill 81 of 2002-03]	07.05.03
03/43	The <i>Northern Ireland (Elections and Periods of Suspension) Bill</i> [Bill 104 of 2002-03]	09.05.03
03/44	Local Elections 2003	12.05.03
03/45	Welsh Assembly Elections: 1 May 2003	14.05.03
03/46	Scottish Parliament Elections: 1 May 2003	14.05.03
03/47	Unemployment by Constituency, April 2003	14.05.03
03/48	Enlargement and the <i>European Union (Accessions) Bill</i> [Bill 98 of 2002-03]	19.05.03
03/49	Whither the Civil Service?	20.05.03

Research Papers are available as PDF files:

- *to members of the general public on the Parliamentary web site, URL: <http://www.parliament.uk>*
- *within Parliament to users of the Parliamentary Intranet, URL: <http://hcl1.hclibrary.parliament.uk>*

Library Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of Parliament and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public. Any comments on Research Papers should be sent to the Research Publications Officer, Room 407, 1 Derby Gate, London, SW1A 2DG or e-mailed to PAPERS@parliament.uk

Summary of main points

The build up of Coalition forces in the Gulf region began in late December 2002 and continued through until March 2003. By mid-March 220,000 Coalition troops had been deployed, including 45,000 British personnel.

Diplomatic efforts to secure agreement within the UN Security Council on a further resolution explicitly authorising the use of force met with failure and on 17 March President George Bush declared a 48-hour deadline for Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq or face military action at a time of the Coalition's choosing.

Operation *Iraqi Freedom* officially began at 0234 GMT on 20 March 2003, although some preparatory air operations had been undertaken in the southern no-fly zone on 19 March 2003. A limited air strike on the Iraqi leadership opened the campaign, followed by the launch of simultaneous air and ground operations. British and US Marines were deployed into the south of the country to secure the Al Faw Peninsula, the southern oilfields, the port of Umm Qasr and the region around Basra. The US Army 5th Corps advanced rapidly north towards Baghdad.

After several weeks of heavy fighting and air strikes British troops launched an assault on Basra on 6 April and succeeded in capturing the city centre. After several days of incursions into the capital, US forces took effective control of Baghdad on 8 and 9 April. Tikrit fell to the Coalition on 13 April, bringing the main combat phase of the campaign to a close. Major combat operations were officially declared to be over on 1 May 2003.

The intense media coverage and analysis of the conduct of military operations was a key feature during the conflict. The simultaneous execution of an air and ground campaign, preceded by an opportunistic strike on the Iraqi leadership, initially defied many commentators' expectations. The apparent strength of Iraqi resistance encountered by Coalition forces, the use of unconventional tactics by Iraqi paramilitaries, and the absence of a popular uprising against the regime, provoked considerable debate about the effectiveness of the Coalition's strategy and the adequacy of the forces deployed. The campaign brought together a number of new or unusual elements, some of which were apparent during the campaign, others of which are only now emerging, and it will take some time for a complete picture to emerge.

Researchers in the International Affairs and Defence Section and the Economic Policy and Statistics Section are covering different aspects of the conflict and the transition to post-conflict reconstruction. For further information on military aspects of the conflict, contact Claire Taylor (Ext. 3852); for developments in Iraq and the wider region and information on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, contact Tim Youngs (Ext. 6765); for information on international legal issues and the role of the United Nations, contact Paul Bowers (Ext. 3621); for the United States, contact Carole Andrews (Ext. 3978). For information on the humanitarian situation and post-war reconstruction, contact Patsy Richards (Ext. 4904).

CONTENTS

I	Background	7
	A. Build-up to Conflict	8
	B. Debate in the United Kingdom	10
	C. Final Diplomatic and Military Developments	17
II	The Outbreak of Conflict	19
	A. Military and Diplomatic Developments	21
	1. Week One (20-26 March)	21
	2. Week Two (27 March – 2 April)	33
	3. Week Three (3-9 April)	41
	4. Week Four (10-16 April)	52
	5. Transition to the Post-Conflict Phase	58
III	Initial Post Conflict Assessment and Lessons Learned	63
	A. Strategy	63
	B. Capabilities and Planning	71
	C. Casualties	76
	D. Friendly Fire	78
	E. Estimated Costs	80
	Appendix 1 – British Government Military Campaign Objectives	82
	Appendix 2 – British Government Paper ‘A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’	85
	Appendix 3 – Parliamentary debates, statements and papers	87
	Appendix 4 – Map of Iraq	90

I Background

UN weapons inspectors returned to Iraq in late November 2002 after the UN Security Council agreed under Resolution 1441 to allow Iraq a final opportunity to comply with its obligations to disarm itself of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).¹

The state of progress with the inspections process was reported to the Council at regular intervals during January, February and early March 2003. Broadly speaking, the inspectors noted cooperation by Iraq on issues of process, such as access to suspected weapons sites, but said progress had been much slower on issues of substance, such as the provision by Iraq of new information to resolve outstanding questions over its proscribed weapons programmes. In the absence of full cooperation, the inspectors said it would not be possible to report to the Security Council that Iraq was in compliance with its obligations.

By early March 2003 the international debate over policy towards Iraq had reached a critical stage, as the build-up of US, British and other Coalition military forces in the Gulf, which had begun in late December, appeared to be nearing completion.

In discussions in the Security Council, the US and British Governments, supported by others, insisted that Iraq was failing to comply with the demands of Resolution 1441 and presented a draft resolution calling on the Council to declare Iraq to be in further material breach of its disarmament obligations. They indicated that a further resolution would be desirable but not legally necessary to authorise military action, stressing that Resolution 1441 and previous Resolutions provided sufficient authority for the use of force.

The French and Russian Governments, backed by other states, argued that the inspection process had not run its course and that further time was required to resolve peacefully the outstanding issues relating to Iraq's programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction. They also contested the view that military action would be lawful in the absence of a further Security Council Resolution authorising military action.

A bibliography on the resort to force and the case made by the British Government can be found in Library Standard Note SN/IA/2138, *Iraq: selected legal issues*.²

Additional background on Resolution 1441, the UN inspections process, and the international debate over policy towards Iraq can be found in Library Research Papers 02/64, *Iraq and UN Security Council Resolution 1441*, of 21 November 2002, and 03/22, *Iraq: developments since UN Security Council Resolution 1441*, of 13 March 2003.

¹ Weapons of mass destruction are commonly taken to include chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Under Resolution 687, the 1991 Gulf War 'ceasefire resolution', Iraq was also obliged to declare and submit for destruction any ballistic missile systems with a range greater than 150 kilometres.

² This is available on the intranet at: <http://hcl1.hclibrary.parliament.uk/notes/iads/sn-02138.pdf>

A. Build-up to Conflict

Discussion within the Security Council on the draft resolution continued during mid-March, but with few indications that a breakthrough was imminent.

On 16 March 2003 the leaders of the USA, UK and Spain, the three co-sponsors of the draft resolution, met for a summit in the Azores. A joint statement was released by President Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prime Minister José María Aznar of Spain, saying the responsibility for the resort to military force lay with the Iraqi regime:

If Saddam refuses even now to cooperate fully with the United Nations, he brings on himself the serious consequences foreseen in UNSCR 1441 and previous resolutions.³

They also announced at their press conference after the meeting that a final period of 24 hours would be allowed for the pursuit of a diplomatic consensus.

By the morning of 17 March 2003 it had become apparent that agreement remained out of reach and the three states announced that they had withdrawn their draft resolution.

a. US ultimatum to Saddam Hussein

In a television address at 8pm Eastern Standard Time on 17 March 2003 President Bush issued an ultimatum to the regime of Saddam Hussein, declaring that:

Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict commenced at a time of our choosing.⁴

He went on to say:

It is too late for Saddam Hussein to remain in power. It is not too late for the Iraqi military to act with honor and protect your country by permitting the peaceful entry of coalition forces to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Our forces will give Iraqi military units clear instructions on actions they can take to avoid being attacked and destroyed. I urge every member of the Iraqi military and intelligence services, if war comes, do not fight for a dying regime that is not worth your own life.

And all Iraqi military and civilian personnel should listen carefully to this warning. In any conflict, your fate will depend on your action. Do not destroy oil

³ 'Text: Azores summit statement', BBC News web site, 16 March 2003, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2855567.stm

⁴ 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation', 17 March 2003, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>

wells, a source of wealth that belongs to the Iraqi people. Do not obey any command to use weapons of mass destruction against anyone, including the Iraqi people. War crimes will be prosecuted. War criminals will be punished. And it will be no defense to say, "I was just following orders."⁵

Iraq rejected Mr Bush's ultimatum for Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq.

b. *Withdrawal of UN Weapons Inspectors*

On 18 March all UN staff were withdrawn from Iraq, including personnel serving with UNMOVIC, the IAEA and the UN Office of Iraq Programme.⁶

In an interview on *BBC Radio 4 Today* on 20 March Dr Blix gave the following assessment of the withdrawal of UN inspectors and the move to military action:

It's clearly a disappointment, we had begun about 3½ months ago and I think we had made a very rapid start, we did not have any obstacles from the Iraqi side in going anywhere. They gave us access and prompt access and we were in a great many places over Iraq and we had managed also to get going the destruction of the Al Samoud missiles. We destroyed over 70 of them with Iraqi cooperation. So, of course, I think that after 3½ months to say that now we call it a day and close the door is rather short and I somewhat doubt when they adopted the resolution last autumn that they really had intended to give only 3½ months for inspections. The impatience took over and they concluded that this really would not get to the bottom of the barrel and therefore armed action was necessary.⁷

He also commented on the utility of information passed to UNMOVIC and the IAEA by national intelligence agencies:

...I have a high regard for intelligence and I think it necessary but I must say that when you watch what came out of intelligence you were not so convinced. We had a question of the aluminium tubes which were alleged to be for building of centrifuges and was much doubted even by lots of American experts and you have the even more flagrant case of the contract which was alleged that Iraq had concluded with Niger, or tried to conclude about the importation of raw uranium as a yellow cake and the IAEA found this was a fake. Now these things did not do much to strengthen the evidence coming, well not the evidence, but at least the stories coming from intelligence and the fact that we did not find things at the sites which were, or in very few cases found anything at sites which were given by intelligence also I think weakened that position.⁸

⁵ 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation', 17 March 2003, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>

⁶ UNMOVIC is the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. IAEA is the International Atomic Energy Agency.

⁷ Interview of Dr Hans Blix by Jim Naughtie, *BBC Radio 4 Today* programme, 20 March 2003

⁸ Interview of Dr Hans Blix by Jim Naughtie, *BBC Radio 4 Today* programme, 20 March 2003

With regard to the question of whether Iraq was, as the US and UK Governments asserted, still in possession of weapons of mass destruction, Dr Blix said:

I am very curious to see, if they [the coalition] find something. In ways paradoxical because if they don't find something then they have sent 250,000 men to wage a war in order to find nothing, it is also paradoxical for Saddam Hussein, if he has nothing it is curious that he has been making difficulties for the inspections in the past, not so much this year.⁹

The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, indicated that the work of the inspectors had “merely been suspended”, adding that

If and when they can resume their work they should go back to Iraq. If anything were to be found, they should go back to test it. I hope the time will come when they will be able to do that.¹⁰

B. Debate in the United Kingdom

a. Foreign Secretary's Statement of 17 March

On 17 March the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, made a statement to the House on the situation following the Azores Summit and the withdrawal of the draft resolution.¹¹ He reiterated the Government's view that Iraq had failed to comply with the demands of the Security Council under Resolution 1441 and criticised the French Government for its opposition to the draft resolution:

Significantly, in all the discussions in the Security Council and outside, no-one has claimed that Iraq is in full compliance with the obligations placed on it. Given that, it was my belief, up to about a week ago, that we were close to achieving the consensus that we sought on the further resolution. Sadly, one country then ensured that the Security Council could not act. President Chirac's unequivocal announcement last Monday that France would veto a second resolution containing that or any ultimatum, "whatever the circumstances", inevitably created a sense of paralysis in our negotiations. I deeply regret that France has thereby put a Security Council consensus beyond reach.

I need to spell out that the alternative proposals submitted by France, Germany and Russia for more time and more inspections carry no ultimatum and no threat of force. They do not implement resolution 1441 but seek to rewrite it. To have adopted such proposals would have allowed Saddam to continue stringing out

⁹ Interview of Dr Hans Blix by Jim Naughtie, *BBC Radio 4 Today* programme, 20 March 2003

¹⁰ Secretary-General's press encounter, 1 April 2003, from <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/offthecuff.asp?nid=405>

¹¹ HC Deb 17 March 2003, c703-23

inspections indefinitely, and he would rightly have drawn the lesson that the Security Council was simply not prepared to enforce the ultimatum that lies at the heart of resolution 1441: in the event of non-compliance, Iraq, as operational paragraph 13 spells out, should expect "serious consequences."

As a result of Saddam Hussein's persistent refusal to meet the UN's demands, and the inability of the Security Council to adopt a further resolution, the Cabinet has decided to ask the House to support the United Kingdom's participation in military operations, should they be necessary, with the objective of ensuring the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and thereby the maintenance of the authority of the United Nations.

From the outset of this crisis the Government have promised that, if possible, the House would have the opportunity to debate our involvement in military action prior to the start of hostilities and on a substantive motion. The House will have that opportunity tomorrow.¹²

b. Government Resignations

Later that day Robin Cook resigned as Leader of the House of Commons. In a personal statement to the House, he declared that:

From the start of the present crisis, I have insisted, as Leader of the House, on the right of this place to vote on whether Britain should go to war. It has been a favourite theme of commentators that this House no longer occupies a central role in British politics. Nothing could better demonstrate that they are wrong than for this House to stop the commitment of troops in a war that has neither international agreement nor domestic support. I intend to join those tomorrow night who will vote against military action now. It is for that reason, and for that reason alone, and with a heavy heart, that I resign from the Government.¹³

He also criticised the assertion that France had been responsible for the lack of consensus in the Security Council, declaring that:

It is not France alone that wants more time for inspections. Germany wants more time for inspections; Russia wants more time for inspections; indeed, at no time have we signed up even the minimum necessary to carry a second resolution. We delude ourselves if we think that the degree of international hostility is all the result of President Chirac. The reality is that Britain is being asked to embark on a war without agreement in any of the international bodies of which we are a leading partner—not NATO, not the European Union and, now, not the Security Council.¹⁴

¹² HC Deb 17 March 2003, cc703-4

¹³ HC Deb 17 March 2003, c728

¹⁴ HC Deb 17 March 2003, c726

Mr Cook, who served as Foreign Secretary between 1997 and 2001, also touched on the issue of Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, claiming that:

Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term—namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target. It probably still has biological toxins and battlefield chemical munitions, but it has had them since the 1980s when US companies sold Saddam anthrax agents and the then British Government approved chemical and munitions factories. Why is it now so urgent that we should take military action to disarm a military capacity that has been there for 20 years, and which we helped to create? Why is it necessary to resort to war this week, while Saddam's ambition to complete his weapons programme is blocked by the presence of UN inspectors?¹⁵

Further resignations from the Government included Lord Hunt who stepped down as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health, John Denham who resigned as Minister of State at the Home Office, and Bob Blizard and Anne Campbell who resigned as PPSs, respectively to Nick Brown, Minister of State at the Department for Work and Pensions, and Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

On 18 March 2003 Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, announced she would remain in the Government, in spite of her pledge of 10 March to resign if there was not UN authority for military action.¹⁶ In a statement she said she had decided to support the Government in the Commons vote on 18 March for a number of reasons. These included the presentation by the Attorney General of the Government's case that the use of force would be legal under international law, the Prime Minister's determination to seek a UN Security Council mandate for the reconstruction of Iraq, the tabling of a resolution on humanitarian aid supplies for Iraq, and the publication of the international 'road map' aimed at securing a resumption of the Middle East Peace Process.¹⁷

c. Debate of 18 March 2003

On 18 March a debate was held in the House of Commons on the following motion:

That this House notes its decisions of 25th November 2002 and 26th February 2003 to endorse UN Security Council Resolution 1441; recognises that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles, and its continuing non-compliance with Security Council Resolutions, pose a threat to international peace and security; notes that in the 130 days since Resolution 1441 was adopted

¹⁵ HC Deb 17 March 2003, c727-8

¹⁶ Excerpts of the interview with the *BBC Radio 4* programme, *Westminster Hour*, of 10 March 2003 can be found on the BBC News web site at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2836925.stm

¹⁷ The full text of Clare Short's statement can be found on the BBC News web site at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2860323.stm

Iraq has not co-operated actively, unconditionally and immediately with the weapons inspectors, and has rejected the final opportunity to comply and is in further material breach of its obligations under successive mandatory UN Security Council Resolutions; regrets that despite sustained diplomatic effort by Her Majesty's Government it has not proved possible to secure a second Resolution in the UN because one Permanent Member of the Security Council made plain in public its intention to use its veto whatever the circumstances; notes the opinion of the Attorney General that, Iraq having failed to comply and Iraq being at the time of Resolution 1441 and continuing to be in material breach, the authority to use force under Resolution 678 has revived and so continues today; 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 Kingdom should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; offers wholehearted support to the men and women of Her Majesty's Armed Forces now on duty in the Middle East; in the event of military operations requires that, on an urgent basis, the United Kingdom should seek a new Security Council Resolution that would affirm Iraq's territorial integrity, ensure rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, allow for the earliest possible lifting of UN sanctions, an international reconstruction programme, and the use of all oil revenues for the benefit of the Iraqi people and endorse an appropriate post-conflict administration for Iraq, leading to a representative government which upholds human rights and the rule of law for all Iraqis; and also welcomes the imminent publication of the Quartet's roadmap as a significant step to bringing a just and lasting peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians and for the wider Middle East region, and endorses the role of Her Majesty's Government in actively working for peace between Israel and Palestine.¹⁸

The Prime Minister acknowledged that the choice before the House was a tough and stark one:

to stand British troops down now and turn back, or to hold firm to the course that we have set. I believe passionately that we must hold firm to that course. The question most often posed is not "Why does it matter?" but "Why does it matter so much?" Here we are, the Government, with their most serious test, their majority at risk, the first Cabinet resignation over an issue of policy, the main parties internally divided [...]

So why does it matter so much? Because the outcome of this issue will now determine more than the fate of the Iraqi regime and more than the future of the Iraqi people who have been brutalised by Saddam for so long, important though those issues are. It will determine the way in which Britain and the world confront the central security threat of the 21st century, the development of the United Nations, the relationship between Europe and the United States, the relations within the European Union and the way in which the United States

¹⁸ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c760

engages with the rest of the world. So it could hardly be more important. It will determine the pattern of international politics for the next generation.¹⁹

He declared that Iraq had complied in certain regards, but stressed the Government's view that there had been "no fundamental change of heart or mind" in Baghdad.²⁰

With regard to the deadlock in the UN Security Council on a further resolution, he outlined the efforts made by his Government to secure agreement. He cited as unreasonable France's opposition to any resolution containing an ultimatum to Iraq to comply, adding that:

The French position is that France will vote no, whatever the circumstances. Those are not my words, but those of the French President. I find it sad that at this point in time he cannot support us in the position we have set out, which is the only sure way to disarm Saddam.²¹

The Leader of the Opposition, Iain Duncan Smith, said his party would support the Government's motion, adding that:

we have argued consistently that Ministers have failed to convince the public of their case, and we have sought to hold the Government to account in the House for their mistakes. In particular, we have also pointed out the failures with regard to the humanitarian consequences of war. However, I believe that when the Government do the right thing by the British people, they deserve the support of the House, and particularly of the main Opposition.²²

He went on:

We are voting tonight in support of the motion not because we endorse every detail of the Prime Minister's handling of the matter, certainly not because we are eager for conflict—as the House knows, I served in the armed forces, and I have some knowledge of the horror of the aftermath of conflict—and not just because we want to show our support for our troops. That said, I believe firmly that, as the Prime Minister says, they are entitled to our full support today.

Saddam Hussein is a tyrant who tortures and murders his own people. He poses a threat to the safety and stability of the Middle East, and he is in complete breach of his obligations to the United Nations and to the international community. However, the main reason why we will be voting for the motion is that it is in the British national interest. Saddam Hussein has the means, the mentality and the

¹⁹ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c760-1

²⁰ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c763

²¹ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c767

²² HC Deb 18 March 2003, c774

motive to pose a direct threat to our national security. That is why we will be voting tonight to do the right thing by our troops and the British people.²³

A cross-party amendment was selected:

To leave out from "1441" in line 2, to "in" in line 21 and insert—

"believes that the case for war against Iraq has not yet been established, especially given the absence of specific United Nations authorisation; but, in the event that hostilities do commence, pledges its total support for the British forces engaged in the Middle East, expresses its admiration for their courage, skill and devotion to duty, and hopes that their tasks will be swiftly concluded with minimal casualties on all sides."

396 Members voted against the amendment, and 217 voted in favour, including 139 Labour Members. The Government motion was supported by the Opposition and was carried by 412 votes to 149.

The amendment was moved by Peter Kilfoyle, who declared that military action against Iraq

would be illegal, immoral and illogical. The Government will tell us that the selected evidence from the Attorney-General that has been published has satisfied the Government and ought to satisfy the House, but I prefer to take the views of the many eminent jurists who have reached very different conclusions. And yes, I also accept the view set out by Kofi Annan that the international community needed a second resolution. I am satisfied that, without that second resolution, we are getting into extremely dangerous ground and setting extremely dangerous precedents.²⁴

He questioned whether Iraq posed a direct threat to the United Kingdom, declaring that military action against Iraq would be illogical because

we are going after the wrong enemy at the wrong time and in the wrong way. I do not believe that Saddam Hussein has been anything other than contained. I do not believe any assertion that is made without the evidence being provided that there are linkages between him and al-Qaeda. I do not believe that he has had the wherewithal, or would have it, to be able to attack the United Kingdom directly.²⁵

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, said his party would not be voting in favour of the Government motion

²³ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c774-5

²⁴ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c781

²⁵ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c781

because our consistent line is that we do not believe that a case for war has been established under these procedures in the absence of a second UN Security Council resolution.²⁶

He expressed concerns over the legitimacy of any military action taken in the absence of a further Security Council resolution, and quoted UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's comments earlier that week:

In the absence of a further explicit United Nations resolution, which is obviously the position in which we find ourselves, he remarked last week:

"The legitimacy and support for any such action will be seriously impaired. If the USA and others go outside the Council and take military action it will be not be in conformity with the Charter."

That raises very serious questions on which we should reflect. Only yesterday afternoon, the Secretary-General said:

"If the action is to take place without the support of the Council, its legitimacy will be questioned"

and the international support will be diminished. We are right to reflect on those considerations.²⁷

He also expressed concern over the potential impact military action could have on popular attitudes in the Muslim world and on the campaign against international terrorism:

Although I have never been persuaded of a causal link between the Iraqi regime, al-Qaeda and 11 September, I believe that the impact of war in these circumstances is bound to weaken the international coalition against terrorism itself, and not least in the Muslim world. The big fear that many of us have is that the action will simply breed further generations of suicide bombers.²⁸

He concluded:

The cross-party amendment is the correct amendment. It is tabled at the correct time, and, if passed, would send the correct signal. It is on those grounds that the Liberal Democrats will vote for it tonight.²⁹

²⁶ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c782

²⁷ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c786

²⁸ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c786

²⁹ HC Deb 18 March 2003, c787

C. Final Diplomatic and Military Developments

In addition to the British forces deployed during January and February 2003, further deployments of ground troops were announced on 13 March. The Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, outlined the additional deployments in a Written Ministerial Statement:

In order to provide Headquarters 1 (UK) Armoured Division with further flexibility to respond to a range of possible tasks and circumstances, we now plan to deploy two additional units. Members of the 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment will deploy to provide additional infantry capability. 202 Field Hospital (Volunteer) will deploy to provide additional medical capability. We had originally envisaged that 202 Field Hospital (Volunteer) would replace 33 Field Hospital, which is already deployed. We now plan that 33 Field Hospital will remain in theatre, along with 34 Field Hospital and 202 Field Hospital (Volunteer), for the time being.

These changes involve some 850 personnel; the total size of the deployment remains about 45,000 personnel.³⁰

On 18 March the US Government announced that 30 countries had declared publicly their willingness to participate in the coalition for the immediate disarmament of Iraq. State Department spokesman Mike Boucher said:

these are countries who have all stood up and said it is time to disarm Iraq, and if Iraq doesn't do that peacefully, we need to be prepared to do it by whatever means are necessary – people that are associating themselves in public with the effort to make sure that Iraq is disarmed and disarmed soon.³¹

He listed the countries in alphabetical order, saying that each country was “contributing in ways it deems the most appropriate”:

Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.³²

³⁰ HC Deb 13 March 2003, c20WS

³¹ US Department of State press release, 18 March 2003, from <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/03031800.htm>

³² US Department of State press release, 18 March 2003, from <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/03031800.htm>

He said there were a further 15 countries that were “participating in defensive measures or other things, but just don't feel they want to be publicly listed at this point.”³³

In addition to the military contributions of Britain, Australia and the Czech Republic³⁴ the US Government subsequently outlined the contribution of combat and non-combat forces from Poland (200 non-combat troops), Bulgaria (nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) non-combat troops), Denmark (one submarine, a corvette and a corps of elite troops), Romania (non-combat medics, engineers and military police), Slovakia (decontamination troops), Latvia (a small number of troops) and Ukraine (decontamination troops).³⁵

The Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, formally announced on 18 March 2003 that his Government would commit its 2,000 troops in the Gulf to the coalition force. Mr Howard also confirmed that the number of Australian forces in the Gulf would not be increased beyond existing levels.

On 19 March 2003 preparatory military activities in the southern no-fly zone were conducted ahead of the main military operation.³⁶ US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld subsequently revealed during a press briefing on 21 March that:

On Wednesday afternoon [19 March] we conducted early battlefield preparations by taking out air defense threats, radar communication sites and artillery that could pose a threat to coalition forces. Some of these targets included radars in western Iraq and near Basra in southern Iraq, artillery pieces near Al-Faw and Az Zubay near Kuwait, and surface-to-surface missiles in the south. Later Wednesday evening, coalition forces began inserting Special Operations Forces throughout western and southern Iraq to conduct reconnaissance operations and take down visual observation posts on the southern Iraqi border.³⁷

In a Statement to the House on 20 March 2003 Mr Hoon commented:

Coalition forces yesterday carried out certain preliminary operations against Iraqi artillery, surface-to-surface missiles, and air defence systems within the southern no-fly zone. Those were prudent preparatory steps, using coalition air capabilities previously used in the no-fly zones, designed to reduce the threat to coalition forces in Kuwait.³⁸

³³ US Department of State press release, 18 March 2003, from <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/arms/03031800.htm>

³⁴ Further information on the breakdown of these forces is available in Library Research Paper RP 03/22 *Iraq: developments since UN Security Council Resolution 1441*.

³⁵ “Inside the coalition of the willing”, *The Advertiser*, 20 March 2003

³⁶ Further information of previous activity in the no-fly zones is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/1981.

³⁷ US Department of Defense News Briefing, 21 March 2003.

³⁸ HC Deb 20 March 2003, c1087

II The Outbreak of Conflict

Military operations began at 0234 (GMT) on 20 March, shortly after the expiry of the 48-hour ultimatum. President Bush addressed the nation to declare that military action had commenced:

American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.

On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. More than 35 countries are giving crucial support -- from the use of naval and air bases, to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honor of serving in our common defense.³⁹

He went on to say that coalition forces would “make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm”, adding that:

A campaign on the harsh terrain of a nation as large as California could be longer and more difficult than some predict. And helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment.

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people. [...]

Now that conflict has come, the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force. And I assure you, this will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory.⁴⁰

In a television address on 20 March Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that:

Tonight, British servicemen and women are engaged from air, land and sea. Their mission: to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction.

I know this course of action has produced deep divisions of opinion in our country. But I know also the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers. They are the finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them.

³⁹ ‘President Bush addresses the Nation’, 19 March 2003, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html>

⁴⁰ ‘President Bush addresses the Nation’, 19 March 2003, from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html>

He declared that, in his judgement, the threat posed by terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in states like Iraq was “real, growing and of an entirely different nature to any conventional threat to our security that Britain has faced before”:⁴¹

For 12 years, the world tried to disarm Saddam; after his wars in which hundreds of thousands died. UN weapons inspectors say vast amounts of chemical and biological poisons, such as anthrax, VX nerve agent, and mustard gas remain unaccounted for in Iraq.

So our choice is clear: back down and leave Saddam hugely strengthened; or proceed to disarm him by force. Retreat might give us a moment of respite but years of repentance at our weakness would I believe follow.⁴²

He went on to say that:

Removing Saddam will be a blessing to the Iraqi people. Four million Iraqis are in exile. 60% of the population dependent on food aid. Thousands of children die every year through malnutrition and disease. Hundreds of thousands have been driven from their homes or murdered.

I hope the Iraqi people hear this message. We are with you. Our enemy is not you, but your barbarous rulers.

Our commitment to the post-Saddam humanitarian effort will be total. We shall help Iraq move towards democracy. And put the money from Iraqi oil in a UN trust fund so that it benefits Iraq and no-one else.⁴³

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said that the military action taken by the Coalition was “a big political error”, adding that it was “unjustified”.⁴⁴ He warned of the dangers of international law being replaced by the “rule of the fist”.⁴⁵

The French President, Jacques Chirac, responded to the start of hostilities by declaring that “France regrets this action taken without the approval of the United Nations.”⁴⁶ He went on to say that he hoped the conflict would be “as rapid and as least costly in human lives as possible to avoid a humanitarian disaster”. He added that: “Tomorrow, we must

⁴¹ ‘Prime Minister’s address to the Nation’, 20 March 2003, from <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page3327.asp>

⁴² ‘Prime Minister’s address to the Nation’, 20 March 2003, from <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page3327.asp>

⁴³ ‘Prime Minister’s address to the Nation’, 20 March 2003, from <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page3327.asp>

⁴⁴ *Financial Times*, 21 March 2003

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Financial Times*, 21 March 2003

get together with our allies and with the whole international community to assume together the challenges that await us.”⁴⁷

His Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin reiterated the French view that the UN should take responsibility for the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq, saying that:

Only the UN has the legitimacy to do a proper job in reconstructing Iraq in the name of the international community and ensuring the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Iraq.⁴⁸

It was reported that the French Government had given assurances to the USA and UK that it would provide military assistance to the Coalition in the event of an Iraqi attack using weapons of mass destruction. The French Ambassador to Washington declared that:

If Saddam Hussein were to use chemical and biological weapons, this would change the situation completely and immediately for the French government. We have equipment to fight in these circumstances.⁴⁹

The Chinese Government called for an immediate halt to military action, which it said “violated the UN Charter and the basic norms of international law”.⁵⁰

Official reaction in the Gulf to the Coalition attack was generally muted, although there was widespread condemnation in the media of what was perceived to be a “colonial war” aimed at securing Iraq’s oil wealth and serving US and Israeli interests.⁵¹

The Syrian Government condemned and denounced the “barbaric aggression” against Iraq, which it declared to be in “flagrant violation of the principles of international law, in breach of international legitimacy and condemned by all the people on earth.” It called for an “immediate end to this war and the withdrawal of the invading troops from Iraq.”⁵²

A. Military and Diplomatic Developments

1. Week One (20-26 March)

The initial phase of the military campaign in the early morning of **20 March** involved limited strikes on key leadership targets. These had been selected on the basis of intelligence on the reported location of senior members of the Iraqi political and military

⁴⁷ *Financial Times*, 21 March 2003

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 2003

⁵⁰ Chinese *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 March 2003, from *BBC Monitoring*

⁵¹ See, for example, the summary of Arab press in *The Independent*, 20 March 2003

⁵² Report of meeting chaired by President Bashar al-Assad, *Syrian Radio*, 22 March 2003, from *BBC Monitoring*

high command.⁵³ More than 40 Tomahawk cruise missiles were fired from six US Navy vessels situated in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. A number of 2000 lbs precision-guided bombs were also dropped from two F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter-bombers. Targets included a leadership residence, an intelligence service headquarters in Baghdad and a Republican Guard facility.⁵⁴

The limited nature of the action prompted surprise among analysts, many of whom had anticipated an intense first wave of strikes across Iraq aimed at inspiring “shock and awe” among the Iraqi leadership and population. The *Financial Times* commented:

After months of planning for a “shock and awe” bombardment that would send a shudder of fear through Saddam Hussein’s regime and prompt Iraqis to abandon it, President George W. Bush rewrote the start of the war based on last-minute intelligence.

Donald Rumsfeld, the defence secretary, yesterday explained the decision to take an opportunistic strike at Iraq’s president ahead of the war schedule envisaged in the greater battle plan when the US received rare information on the whereabouts of Mr Hussein. “Any war plan reflects the reality that one would take opportunities that present themselves” Mr Rumsfeld said.⁵⁵

An article in *The Evening Standard* reported:

While military chiefs made clear that the first strike was not part of the anticipated “shock and awe” aerial barrage predicted for the opening of hostilities, it became apparent that the first moves of a ground assault had begun at the Iraq-Kuwait border [...]

A British military source at US Central Command in the Qatar desert said “although hostilities have commenced this is not the start of the war. These air strikes were taking advantage of a window of opportunity based on intelligence reports.”⁵⁶

In response to the early outbreak of hostilities, exchanges of artillery fire between Iraqi and Coalition forces were reported on the Iraq-Kuwait border.

Iraqi forces reportedly fired five surface-to-surface missiles into Kuwait from southern Iraq. Initial reports claimed that Scud-based missiles had been used, although this was later discounted. Prior to the conflict, the Iraqi Government had consistently denied that it still possessed Scud-based missiles, which were proscribed under UN Security Council

⁵³ Statement by Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, HC Deb 20 March, c1087

⁵⁴ US Department of Defense News Briefing, 21 March 2003.

⁵⁵ “Last-minute news led to rewrite of war script”, *The Financial Times*, 21 March 2003

⁵⁶ “War starts with a cruise onslaught”, *The Evening Standard*, 20 March 2003

Resolution 687.⁵⁷ An Iraqi Government spokesman said the missiles fired at Kuwait had included Al-Samoud 2 and Fatah missiles. Two tactical ballistic missiles, possibly short-range Ababil-100 missiles, were intercepted by Patriot air defence missiles.⁵⁸ The other missiles were not intercepted because they were judged to be landing away from military sites or civilian population centres.

Embedded correspondents⁵⁹ near Kuwait city reported that an Iraqi Seersucker sea-skimming cruise missile had landed near a Marine headquarters, but did not cause any damage. The missile was not picked up by Coalition surface-to-air missile systems due to its low altitude.

During the evening of 20 March and the early hours of **21 March** air strikes continued on regime targets, Republican Guard positions and Iraqi infrastructure, although still not on the scale previously anticipated by many commentators. Coalition aircraft, including RAF Tornado GR4s, attacked key facilities and Harrier GR7s provided close air support for Coalition ground forces. A number of Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles were launched from US warships and Royal Navy submarines in the region. Media coverage reported explosions in the northern Iraqi cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.⁶⁰

In tandem with the air campaign, Coalition ground forces advanced into southern Iraq, supported by Coalition aircraft and naval vessels. British Royal Marines from 40 and 42 Commando launched an airborne and amphibious assault on the Al Faw Peninsula in order to secure oil pipeline infrastructure and forestall any threat of pollution to the Gulf.

US Marines from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and elements of the British 3 Commando Brigade launched attacks on the port of Umm Qasr. Troops from the US 3rd Infantry Division and US Army 5th Corps headed north toward Baghdad. The 5th US regimental combat team, supported by British specialist units, secured the South Rumaila oilfield and gas and oil platforms to the south and south-west of Basra. Two battle groups of the British 7th Armoured Division provided flank protection for a push by another US regimental combat team toward Basra.⁶¹ During the deployment of amphibious forces to the Al Faw peninsula a US CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter crashed in Kuwait, killing eight British Marines from 3 Commando Brigade and four US aircrew.

In a Statement to the House on 21 March 2003 the Secretary of State for Defence provided an update on military operations:

⁵⁷ For more information on the known state of Iraq's ballistic missile programmes, see Section II B 2 e of Library Research Paper 03/22.

⁵⁸ Subsequent reports suggested that during the conflict Patriot succeeded in shooting down all nine Iraqi missiles that were targeted. See 'Radar probed in Patriot incidents', *Washington Post*, 8 May 2003.

⁵⁹ A number of international journalists were allowed to travel with Coalition forces as "embedded correspondents".

⁶⁰ "Iraq latest: at a glance", *BBC News Online*, 21 March 2003

⁶¹ Ministry of Defence Press Conference, 21 March 2003

British forces have been heavily engaged in maritime, land and air operations overnight. Those operations are continuing and I know the House will understand why I cannot give all the details at this stage.

I regret that I have to confirm that a United States CH-46 helicopter carrying British and United States personnel crashed in Kuwait, close to the border with Iraq. There were a number of fatalities [...] it was not the result of enemy action [...]

The helicopter was engaged in an operation led by 3 Commando Brigade on the Al Faw Peninsula in south-eastern Iraq. It began with an assault on the southern tip of the peninsula, using support helicopters from Kuwait and from the Amphibious Task Group in the north Arabian Gulf. The tip of the peninsula was secured as planned by 40 Commando Royal Marines, and without damage to the oil infrastructure, averting any attempt by the regime to cause an environmental disaster in the Gulf. Some resistance, including the use of mortars and artillery, has been encountered, and there was a small-scale engagement with individual Iraqi troops resulting in four known Iraqi fatalities [...]

At 0430 hours this morning, coalition ground forces including elements under the command of 3 Commando Brigade commenced an operation to seize the port of Umm Qasr and a nearby naval base. In addition, this morning, 42 Commando were deployed by British aircraft to a blocking position north of Al Faw. Throughout that operation, Royal Navy ships including HMS Chatham and Marlborough provided naval gunfire support to 3 Commando Brigade [...]

In addition to the Al Faw operation, coalition land operations across the Kuwait-Iraq border are well under way. Preparatory action began yesterday afternoon using fixed-wing and rotary air forces and artillery. At 1715 hours yesterday, the 5th US Regimental Combat Team launched operations to secure the South Rumaila oilfield and gas and oil platforms in southern Iraq.

At 0300 hours this morning, the main land offensive began with coalition forces advancing across the Kuwait-Iraq border. Two battle groups of 7th Armoured Brigade are providing flank protection as part of that assault. We understand that stiff resistance has been encountered and that 7th Armoured Brigade has engaged in contact with Iraqi forces.

Turning to air operations, at 1800 hours yesterday, 50 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles were launched at regime targets in Baghdad closely associated with Saddam Hussein. A number of missiles were launched from Royal Navy submarines, and we believe that all hit their regime targets. A large number of RAF aircraft, including combat and support aircraft, have been active during the past 24 hours, including Tornado GR4s using Enhanced Paveway 2 precision munitions.⁶²

⁶² HC Deb 21 March 2003, c1211-1212

Iraqi resistance to Coalition ground forces was initially reported to be sporadic. A summary of military action by the Ministry of Defence reported the amphibious assault on the Al Faw Peninsula as having encountered “light resistance” with large numbers of Iraqi soldiers surrendering.⁶³ As Coalition forces pushed inland, however, pockets of stiff resistance were reported around Umm Qasr and further north around the three key bridges over the Euphrates River at Nasiriyah. Iraqi forces were reported to be employing guerrilla tactics, using lightly armed troops or paramilitaries to snipe at Coalition forces and infiltrate areas that had appeared to have been pacified.

Some analysts expressed concern that the tactics employed by the Iraqis could slow the pace of the Coalition advance towards Baghdad and threaten the supply chain extending back to Kuwait. Other commentators and Coalition military leaders stressed that the resistance encountered had been extremely sporadic and underlined that the Coalition advance was intentionally bypassing light resistance, leaving the task of securing population centres and rear areas to the follow-on forces.

On 21 March 2003 US and British Special Forces seized two airfields (H2 and H3) in western Iraq, providing Coalition forces with strategically important forward bases for further operations in the area. Commentators noted that the capture of H2 and H3 would also hinder any Iraqi efforts to mount attacks on Israel using ballistic missiles. A number of Scud-based missiles were launched against Israel from western Iraq during the 1991 Gulf conflict and intensive Coalition Special Forces operations were required to target the missiles and their launchers.

The anticipated high-intensity “shock and awe” aerial campaign (A-Day) commenced late on 21 March and continued into the early hours of **22 March**. According to the Ministry of Defence, Coalition aircraft flew approximately 3,000 sorties during the air attacks⁶⁴ focusing on command and control structures, communications and military capabilities in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul. An assessment by the US Department of Defense declared that:

More than 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched from US and British ships and submarines. Additionally, about 100 air-launch cruise missiles were fired, and 700 precision-guided munitions were dropped by coalition aircraft on targets throughout Iraq.⁶⁵

⁶³ Operation *Telic* Summary Report, 20/21 March 2003. This is available online at: <http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/summary.htm>

⁶⁴ Operation *Telic* Summary Report 21/22 March 2003.

⁶⁵ US Department of Defense News Briefing, 22 March 2003. This is available online at: http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03222003_t0322osdpa.html

During the air attack two Royal Navy Sea King Mk7 Airborne Early Warning helicopters collided over international waters in the North Arabian Gulf. Six British personnel and one US crew member were killed.

On the ground, US Marines and the British 7th Armoured Brigade approached Basra, encountering significant Iraqi resistance. The Iraqi 51st Mechanised Brigade was reported to be surrendering en masse, although this was subsequently disputed by Coalition spokespeople. A Department of Defense (DoD) press briefing on 22 March placed the total number of Prisoners of War (POWs) captured thus far at approximately 2,000. The British journalist Terry Lloyd and two of his companions were reported missing on the road to Basra. Reports later confirmed that Lloyd had been killed in the crossfire between Iraqi and US forces.

US troops heading north continued to encounter strong resistance around Nasiriyah and fresh resistance was encountered in and around Umm Qasr. Some Iraqi troops and paramilitaries in the south were reported to be wearing civilian clothing, making it difficult for Coalition forces to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Eleven US soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division were wounded and two killed in a grenade attack by a fellow US soldier at a US camp in northern Kuwait.

The aerial bombardment of Baghdad and Iraq's other major cities and towns intensified on **23 March** with the first elements of a daylight bombing campaign. The DoD confirmed that Coalition forces had "flown more than 6,000 sorties to date in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom".⁶⁶

The continuation of sporadic resistance in southern Iraq and in particular around Umm Qasr, Basra and Nasiriyah prompted speculation among many analysts that members of the Republican Guard and the *Fedayeen*, a militia force under the control of Saddam Hussein's son Uday,⁶⁷ had been deployed to key towns in an effort to engage Coalition forces in urban warfare. An article in *The Financial Times* commented:

In an ominous sign of the military and political difficulties that may lie ahead for the invasion force if it seeks to capture urban areas, the word "guerrilla" was used at the weekend by Colonel Chris Vernon, chief UK military spokesman in Kuwait, to explain the unexpectedly stiff resistance encountered in Umm Qasr [...]

By yesterday [23 March] however, the fighting had intensified, and coalition commanders were suggesting that a group of 120 Iraqi soldiers still fighting against overwhelming odds were either republican guards or special forces men

⁶⁶ US Department of Defense press release, 23 March 2003

⁶⁷ Further information on the status of the Republican Guard and *Fedayeen* is available in Library Research Paper RP02/53 *Iraq: the debate on policy options*.

sent by President Saddam Hussein's regime to bolster Umm Qasr's defence. Some were said to be firing from the windows of civilian houses and switching from military to civilian clothes.⁶⁸

Seven US Marines were killed during the fighting in Nasiriyah. A US Army supply convoy was also ambushed by Iraqi forces with twelve US troops reported missing. Five US POWs were shown later on Iraqi television, prompting criticism from the US leadership and claims that the Geneva Conventions had been contravened.

Two British RAF personnel were killed when a Tornado GR4 was brought down on the Kuwaiti border by a Patriot missile battery.⁶⁹ Two British soldiers were reported missing, later confirmed dead, after an attack on British military vehicles in southern Iraq.

A civilian bus was hit by Coalition aircraft during an attack on a bridge on the Iraqi side of the Syrian border. Five Syrians were killed and another ten injured. The Pentagon also confirmed that two Tomahawk cruise missiles had malfunctioned, landing in an unpopulated area of Turkey.

Early on **24 March** between thirty and forty US attack helicopters launched strikes on Republican Guard positions to the south of Baghdad. Republican Guard formations near Karbala were attacked in anticipation of the arrival of the ground forces, including the US Army 5th Corps and the US 3rd Infantry brigade which were moving north toward the town following heavy fighting at Najaf. Heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered during the helicopter attack and one US Apache attack helicopter was shot down. Both air crew were captured and later shown on Iraqi television. Iraqi officials claimed a farmer armed with a shotgun had shot the aircraft down.

The air campaign continued with significant activity in the north of the country along the frontline between Iraqi troops and Kurdish-controlled territory. Mosul, Kirkuk and Chamchamal were reported to have come under heavy bombardment.

US Marines of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit were replaced in Umm Qasr by British forces from 42 Commando, allowing the US unit to redeploy for the advance north. Fighting continued in and around Basra and Nasiriyah. The first British combat casualties of the campaign occurred during fighting in Al Zubayr near Basra, when a soldier from the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and a soldier from 1st Battalion, The Black Watch were killed in separate incidents.

⁶⁸ "Fierce fighting as coalition troops struggle to subdue Umm Qasr", *The Financial Times*, 24 March 2003

⁶⁹ The Tornado GR4 was based at RAF Marham.

Commenting on the strength of the resistance encountered by Coalition forces, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, declared at a Ministry of Defence press conference that:

My concern, as I have indicated in relation to Basra for example, is the use of regular forces, militias, basically some of Saddam Hussein's thugs who in previous years have been responsible for terrorising and intimidating the Iraqi people. It is those kinds of people that are resisting. By and large the regular forces around Basra withdrew, and our concern obviously is not to expose our forces to the kinds of terrorist activities that some of those groups could carry out.⁷⁰

In response to further allegations that resistance from Iraqi military and paramilitary forces was hampering progress the British forces spokesman, Group Captain Al Lockwood, commented on the *Today* programme that:

We're encountering them, if necessary we're going round them. They're not impeding our advance at all, and as necessary we will go back and deal with them. We're making progress, we're on our timeline.⁷¹

In a Statement to the House on 24 March 2003, the Prime Minister provided an update on military operations:

I hope that the House will understand that there is a limit to how much I can say about the detail of our operations, especially those involving special forces, but with that caveat, at present British and US troops have taken the al-Faw peninsula; that is now secure. The southern oil installations are under coalition control. The port of Umm Qasr, despite continuing pockets of resistance, is under allied control, but the waterway essential for humanitarian aid may be blocked by mines and will take some days to sweep. Basra is surrounded and cannot be used as an Iraqi base, but in Basra there are pockets of Saddam's most fiercely loyal security services, who are holding out. They are contained but still able to inflict casualties on our troops, so we are proceeding with caution. Basra international airport has been made secure. The western desert is largely secure. In the north, there have been air attacks on regime targets in Mosul, Kirkuk and Tikrit. We have been in constant contact with the Turkish government and the Kurdish authorities to urge calm.

Meanwhile coalition forces led by the American 5th Corps are on the way to Baghdad. As we speak, they are about 60 miles south of Baghdad, near Karbala. A little way from there they will encounter the Medina division of the republican guard, which is defending the route to Baghdad. That will plainly be a crucial moment. Coalition forces are also advancing on al-Kut, in the east of Iraq. The

⁷⁰ Ministry of Defence press conference, 24 March 2003. A copy of the transcript is available online at: http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/sofs_fpa_24march.htm

⁷¹ Reported by *BBC News Online*, 24 March 2003

two main bridges over the Euphrates south of Baghdad have been taken intact. That is of critical significance.

The air campaign has attacked Iraqi military installations, the centres of Saddam's regime and command and control centres. More than 5,000 sorties have taken place, thousands of Iraqi soldiers have surrendered and still more have simply left the field, their units disintegrating. But there are those, closest to Saddam, who are resisting and will resist strongly. They are the elite who are hated by the local population and have little to lose. There are bound, therefore, to be difficult days ahead, but the strategy and its timing are proceeding according to plan.⁷²

At a US Central Command Press Briefing General Tommy Franks confirmed that the “enemy prisoner-of-war count today is in the vicinity of 3,000”.⁷³

The Chief of Staff of the UK contingent based in Qatar, Major General Peter Wall, declared at the press briefing that:

The RAF have been involved in operations around the clock since the campaign began, flying over 100 sorties a day. And our tankers and AWACS have played a key role in supporting the coalition's air effort.⁷⁴

The *American Forces Press Service* reported:

Coalition aircraft flew more than 1,500 sorties in the continuing air war against the regime in Iraq on March 24, coalition officials in the region said today.

More than 800 were strike sorties, with 200 of those being flown against “preplanned” targets. The rest were flown against “emerging targets”, targets of opportunity.⁷⁵

Reports suggested that US troops had been flown into Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq to prepare for the opening of a northern front in the campaign. An article in the *Financial Times* reported:

Several hundred US soldiers were landed at a mountain air strip in northern Iraq to take part in the opening of a northern front against Saddam Hussein in Mosul and Kirkuk, according to Kurds familiar with the operation...⁷⁶

⁷² HC Deb 24 March 2003, c21-22

⁷³ US Central Command press briefing, 24 March 2003. A copy of this transcript is available online at: http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/News_Release.asp?NewsRelease=20030359.txt

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ “Coalition aircraft flew more than 1,500 sorties over Iraq”, *American Forces Press Service*, 25 March 2003

⁷⁶ “US troops land by air to open northern front”, *The Financial Times*, 24 March 2003

At the US Central Command press briefing on 24 March General Franks acknowledged that US, British and Australian Special Forces were already operating in the region.⁷⁷

On **25 March** the strong Iraqi resistance encountered in and around Basra led to the city being designated a military target by British forces. The intention was to neutralise the Iraqi forces still in the city and allow in humanitarian aid. British forces were reported to be engaging Iraqi paramilitaries fleeing the city.

Reports emerged of a civilian uprising in the city against Saddam's forces, fuelling speculation that the Shia population was turning against the regime. However, officials from the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the main Shia opposition group, dismissed the reports of an insurrection, saying instead that there had been small-scale protests about the poor living conditions in the city, the loss of the water supply and the Coalition bombardment.

The day before, Prime Minister Tony Blair had acknowledged that the lack of Allied support for the Shia during the 1991 uprising after the Gulf War was having a cautionary impact on the behaviour of the population during the current conflict. Noting the cautious welcome given to Coalition troops by Iraqi civilians, Mr Blair said:

They cannot be sure in their own minds yet that we mean what we say. In their own minds, they have to be very circumspect until they're sure the regime's gone.⁷⁸

There was some press speculation that the British had been deployed in the Basra area to deter incursions into Iraq by Iranian forces or Iranian-backed militias. It was also suggested that good relations between London and Tehran made it politically expedient to deploy British rather than American forces in this area. This was subsequently disputed by Mr Hoon in his statement of 26 March 2003:

Much of Coalition-controlled Iraq bordering Iran is under British command. But the suggestion that the Royal Marines were sent to guard against Iranian forces is simply not true. We are seeking close contacts with the Iranian authorities to reduce the scope for any misunderstanding.⁷⁹

Two British personnel from the Queen's Royal Lancers were killed and a further two seriously injured on the outskirts of Basra when their Challenger 2 tank came under "friendly fire" from another Challenger tank. A report from *BBC News Online*

⁷⁷ A copy of this transcript is available online at:
http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/News_Release.asp?NewsRelease=20030359.txt

⁷⁸ *Guardian*, 26 March 2003

⁷⁹ HC Deb 26 March 2003, c292

commented that “there are some suggestions that depleted uranium shells were used – which would account for the complete destruction of the tank’s turret”.⁸⁰

In a separate “friendly fire” incident a US F-16 fighter aircraft fired on a Coalition Patriot missile battery which had mistakenly locked its radar on to the plane. This was the second “friendly fire” incident of the campaign involving the Patriot.

The consolidation of Coalition forces south of Baghdad continued with a third route towards the city secured at Al Kut in the south east. Republican Guard positions near Karbala remained under sustained aerial and artillery attack ahead of an advance on Baghdad. The port of Umm Qasr was also finally declared secure and humanitarian supplies were expected to arrive within 48 hours.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld confirmed during a US Department of Defense news briefing that the number of Iraqi POWs was in “excess of 3,500”.⁸¹

General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went on to state:

The air campaign is continuing well. We flew nearly 1,000 sorties over Iraq yesterday. Most against Republican Guard units, and conducted close air support for the ground advance in the south and Special Forces in the west [...] We’re just about to Baghdad. Some of the biggest losses we’ve taken are due to Iraqis committing serious violations of the law of armed conflict in the Geneva Convention by dressing as civilians, by luring us into surrender situations and then opening fire on our troops.⁸²

On **26 March** the consolidation of Coalition forces in the southern outskirts of Baghdad continued, although fighting was reported at Nasiriyah and further north at Najaf, while US Marines encountered resistance around the town of Samawah on the push toward Baghdad. Heavy fighting in the area had been reported and more than 30 US marines were injured in an exchange of “friendly fire” with other American troops.⁸³

The aerial campaign over Baghdad and Republic Guard positions south of the city continued overnight.

In the south of the country Coalition aircraft launched an attack on a column of Iraqi tanks and infantry leaving the city of Basra, heading for the Al Faw Peninsula. It

⁸⁰ “Tanks vulnerable to friendly fire”, *BBC News Online*, 26 March 2003. This report is available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2887235.stm

⁸¹ US Department of Defense News briefing, 25 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03252003_t0325.html

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ “Friendly fire injures at least 25 marines near An Nasiriyah”, *Associated Press*, 29 March 2003

remained unclear whether the Iraqi troops were launching a fresh offensive on Al Faw or fleeing Basra.

Reports of a northern front being opened up were confirmed by US officials after airborne assault troops from the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachuted in to secure an airfield in Kurdish-controlled territory.

15 civilians were killed and 30 injured when two missiles hit a busy street market in the northern Shaab district of Baghdad. The explosions coincided with Coalition air strikes in and around Baghdad. Coalition officials did not directly admit responsibility for the attack, but said missiles and launchers had been targeted at a residential area in the vicinity of the market around the time of the explosions.⁸⁴

Deployment of the US 4th Infantry Division to the Gulf was announced by the Pentagon. Although regarded by some media commentators as extra troops to reinforce Coalition forces already on the ground, deployment of the 4th Infantry Division had already been announced in January 2003. The Division had been expected to open up a northern front in Iraq from bases in Turkey. However, the Turkish indecision over allowing basing rights had left the 4th Infantry's equipment and stores on transport ships in the Mediterranean since late February and its troops on standby for deployment from Fort Hood in Texas.

The US Central Command news briefing on 26 March 2003 confirmed that the number of Iraqi PoWs was "up over 4,000".⁸⁵

At a news briefing the Deputy Director of Operations at US Central Command, Brigadier General Brooks, provided details on the use of depleted uranium⁸⁶ by US forces:

There's a very small portion of our munitions that use depleted uranium. And there have been lots of studies on what the actual hazards are from depleted uranium. When depleted uranium hits something, it's the residue from that that has any possible hazard at all, and that requires close personal ingestion in order to have an effect. We believe that the way we do our operations is as safe as can be done for combat action and does not create the kind of hazard that may have been thought about in the past.⁸⁷

The Defence Secretary Mr Hoon declared that the first stage in providing help to Iraq "must be defeating Saddam Hussein's forces and establishing a secure environment".⁸⁸

⁸⁴ BBC News web site at <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 26 March 2003

⁸⁵ US Central Command News Briefing, 26 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/Transcripts/20030326.htm>

⁸⁶ For more detail on the issue of depleted uranium, see Library Standard Note SN/IA/641, *Military Use of Depleted Uranium*.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ HC Deb 26 March 2003, c293

Only once a secure environment had been established would humanitarian operations be possible in areas of the country under Coalition control.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Sir Galahad, loaded with water, medical supplies, food and equipment for providing shelter, was reported on 26 March to be waiting to enter Umm Qasr, once the sea lanes had been demined.

Only a small number of Iraqi refugees were reported to have crossed into Jordan or other neighbouring countries, despite earlier concerns about the potential for a mass exodus once conflict started. Aid agency officials speculated that the relatively targeted nature of the campaign, coupled with fuel shortages and the distances to be covered across the Western Desert, may have persuaded many Iraqis not to flee.

2. Week Two (27 March – 2 April)

As of **27 March** Coalition aircraft were reported to have flown approximately 1,000 sorties across Iraq in support of ground troops. The US Army's 5th Corps and 1st Marine Expeditionary Force remained engaged in heavy fighting at Najaf, Nasiriyah and Samawah.

Some analysts argued that ongoing resistance in these areas had stalled the Coalition advance and had prevented both personnel and logistics supplies from reaching the front line to the south of Baghdad. This also prompted questions over whether sufficient Coalition forces had been deployed in theatre and led to speculation of a rift between US Central Command and the Pentagon.

An article in *The Financial Times* commented:

US military commanders were yesterday at a decisive point in their Iraqi campaign, having to choose within the next few days whether to attack Baghdad or wait up to a month for reinforcements. Equipment for the main back-up, the 4th Infantry Division, was still making its way through the Red Sea and the first group of transports is not expected to arrive in Kuwait until the weekend. The entire force is unlikely to enter Iraq before April 10 at the earliest. As recently as last week, US officers were thinking about sending the 4th Infantry back to its base in Ford Hood, Texas. The division was originally intended to spearhead a northern invasion of Iraq from Turkey, but its supply ships have been at bay in the Mediterranean for six weeks, awaiting Ankara's permission to cross the country.

Insiders who have spoken to senior Pentagon officials, said growing anger was directed at Donald Rumsfeld, defence secretary, who, the officials say, dismissed their efforts to include heavier ground forces in the field before an invasion. Mr

Rumsfeld has denied these accusations, insisting that the war plan followed thorough consultation with senior uniformed officers.⁸⁹

At a US Central Command briefing the Deputy Director of Operations, Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, commented that “we have adequate force to do what we need to do, and we remain satisfied with that”.⁹⁰

A combined air and ground assault began in northern Iraq against the Islamist Ansar al-Islam group, which was alleged to have links with the Iraqi regime and the al-Qaeda terrorist network. Ansar al-Islam was based around Biyara, to the northeast of Halabja, inside the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq, and was alleged to have been behind a series of bomb attacks and assassinations of leading officials from the Kurdish Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the two main Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. Around 1,000 US troops and 10,000 PUK fighters were involved in the ground offensive, which left up to 300 Ansar fighters dead.⁹¹ The area was secured within three days.

The consolidation of territory and forces around Najaf, Nasiriyah, Samawah and Al Kut continued on **28 March**, along with the heavy aerial bombardment of Republican Guard positions south of Baghdad. Targets in other cities in the north and centre for Iraq were also reported to be under attack.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, provided an update on the Coalition campaign during a DoD news briefing:

Operation Iraqi freedom continues. More than 270,000 coalition forces are deployed in support of combat operations with approximately one-third of those already inside Iraq.

Our ground operations are continuing to push north with marine, armoured and infantry forces poised near Baghdad [...] The air campaign continues as well. We flew almost a thousand sorties over Iraq yesterday, mostly against Iraqi regime leadership and command and control targets, ballistic missile threats and major communication nodes [...] we have air supremacy over approximately 95 percent of Iraq. The area of Baghdad and just north we are not yet calling our skies. While we've been flying freely over Baghdad, we have some surface-to-air missile systems currently unlocated in that area.

⁸⁹ “US faces key decision on Baghdad”, *The Financial Times*, 28 March 2003

⁹⁰ US Central Command Briefing, 27 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/Transcripts/20030329.htm>

⁹¹ PUK officials claimed between 200 and 300 Ansar fighters had been killed, although the US Department of Defense said it could not confirm those figures. *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

That said, since the beginning of operations, our forces have fired more than 650 Tomahawk missiles and dropped more than 5,000 precision-guided munitions. Overall, our plans are on track.⁹²

At a separate press conference the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mike Jackson, provided an update on the progress made by British forces:

Within south east Iraq, 3 Commando Brigade remain in control on the Al Faw peninsula, and [...] are dealing amongst other things with the arrival of humanitarian aid. 7 Armoured Brigade continue to keep watch on Basra, to start to change the circumstances there, to exploit wherever we can ways of unhinging the regime's control from the populous. There have been a number of quite successful I would say, engagements around Basra well reported, and 16 Air Assault Brigade continue to secure and control the Rumaila oil complex, denying it to the enemy and allowing work and production there to recommence, and hopefully quite soon.⁹³

A British soldier was reported missing, believed dead, and a further four troops were injured after a US A-10 ground attack aircraft reportedly fired on two British armoured vehicles.

A second daylight explosion in a Baghdad marketplace was reported in as many days. Iraqi reports suggested 50 civilians had been killed and as many injured. Iraqi officials said Coalition forces had been responsible, a claim that was disputed by Coalition spokespeople, who said there was evidence to suggest the explosion had been caused by a malfunctioning Iraqi surface to air missile that had fallen to earth.

RFA Sir Galahad arrived at Umm Qasr with the first supplies of humanitarian aid.

In response to allegations of a rift between US Central Command and the Pentagon over the adequacy of the Coalition forces and the war plan generally, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated at the US DoD news briefing:

The war plan is [General] Tom Franks' war plan. It was carefully prepared over many months. It was washed through the tank with chiefs on at least four or five occasions. It has been through the combatant commanders. It has been through the National Security Council process [...] When asked by the President or by me, the military officers who've reviewed it have all said they thought it was an excellent plan.⁹⁴

⁹² US Department of Defense news briefing, 28 March 2003. A transcript is available online at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03282003_t0328sd.html

⁹³ Ministry of Defence Press Conference, 28 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/press_28march.htm

⁹⁴ *ibid*

However, media speculation of a rift between senior US political and military figures increased following confirmation by the Pentagon that another 100,000 troops were to be deployed to the Gulf, in addition to the 30,000 personnel of the 4th Infantry Division already en route. An article in *The Independent* commented:

The Pentagon signalled the most radical amendment to the strategic plan since the war started nine days ago, by announcing that extra 100,000 troops would be sent to fight in Iraq, in addition to the 30,000 from the 4th Infantry Division already in the plan. They will join the 250,000 Americans and 45,000 British in the Gulf.⁹⁵

The extra US forces included the 1st Armoured Division in Germany, the 1st Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 2nd and 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiments, the 18th Airborne Corps Artillery, the 160th Fighter Squadron and elements of the 4th Marine Division.⁹⁶ Forces were expected to be in theatre by mid-April.

In the Pentagon press briefing Mr Rumsfeld declared that the US Government had received:

information that shipments of military supplies have been crossing the border from Syria into Iraq, including night-vision goggles. These deliveries pose a direct threat to the lives of coalition forces. We consider such trafficking as hostile acts and will hold the Syrian government accountable for such shipments.⁹⁷

He also commented that:

the entrance into Iraq by military forces, intelligence personnel, or proxies not under the direct operational control of General Franks will be taken as a potential threat to coalition forces. This includes the Badr Corps, the military wing of the Supreme Council on Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The Badr Corps is trained, equipped and directed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, and we will hold the Iranian government responsible for their actions, and will view Badr Corps activity inside Iraq as unhelpful. Armed Badr Corps members found in Iraq will have to be treated as combatants.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ "Why density problem meant Bush had to send extra troops", *The Independent*, 29 March 2003

⁹⁶ Information from GlobalSecurity.Org, available online at:
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_030127-alert.htm

⁹⁷ US Department of Defense news briefing, 28 March 2003, from
http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03282003_t0328sd.html

⁹⁸ US Department of Defense news briefing, 28 March 2003, from
http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03282003_t0328sd.html

Claims had also been made that Russian equipment, specifically Kornet anti-tank missiles, had been exported to Iraq, potentially via Syria. The missiles are believed to have been responsible for the disabling of two US Abrams tanks near Samawah.⁹⁹

On **29 March** US Central Command confirmed that Coalition forces had begun operating from a forward airfield near Tallil in the south of Iraq, providing combat search and rescue, close air support and logistical support to Coalition forces on the ground.

Further assaults on the Republican Guard Medina Division were carried out to prepare the battlefield for a ground assault northwards towards Baghdad. A number of analysts suggested there would be a pause in the Coalition advance on Baghdad to allow time for the arrival of additional troops in the Gulf and the suppression of resistance in rear areas such as Nasiriyah and Najaf.

However, Major General Renuart of CENTCOM disputed such interpretations, saying:

There is no pause on the battlefield. Because you see a particular formation not moving on a day, does not mean that there is a pause on the battlefield. At the same time that we are conducting our air operations throughout the battlefield, we conduct artillery raids, we conduct deep attacks [...] we conduct long-range patrols in order to fix and identify where enemy formations may be. All of those things are part of the battlefield commander's tools, and so it would be unfair to characterise the fact that you don't see tanks rolling on every single day as any pause in the operation.¹⁰⁰

Four US soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division were killed following the attack on a US checkpoint at Najaf by an Iraqi suicide bomber posing as a taxi driver. An article in *The Observer* commented:

The suicide bombing was the first against US and British forces since the campaign began 11 days ago. It followed public appeals for volunteers for a Martyrs Brigade of suicide bombers, and is a worrying portent of the kind of reception that US forces may meet as they move closer to Baghdad.¹⁰¹

The Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan was reported to have stated that suicide attacks against coalition troops would become “routine military policy”.¹⁰²

An article in *The Daily Telegraph* reported that, in response to shift towards suicide attacks, US forces had “instituted new rules of engagement in the area around Najaf and said any driver who failed to stop or turn around after being warned would be shot”.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ See ‘US claims of arms sales strains links with Russia’, *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

¹⁰⁰ US Central Command press briefing, 29 March 2003

¹⁰¹ “US ready for final assault on Baghdad, *The Observer*, 30 March 2003

¹⁰² Iraq Latest, *BBC News Online*, 29 March 2003

Coalition officials continued to allege that Iraqi soldiers and paramilitaries were violating the laws of war by dressing in civilian clothing or pretending to surrender to Coalition forces and then opening fire as they approached.

An Iraqi sea-skimming cruise missile, believed to have been a Chinese-made CSSC-3 Seersucker,¹⁰⁴ struck a seawall in Kuwait City, causing minor damage and injuring two people. The missile was apparently fired from the Faw Peninsula, an area that had been considered to be under Coalition control at the time.

On **30 March** US Central Command confirmed that the Ansar al-Islam base in northern Iraq had been destroyed by Coalition forces. In the area around Nasiriyah, which had been the focus of stiff resistance for nearly a week, reports of Coalition dialogue with the local population prompted speculation that resistance in the town could be easing.

At the CENTCOM briefing on 30 March General Tommy Franks stated:

I have received report that coalition forces are working with local Iraqis in the city of An Nasiriyah, and the death squads that operate – the squads of gangs, regime gangs that operate in that city, have come under fire. The Iraqis in and around An Nasiriyah are helping us once again as we speak by providing records on Ba’ath party officials and members of the regime attempting to operate in and around An Nasiriyah.¹⁰⁵

Heavy fighting broke out on the outskirts of Basra between 3 Commando Brigade and a substantial force of Iraqi troops. Five senior Iraqi officers were reported to have been captured during the fighting. A British Marine was killed and several others injured in the action.

A British soldier was also killed in a road accident in Kuwait, while two US Marines were killed in separate vehicle accidents in central Iraq. Three US personnel were killed when a Marine helicopter crashed in southern Iraq.

Speaking on *BBC Radio 4's The World This Weekend* the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, suggested that British forces could be redeployed as the conflict progressed:

It's always been the case that these kinds of conflicts require certain kinds of armed forces in the initial phase. Obviously once we move to a different kind of conflict we can the look at whether we have the right kinds of forces.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “Driver mows down American troops”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 2003

¹⁰⁴ The Seersucker missile is also known as the Silkworm.

¹⁰⁵ US Central command press briefing, 30 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/Transcripts/20030334.htm>

¹⁰⁶ “Troops could be replaced”, *BBC News Online*, 30 March 2003

Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a speech at the Annual Policy Conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) during which he warned Iran, Syria and other states in the region to halt the development of weapons of mass destruction and support for terrorism:

As part of our overall strategy in combating terrorism and dealing with states that do not follow acceptable patterns of behaviour, we are demanding more responsible behaviour from these states, especially those in the region. It is now time for the entire international community to step up and insist that Iran end its support for terrorists, including groups violently opposed to Israel and to the Middle East peace process. Tehran must stop pursuing weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. In addition, we will continue to support the aspirations of the Iranian people to improve their lives and live in peace and security with their neighbors.

Syria also now faces a critical choice. Syria can continue direct support for terrorist groups and the dying regime of Saddam Hussein, or it can embark on a different and more hopeful course. Either way, Syria bears the responsibility for its choices, and for the consequences.¹⁰⁷

On **31 March** heavy fighting continued in and around Basra between Iraqi and British forces. The US Army 5th Corps engaged elements of the Republican guard at Hindiya, south of the Iraqi capital, and the 101st Airborne Division attacked Iraqi troops in Najaf. The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force consolidated its hold on Nasiriyah while moving northwards to form a second front for the push on Baghdad.

In a Pentagon press briefing Major General McChrystal provided an update on the progress of Coalition forces:

Our ground operations are continuing to engage enemy positions throughout Iraq [...] We've seized additional key bridges over the Euphrates River and conducted offensive operations to isolate Al Samawah and Nasiriyah in order to destroy irregular forces in those areas.

The air campaign continues well. We flew about 1,000 sorties over Iraq yesterday, mostly against the Medina, Hammurabi, Baghdad and Al Nida divisions. We also hit command, control and communications targets and air defence sites in Baghdad and northern Iraq. Our forces have fired more than 700 Tomahawk land attack missiles and dropped more than 8,000 precision-guided munitions since Operation Iraqi Freedom began.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Remarks at AIPAC Annual Policy Conference, 30 March 2003, from <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2003/19174.htm>

¹⁰⁸ US Department of Defense press briefing, 31 March 2003. A transcript is available online at: http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03312003_t0331asd.html

Seven Iraqi civilians were killed by US forces after failing to stop their car at a checkpoint near Najaf, prompting speculation from some commentators that the rules of engagement had been relaxed following the suicide bombing the day before. Brigadier General Vince Brooks disputed the claim that US troops had violated the rules of engagement, commenting that:

There is increased vigilance because of the tactics that we've seen used throughout the battlefield by the regime and the death squads that are out there. We always maintain the inherent right to self defence. That is the start point for any of our rules of engagement.¹⁰⁹

The following day US Marines shot dead an unarmed Iraqi driving a truck at speed toward a US checkpoint.

During oral questions on 31 March Mr Hoon reiterated that the composition of British forces in the Gulf may be reviewed, stating that:

I have never ruled out sending reinforcements. It is important to replace units and individuals who have been in theatre for several months as and when that is necessary. I am ruling out – at this stage at any rate – the need for a substantial increase of the total number of our forces in theatre. We judged at the time [...] that around 45,000 members of our forces were likely to be sufficient for the job that we were required to undertake. Nothing has changed my assessment of that position.¹¹⁰

Mr Hoon also confirmed that the Coalition was holding about 8,000 prisoners of war.¹¹¹

A British soldier was killed during an explosive ordnance disposal operation in southern Iraq.

Attacks on Republican Guard positions south of Baghdad were the main focus of Coalition ground and air activity on **1 April**. Simultaneous attacks were mounted on Hilla, Karbala, Samawah and north of Nasiriyah. Two Republican Guard positions north of Baghdad were reported to have moved south to defend the capital and bolster weakening positions on the southern outskirts.

A British soldier of the Household Cavalry Regiment attached to 16 Air Assault Brigade was killed in a road accident.

In the late hours of 1 April and the early hours of **2 April** US forces moved on Republican Guard positions near Karbala in an effort to consolidate their position and

¹⁰⁹ “You just killed a family, the officer yelled”, *the Daily Telegraph*, 2 April 2003

¹¹⁰ HC Deb 31 March 2003, c649

¹¹¹ *ibid*

prepare the battlefield, ahead of a major push on Baghdad. Some units were reported to be less than 20 miles from the capital.

An assessment by *The Financial Times* suggested:

Military officials said intensified air strikes on the front lines of Republican Guard units had approximately halved their capability, setting the stage for a frontal ground attack within 48 hours. Defence officials and people briefed on the Pentagon's war plan have said in recent days that the assault on the Republican Guard's armoured Medina division was imminent.

The land battle will be spearheaded by 200 Abrams tanks from the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division, the lead force which has been regrouping 50 miles south of Baghdad since the weekend. Probing ground movements by the 3rd Infantry started on Monday and continued into last night, with advanced units moving north to test Medina positions [...]

Over the last 24 hours, the air assault has been escalated significantly, with British and US jets flying more than 2,000 missions, aimed largely at "softening up" the Medina division. Military officials said they have seen movement of Republican Guard forces in recent days, believed to be reinforcements moving in to fill gaps in the Medina division created by US bombings.¹¹²

US Marines of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force also continued to push northwards on the east bank of the Euphrates in order to link up with the 3rd Infantry Division near Hilla and create a broad front to the south and west of Baghdad. Heavy air strikes in the vicinity of Al Kut allowed Marines to seize a key bridge across the River Tigris and take control of one of the main highways to the south east of the capital.

Approximately 50,000 US troops were reported to be advancing on Baghdad from the south and west, while 6,000 Marines were reported to be in the Al Kut region heading toward the city.

3. Week Three (3-9 April)

By **3 April** it appeared that the opening phase of Coalition operations to surround and take Baghdad had begun. US forces from the 3rd Infantry Division attacked Saddam International Airport less than 12 miles southwest from the city centre.

Coalition Special Forces were reported to be operating in the city. For the first time during the campaign power and water supplies were cut off in Baghdad which some analysts speculated had been caused by a "blackout" bomb capable of short-circuiting the electrical grid. US Central Command denied that Coalition forces had been responsible,

¹¹² "US plans imminent attack on Baghdad republican guard", *The Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

prompting speculation by some commentators that the Iraqi regime had cut off supplies as part of a propaganda campaign. Iraqi resistance to the Coalition advance was reported to be sporadic.

An article in the *Financial Times* commented:

US forces advanced to the edge of Baghdad almost unchallenged and began pouring in special forces to probe the military strength and political control within the city. US armoured units moved to about six miles from the edge of Baghdad and aircraft pounded targets in and around the capital. Parts of Saddam International Airport, 12 miles from the city centre, were occupied by US forces [...] although there were intense pockets of fighting nearby [...]

Republican Guard units, including remnants of the two divisions defending Baghdad's southern and western approaches, were believed to be retreating into the city, forcing commanders to decide whether to pause on the outskirts or begin probing the inner defences.¹¹³

Rupert Cornwell, writing in *The Independent*, suggested:

American troops are on the outskirts of Baghdad and the campaign, if not the final battle, for the Iraqi capital has already begun. A momentous choice, clouded by any number of imponderables, faces American commanders. Do they launch their attack on the city now? Or should they wait for reinforcements to arrive, hoping that unchallenged airpower, special forces operations or some form of popular uprising or coup against Saddam Hussein (assuming he is still alive and in control) will spare them their worst nightmare - a savage street-by-street battle. Last night, the special forces appeared to be already on the move. Both sides have powerful arguments. The next few days offer virtually moonless conditions, heightening the advantage enjoyed by attackers equipped with night-vision equipment and unmanned drones able to pin point targets.

The force likely to form the backbone of any organised defence of Baghdad will be significantly smaller than it might have been, assuming the damage inflicted on the Medina and Baghdad divisions of the Republican Guard in Wednesday's fighting is as devastating as US commanders claim. A top priority is now to prevent units of those divisions making it back into the city to link up with President Saddam's praetorian guard, the estimated 15,000-strong Special Republican Guard commanded by Saddam's son Qusay, and guerrilla fighters loyal to the regime [...]

But the arguments for waiting a little are equally strong. In the first place, many analysts do not believe the forces now available - the US 3rd Infantry Division, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and elements of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions - are enough to encircle and capture a city of some 5 million people. If

¹¹³ "Special forces go into Baghdad", *Financial Times*, 4 April 2003

they tried, even with overwhelming support from the air, the battle could prove a bloody, inconclusive affair. That in turn would resurrect the criticism, quieted by this week's resounding successes on the battlefield, that Donald Rumsfeld, the Defence Secretary, put too small a force in the field in the first place. General Tommy Franks, in overall command of the war, may or may not have already made up his mind. In the meantime, his forces will seek to take control of Saddam international airport, gaining a supply base just 10 miles from Baghdad's south-western edge. The aerial pounding of "regime targets" will continue, while special forces and other reconnaissance units will step up sorties to gauge the resistance to be expected later.¹¹⁴

Some commentators believed US forces would encounter severe difficulties if forced to engage in urban warfare with Iraqi irregular forces. They pointed to a lack of recent combat experience in urban environments on the part of US troops and cited the example of Somalia in 1993 when US forces took losses while operating in Mogadishu. Mark Odell of the *Financial Times* commented on 2 April that:

So far 19 US troops and five British soldiers have been killed in combat by Iraqis, but urban warfare is expected to see that number rise rapidly, with commanders muttering of "thousands" of casualties.

Intense and bloody street-to-street fighting in Iraq's capital now looks unavoidable judging by the measures the invading forces have had to resort to in the south. [...] British and US troops around Nasiriya, respectively, have had to engage in intense fighting in built-up areas to tackle stubborn resistance from fighters loyal to the regime.¹¹⁵

He suggested that, in contrast to the devolved decision-making powers in the British army,

US forces have a more rigid chain of command and are more inclined to rely on weapons technology, an advantage severely blunted in urban warfare, as demonstrated by the debacle in Mogadishu in 1993.¹¹⁶

However, others argued that the experience of Mogadishu could not provide an accurate guide for the current conflict. Max Boot of the US Council on Foreign Relations argued that:

Mr Hussein may think he can repeat "Black Hawk Down" on a larger scale but he is almost certainly mistaken. US forces had no trouble securing Mogadishu in 1992. The problems occurred in 1993 after the bulk of US troops had gone home and a small contingent of commandos was sent to chase a warlord. US forces

¹¹⁴ "Momentous choice faces the allies", *The Independent*, 4 April 2003

¹¹⁵ Mark Odell, 'Allied forces face nightmare of intense urban warfare', *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

¹¹⁶ Mark Odell, 'Allied forces face nightmare of intense urban warfare', *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

achieved their objective but at a cost of 18 lives, because they lacked armour and air support. In the battle of Baghdad there will be no such lack.¹¹⁷

Other commentators believed the approach adopted by British forces in Basra could provide a solution. Paul Eedle of the *Financial Times* commented on 2 April:

It is possible that the attacking force will avoid a full-frontal assault and concentrate on hit-and-run raids against senior figures, as the British are reported to be doing in the southern city of Basra.¹¹⁸

However, he and other commentators warned of the difficulties in engaging Iraqi forces in urban areas without endangering the lives of civilians and exposing Coalition troops to guerrilla attack.

The other option outlined by commentators involved surrounding Baghdad, but keeping Coalition forces out of the centre. Some believed that water, food and other supplies could be cut off, forcing the Iraqis to surrender or inducing a revolt and the internal collapse of the regime.

British troops in Basra met sporadic resistance as they advanced to within four miles of the city centre in order to create a forward base. Media reports suggested that British forces had used cluster bombs¹¹⁹ in Basra, although this was later denied by a British Army spokesman, who stated that “we are not using cluster munitions for clear collateral damage reasons in and around Basra”.¹²⁰

In a Statement to the House on 3 April Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon confirmed that:

British forces have used cluster bombs, which, as I have told the House before, are the most suitable weapons for dealing with wide-area targets [...]

Without cluster bombs, we would have to use far larger ordnance to deal with the same problem. We would have to use far larger weapons to deal with deployed tanks, for example, which is the sort of target against which cluster bombs are used. I do not think that there is a simple answer to this issue. As I have indicated to the House on many previous occasions, we use the weapon only when it is absolutely justified, but if it is, it is because it will make the battlefield safer for our armed forces—and I am not prepared to compromise on that [...]

¹¹⁷ Max Boot, ‘There is no reason to panic – the war is going well’, *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

¹¹⁸ ‘Dangers await behind capital’s meagre defences’, *Financial Times*, 2 April 2003

¹¹⁹ For more detail on the debate over cluster munitions, see Library Standard Note SN/IA/2116, *Anti-Personnel Mines and Cluster Munitions*.

¹²⁰ “Brit cluster bomb denial”, *Sky News Interactive*, 3 April 2003

I can certainly tell the House that so far it has not been necessary to use cluster bombs in and around Basra.¹²¹

Seven US soldiers were killed when a US Black Hawk helicopter came down near Karbala. In a separate incident a US F/A-18 Hornet aircraft crashed in southern Iraq after reportedly having been shot down by a surface-to-air missile, believed to have been fired by a Coalition Patriot missile battery. One US soldier with the US Army 5th Corps was killed and several others were injured when an American F-15 fighter aircraft fired on Coalition troops inspecting an abandoned Iraqi tank.

Two reporters working for Al-Jazeera, the Qatari-based Arabic satellite television channel, were banned by the Iraqi authorities and ordered to leave the country. The ban was lifted on **4 April** and the channel resumed its coverage from Iraq.

US forces at Saddam International Airport continued to come under fire from counter-attacking Iraqi forces and there were reports that significant Iraqi reinforcements were moving into the area. US military officials dismissed the attacks as “small and uncoordinated”¹²², and announced that the airport would be renamed Baghdad International Airport.

The Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammad Saeed al-Sahaf, claimed US forces at the airport had been surrounded and that preparations were being made to launch “non-conventional attacks” against Coalition troops. However, he stressed that Iraq had no plans to use chemical or biological weapons.

South of the city the US 1st Marine Expeditionary Force continued its attack towards Baghdad, destroying remnants of the Baghdad Republican Guard division near Al Kut, and elements of the Al Nida Republican Guard division between Al Kut and Baghdad. 2,500 members of the Republican Guard were reported to have surrendered en masse near Al Kut. Other Republican Guard units in the area were reported to have retreated north from Al Kut in small groups, prompting speculation of a possible regrouping of the Republican Guard closer to Baghdad in order to defend the city.

At a Ministry of Defence press conference the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire, outlined the contribution of the RAF to the Coalition air campaign to date:

The daily air task order calls for about 1,200 fixed wing sorties each day. That does not include rotary wing support, which is also extensive [...]

For the record, the Royal Air Force is contributing about 10% to the overall 1,200 sorties a day, and that matches if you like the scale of our deployment. But our

¹²¹ HC Deb 3 April, c1077-9

¹²² “Special guard in airport battle”, *The Financial Times*, 5 April 2003

contribution in terms of effect is certainly 10% and probably greater, not least because the balance of our combat air power deployed is largely offensive rather than defensive.¹²³

A car exploded near a US checkpoint northwest of Baghdad, in what appeared to be another suicide attack. The blast killed three US soldiers, an Iraqi woman and the driver. The Iraqi state news agency said that two women had carried out the suicide attack.

In a statement to the Iraqi people, read by the Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, President Saddam Hussein declared that victory was within their grasp and that the Coalition would be “humiliated”.¹²⁴ Failure to appear on television fuelled speculation that he had been killed or injured. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Najji Sabri, dismissed such rumours, saying the President was alive and well.

Iraqi satellite television later showed a pre-recorded speech by Saddam Hussein in which he called on Iraqis to “strike at your enemy strongly” and referred several times for the need for jihad, making what were interpreted by the BBC as “veiled calls for martyrdom or suicide attacks on Coalition troops”.¹²⁵

UN aid agencies were reported to have re-entered southern Iraq for the first time since their withdrawal on 18 March. A World Food Programme (WFP) convoy of 23 trucks entered northern Iraq to deliver aid.

The US Congress approved funding of \$80 billion to finance the conflict in Iraq, but specified that money allocated for post-war reconstruction should not be given to companies in France, Germany, Russia or Syria.

US forces began reconnaissance missions into the southern outskirts of Baghdad on **5 April**, marking the furthest land advance yet into the capital. These preliminary operations were followed swiftly by reports of substantial Coalition forces moving toward the centre of Baghdad from the south west. US Central Command also confirmed that the 3rd Infantry Division and elements of the 101st Airborne Brigade had secured Baghdad airport, with operations under way in order to bring it into operational use. However, the Iraqi Information Minister denied that US troops had entered central Baghdad, and suggested that US forces had been expelled from the airport. Reports also came in of hand-to-hand combat in the southeast of the capital between Coalition forces and foreign fighters from Jordan, Sudan and Egypt.

¹²³ Ministry of Defence press conference, 4 April 2003. A copy of the transcript is available online at: http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/press_4april.htm

¹²⁴ BBC News web site at <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 4 April 2003

¹²⁵ ‘Saddam Speech: Call for ‘Martyrdom’’, BBC News web site, 5 April 2003, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2919467.stm

Coalition Forces Air Component Commander, General Michael Moseley, commented during a US DoD briefing on the low levels of Republican Guard resistance:

What we're seeing is we're seeing elements in much smaller combat formations that have been cut off from their central command and control. As far as large fighting formations, we haven't seen any of that lately because again, we've been attacking steady for about six or seven days now. Those that are still out there I believe are going to cause us some problems and that's what the 3rd ID and the Marines are dealing with now [...]

The Iraqi military, as an organised defence in large combat formations doesn't really exist anymore. The formations, the equipment is there and some of the people are there, but as far as corps and division strength, being able to bring that combat power to bear against the coalition, it's not the same as it was two weeks ago. The Republican Guard and the regular army, while they are still out there, they are not able to bring themselves to bear in those large combat formations [...]

We're still striking leadership targets and command and control targets outside of Baghdad because we want to continue to keep the options of true command and control to a minimum.¹²⁶

A US AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter crashed in central Iraq killing 2 US Marines.

Coalition forces pressed ahead into the southern outskirts of Baghdad on **6 April**. A column of 2,000 US vehicles was reported to have joined two similar formations already engaged there. Heavy fighting continued in and around the city as US troops fought for control of a strategic crossing over the River Tigris in the south east of the city. Further to the north US forces were reported to have taken control of most of the main routes in and out of Baghdad.

At a CENTCOM press briefing Brigadier General Vincent Brooks added:

The land component continues to achieve success. Our efforts to remove remnants of the regime from the areas of Basra, Samawa, Najaf and Karbala are ongoing. There have been some encounters with regime forces in some areas, but the number of encounters has gone down appreciably while the support of the population is increasing [...]

The two-core attack by 5th Corps and the 1st MEF continues to isolate Baghdad, denying any reinforcements or any escape by regime military forces. Fifth Corps controls the corridor from Karbala to Baghdad [...] The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force controls the corridor from Samanpak to Baghdad.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ US Central Command Briefing, 5 April 2003.

¹²⁷ US Central Command Briefing, 6 April 2003

US officials also announced they had destroyed a camp at Samanpak believed to have been used by the Iraqi regime to train foreign volunteers in terrorist activities.

After two weeks of limited incursions into the city, British Marine Commandos and a number of tank squadrons mounted an assault on Basra, resulting in the capture of the centre of the city. Three British soldiers were killed during the assault.

Eighteen people were killed in a friendly fire incident when a US F-15 fighter aircraft dropped a bomb on a convoy of US Special Forces and Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq.

In a separate incident a convoy of Russian diplomats leaving Baghdad were caught in the cross fire between US and Iraqi forces, leaving four people injured.

Reports began to emerge of widespread looting in several Iraqi towns and cities as the regime's control disintegrated. Concern was expressed by aid agencies that the Coalition lacked sufficient resources to establish effective control over Iraq and to prevent the ransacking of hospitals, government buildings and other government infrastructure.

After a number of days fighting on the edges of the city US forces launched an assault on the centre of Baghdad on **7 April** taking control of large sections of the west of the city, including two presidential palaces. US troops, led by a 5,000 strong brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, moved towards the capital from the southeast. Despite taking substantial ground within the city CENTCOM officials commented that Coalition forces would "set up camp inside Baghdad although there was no immediate intention to do so".¹²⁸ Officials also suggested that the strategy of in-and-out raids on Baghdad would continue and intensify.

Despite small pockets of paramilitary resistance, British forces consolidated their hold on Basra. In a Statement to the House on 7 April, Mr Hoon, commented on the British operation in the city:

Raids and patrols into Basra during Saturday night [5 April] met with much less resistance from Iraqi forces than on previous days. The opportunity was therefore taken yesterday morning to launch a major operation to secure strategic positions deep within the city. That involved personnel from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the 1st Battalion Irish Guards attached, the 1st Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the 1st Battalion Black Watch, the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and 3 Commando Brigade. Significant progress has been made. We assess that coalition forces can now go to all parts of the city, albeit under the cover of armour.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ "US thrust into Baghdad spells start of end game" *The Financial Times*, 8 April 2003

¹²⁹ HC Deb 7 April 2003, c21

He went on to state:

In a very similar manner, the past few days have seen US forces make considerable progress in and around Baghdad, supported by coalition air and missile strikes which have degraded the regime's command and control capability and the Republican Guard's combat effectiveness. That strategy has worked remarkably well. The final 50 miles or so of the advance on Baghdad were completed at great speed. The US army's Fifth Corps defeated the Republican Guard's Medina division and seized Baghdad international airport on Friday. The first coalition aircraft landed at the airport yesterday. The First Marine Expeditionary Force overcame the Baghdad and Al Nida divisions of the Republican Guard in a matter of days, and is now on the south-east outskirts of Baghdad. US forces now control the major routes in and out of Baghdad.¹³⁰

However, an article in the *Financial Times* commented:

While finishing off the regime in Baghdad will have a big impact, there is a recognition that US and British troops need to fan out throughout the length and breadth of the country to mop up the final pockets of by-passed Iraqi troops and paramilitary fighters.

Thousands of Iraqi troops were by-passed during the breakneck US drive on Baghdad, and American military commanders recognise that until all these are dealt with the population might not be willing to engage in any political process for fear of retaliation by supporters of the old regime [...]

The need to occupy all of the main population centres in the country is one of the main lessons of Afghanistan, where US and international peacekeeping troops remained in Kabul and Kandahar, allowing the countryside to remain a haven for al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters.¹³¹

British military officials said they believed that General Ali Hassan Al-Majid, the commander of Iraqi forces in southern Iraq, had been killed in an airstrike. Mr Al-Majid, who was often referred to in the media by his nickname "Chemical Ali" due to his role in the chemical attacks on Kurdish civilians during the late 1980s, was first cousin to Saddam Hussein and a member of the Iraqi leadership's inner circle.

Two aid workers with the Médecins Sans Frontières charity were reported missing in Baghdad and two Polish journalists were believed to have been abducted by Iraqi forces near Hilla.

The consolidation of US forces in Baghdad continued on **8 and 9 April**, with substantial areas of the city falling under Coalition control. US Marines advanced through the south

¹³⁰ *ibid*, c22

¹³¹ "US commanders preparing to launch big assault on Tikrit", *The Financial Times*, 8 April 2003

east of the city, supported by Apache attack helicopters and A-10 ground attack aircraft, while tanks from the 3rd Infantry Division seized control of a number of strategic crossings over the Tigris and opened fire at targets in eastern Baghdad.

At a US CENTCOM briefing on 8 April Brigadier General Vincent Brooks stated:

The main focus of the operation continues to be, for the land component, in and around Baghdad. In the east, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force attacked across the Biyala River into the southeast corner of Baghdad. They encountered forces, including T-72 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, other armoured vehicles, surface-to-surface missiles, artillery pieces, and numerous technical vehicles. These forces were encountered and destroyed, and they proceeded on their attack to seize the Rashid Airport [...]

In the west, 5th Armoured Corps, remained in the centre of Baghdad overnight, and also continued attacks this morning from the north and from the south, conducting operations inside the heart of Baghdad. They also encountered a mixture of forces, including T-72 tanks, armoured vehicles, technical vehicles and artillery pieces.¹³²

Following the receipt of current intelligence on the location of Saddam Hussein and his two sons, a US B-1B aircraft was tasked at short notice to strike a restaurant in a Baghdad suburb with four JDAM bombs. US officials suggested that Saddam may have been killed in the attack, although British intelligence sources were quoted as saying that they believed the Iraqi leader had survived.¹³³ Subsequent press reports claimed the bombs had missed their target, killing at least eight civilians in nearby homes.¹³⁴

Iraqi state television went off air, followed shortly afterwards by Iraqi state radio. Four Reuters staff were injured during fighting in the capital and an Al-Jazeera correspondent, Tariq Ayyub, was killed when a bomb struck the network's Baghdad office.

Kurdish soldiers backed by US Special Forces advanced on Kirkuk and Mosul in the north, although one BBC reporter suggested that the "strategy was one of attrition rather than trying for a big push".¹³⁵ Coalition air strikes continued in the region, with a particular focus on targets around the town of Tikrit to the north of Baghdad. Tikrit was the birthplace of Saddam and was expected to be the area where popular support for his regime was strongest.

In the east of the country US Marines consolidated positions around the town of Amara without encountering any Iraqi resistance. US forces were reported to be close to linking

¹³² US Central Command Briefing, 8 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/Transcripts/20030408.htm>

¹³³ "Iraq latest", *BBC News Online*, 8 April 2003

¹³⁴ 'Smart bombs aimed at Saddam killed families', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 2003

¹³⁵ "Iraq latest", *BBC News Online*, 8 April 2003

up with British forces advancing northwards from Basra, thereby opening up an eastern supply corridor to the capital.

The Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed al-Douri, became the first senior Iraqi official to admit that the regime's control had dissipated, saying that: "The game is over. We hope that peace will prevail and that's all that we hope." When asked what he meant by "the game is over", he responded "the war".¹³⁶

At a summit in Northern Ireland, President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair both said it appeared that the Iraqi regime's control of the country was weakening rapidly. The focus of the talks was reported to be on managing the transition from the combat phase to the post-war reconstruction phase.

Mass looting in Basra and other Iraqi towns and cities continued. Law and order was also reported to have broken down in Baghdad as looters ransacked hospitals, government buildings and museums. A giant statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in central Baghdad, with the aid of a US armoured vehicle. Local Iraqis celebrated in the streets and beat the statue with their shoes.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reiterated his earlier claims that Syria was aiding the regime of Saddam Hussein, saying that Damascus appeared "to have made a conscious decision to ignore" his earlier warnings to desist. He claimed that: "Senior regime people are moving out of Iraq into Syria, and Syria is continuing to send things into Iraq",¹³⁷ although the allegations were denied by the Syrian Government.

The British Government announced that its troops were distributing leaflets with a message in Arabic from the Prime Minister to the people of Iraq. The message read:

As soon as Saddam Hussein's regime falls the work to build a new free and united Iraq will begin. A peaceful, prosperous Iraq which will be run by and for the Iraqi people. Not by America, not by Britain, not by the UN - though all of us will help - but by you the people of Iraq.

Coalition forces will make the country safe, and will work with the United Nations to help Iraq get back on its feet. We will continue to provide immediate humanitarian aid, and we will help with longer-term projects.

Our troops will leave as soon as they can. They will not stay a day longer than necessary.

We will make sure deliveries of vital aid such as food, medicine and drinking water get through.

¹³⁶ BBC News web site at <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 9 April 2003

¹³⁷ *Financial Times*, 10 April 2003

Our aim is to move as soon as possible to an interim authority run by Iraqis. This will pave the way for a truly representative Iraqi government, which respects human rights and the rule of law; develops public services; and spends Iraq's wealth not on palaces and WMD, but on schools and hospitals.

The money from Iraqi oil will be yours. It will no longer be used by Saddam Hussein for his own benefit and that of his regime. It will be used to build prosperity for you and your families.

You should be free to travel, free to have access to independent media, free to express your views.

As we made clear from the start this is not a war of conquest. This is a campaign that will end dictatorship, remove the weapons of mass destruction and liberate the Iraqi people so you can determine your own future - a better future. This is not a war on Iraq. This is a campaign against Saddam's regime.

For too long the world ignored the plight of the Iraqi people. That was wrong. We know and understand that many of you live in fear of Saddam. We promise that the events of 1991 will not happen again. We have pledged to remove Saddam. And we will deliver. Once he is gone, we will help Iraq rebuild itself, and become once more a member of the international family of nations.

In the spirit of true friendship and goodwill we will do our utmost to help.¹³⁸

4. Week Four (10-16 April)

In a Statement to the House on **10 April** the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, stated:

There is understandable euphoria at the progress made in recent days. But we must recognise that the military task is far from complete. There are still large areas of Iraq not under coalition control, and units of the Iraqi armed forces still engaged in combat. After years of brutal repression, we have inevitably seen excesses and lawlessness as the old regime collapses. Coalition military forces will be doing all they can to provide a secure environment.¹³⁹

Civil disorder continued to spread across the capital as Coalition troops encountered fresh resistance from Iraqi forces in some areas of the city. Several government ministries, including the Trade Ministry, were set on fire in central Baghdad during the looting, prompting concern from some commentators that, amid the chaos, regime officials could be attempting to destroy documents containing evidence of human rights abuses.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Available on the Number 10 web site at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page3449.asp>

¹³⁹ HC Deb 10 April 2003, c405

¹⁴⁰ See for example, Robert Fisk, 'For the people on the streets this is not a war of liberation but a new colonial oppression', *Independent*, 17 April 2003

In response to the ongoing and widespread looting, the International Committee of the Red Cross called on Coalition forces to re-impose law and order in the country, as required of an occupying force under the Geneva Conventions.

A prominent Shia cleric, Abdul Majid al-Khoei, who had returned from exile in the UK the week before, was murdered by a crowd outside the Ali Mosque in Najaf. Another cleric, Haider Kelidar, who had reportedly worked for the Iraqi ministry of religious affairs, was also killed. Analysts suspected that a rival Shia group may have been responsible for orchestrating the murders.

Three US Marines were killed in another suicide bombing at a US checkpoint in the capital.

Kurdish soldiers from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) entered the town of Kirkuk in the early hours of 10 April in the face of limited Iraqi resistance. The fall of the city was greeted with concern by both Turkey and the US after the PUK acted ahead of a planned joint move on the town by US Special Forces and soldiers from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). A report in the *Financial Times* stated:

Fighters from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan seized the city, apparently in support of a popular uprising that followed heavy bombing by US aircraft. They advanced from the PUK front line west of Suleimaniya. The operation appeared to take their allies in the Kurdistan Democratic Party by surprise. KDP officials said the seizure of Kirkuk had been planned to begin only last night in co-ordination with US forces. They said their forces were for the time being staying on the outskirts of the city.

The fall of Kirkuk to PUK soldiers prompted immediate concern in Turkey, which says it fears Kurdish control of the city may foster demands for Kurdish independence. Abdullah Gul, Turkey's foreign minister, said he had received a pledge from the US to send reinforcements to the city [...]

Mr Gul said Ankara had offered Turkish troops in case not enough US soldiers were available in the area, but the offer was rejected [...]

Among other territory that fell yesterday were the towns of Khaneqin, near the south-east corner of Kurdish-controlled territory, and Altun Kupri, a strategic town that straddles the Zab river on the main road to Kirkuk.¹⁴¹

A small number of US troops and Kurdish forces were reported to be moving into the northern town of Mosul after signs of Iraqi surrenders in the area.

¹⁴¹ "Peshmerga move into Kirkuk as regime's troops retreat", *The Financial Times*, 11 April 2003

US Special Forces and elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade entered Kirkuk on **11 April** in order to secure the city and ease Turkish concern over the PUK presence. Kurdish fighters withdrew from Kirkuk during the day, and it was agreed that Turkey would send a team of military observers to the city to monitor the situation.

Coalition Special Forces near Mosul accepted a signed cease-fire agreement from the Iraqi 5th Corps Commander. Commenting on the significance of the agreement to the Coalition's northern front, Brigadier General Vincent Brooks suggested:

It's a very important outcome that has occurred with the cessation of hostilities in the north. There are areas that we've not been in. And so, again, I emphasise that there may well be some regime loyalists that are still in pockets in the cities we've talked about in the north who individually may choose to continue to fight [...]

And so while the conventional military force appears to be moving further and further away from the battle and that risk to Iraqi forces and also to coalition forces is moving aside, we still recognise that there are other dangers that are on the battlefield and work must still be accomplished.¹⁴²

Air strikes continued in and around Tikrit, while further south Coalition forces continued to mop up remaining Iraqi resistance, in particular, in Baghdad and Karbala.

Two Iraqi children were killed and nine other Iraqis injured when US Marines shot at a van that failed to stop at a checkpoint in Nasiriya.

In light of the progress of the Coalition campaign, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, announced that the UK would begin to scale back its forces in the Gulf. In a Written Ministerial Statement he outlined that:

As the pattern of coalition operations in Iraq changes, it will be possible for a number of units to proceed with other tasking or return to the United Kingdom. I am delighted to confirm our participation in Exercise Flying Fish under the Five Power Defence Arrangements with forces from Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand. HMS Marlborough and HMS Liverpool together with RFA Grey Rover have been released from operations in the Middle East and will now proceed to the Far East. The Government attaches great importance to this long-planned deployment which sends a clear signal demonstrating our continuing commitment to the FPDA and the wider security of the region as a whole.

Other maritime assets will be released as appropriate, for return to the UK or onward deployment. On current plans, HMS Ark Royal with elements of her Group will shortly leave the Joint Operations Area and start their return passage to the UK. Significant maritime forces will remain in the Gulf to continue

¹⁴² US Central Command Briefing, 11 April 2003

important continuing tasks, including mine clearance operations, logistic support and force protection.

We also continue to keep our requirements in the land and air environments under review. We envisage that a number of fixed wing and rotary aircraft can be withdrawn in the near future, starting with the return of Tornado F3 aircraft over the next few days. In the near term, the medical capacity in the region means that we can now withdraw 33 Field Hospital and RFA Argus. 34 Field Hospital and 202 Field Hospital (Volunteer) will remain in the Gulf region for the time being.

It is our policy to deploy personnel on operations for no longer than is necessary to achieve our military objectives. We will therefore continue to adjust our forces deployed to the Gulf as appropriate, withdrawing units whose tasks are complete, and in due course replacing those whose tasks continue. For example, elements of 101 Logistics Brigade will replace their counterparts in 102 Logistics Brigade during early May. As previously stated, we have no plans to deploy significant additional forces.¹⁴³

US reinforcements reached Mosul on **12 April**, as clashes erupted between Kurds and Arabs. Fifteen people were reported to have been killed and over 200 injured in the fighting.

Overnight air strikes against Tikrit continued ahead of an expected assault on the town. Advance units of 4th Infantry Division moved into Iraq from the south and were reported to be heading for the Tikrit area.

US officials gave the first indications that the US naval presence in the Gulf would be reduced. At a Pentagon press briefing on 12 April Vice Admiral Timothy Keating stated:

The USS *Abraham Lincoln* battle group left the AOR [area of responsibility] today [...]

We are looking at a gradual and measured reduction of those naval forces that are in the AOR [...]

Kitty Hawk may leave in a couple of days – maybe a little bit longer. That will bring us down to two [carrier groups in the Arabian Gulf]. And then the USS *Nimitz* just arrived, so I think it's likely near certain that we'll keep her for quite a while. And that leaves the USS *Constellation* and we will look to send her back home as soon as General Franks says that the requirement has diminished sufficiently.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ HC Deb 11 April 2003, c38-39WS

¹⁴⁴ US Department of Defense News Briefing, 12 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030412-0092.html>

Coalition efforts also focussed on finding and apprehending key members of the former regime, including senior military officials, leaders of the ruling Ba'ath party, and certain scientists and officials believed to be involved in Iraq's programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction. Packs of cards containing the names of leading officials were distributed to US forces to act as an aide memoire. In the weeks after the fall of Baghdad, several key figures in the regime were captured or chose to hand themselves over to Coalition forces, including Saddam Hussein's scientific adviser, General Amir Hamudi Hasam Al-Saadi, who acted as the primary liaison with UN weapon inspectors, and former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz.

The US Congress gave its final approval to a bill authorising \$79 billion to finance the war and subsequent reconstruction efforts.

US forces launched an all-out assault on the town of Tikrit on **13 April** after several days of speculation. Iraqi resistance to the Coalition advance was reported to be initially limited, although heavy fighting later broke out in the southern outskirts of the town between US Marines backed by tanks and Cobra helicopter gunships and an Iraqi tank column.

In an interim attempt to quell the civil unrest and lawlessness in Basra the first joint UK-Iraqi police patrols took place in the city. Plans to mount joint patrols between US forces and Iraqi police in Baghdad were also suggested.

Kurdish fighters withdrew from Kirkuk following an increased US presence in the town. US B2 bombers based in Diego Garcia were re-deployed in a further sign that the US had begun to scale back its forces in the region.

Fighting between US and Iraqi forces in Tikrit continued in the early hours of **14 April**. However resistance lessened as US forces secured the centre of the town and increased the Coalition's presence in the area.

Brigadier General Vincent Brooks at CENTCOM stated:

In this attack toward Tikrit, the force met little resistance in the towns of Ba'qubah on the east side of the Tigris River and Samarra [...] The attack continued yesterday, and its first efforts to isolate Tikrit from the south, from the west, and also from the north, as well as a key bridge in the centre of town that crosses the Tigris River. This morning the attack entered Tikrit, securing the presidential palace there and also beginning the search for any remaining regime supporters. And this is really the only significant combat action that occurred within the last 24 hours.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ US Central Command Briefing, 14 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/Transcripts/20030414.htm>

The fall of Tikrit was regarded by many commentators as the last major battle of the campaign. Speaking at a US Pentagon press briefing, Major General McChrystal stated:

Coalition forces are still patrolling Iraq with due diligence. Our air sorties have decreased over the last few days to about 700-800 sorties over Iraq per day. We dropped less than 200 precision-guided munitions in the last 24 hours to support out operations on the ground. In fact, today was the last day that aircraft from all five carrier battle groups will fly missions into Iraq. As the 5th Fleet Commander mentioned over the weekend, a couple of them will be departing the region over the course of the next few days.

On the ground coalition forces are continuing patrols throughout Iraq. And as I've said before, there's still more difficult and even dangerous work to be done [...] I would anticipate that the major combat engagements are over because the major Iraqi units on the ground cease to show coherence. Tikrit was the last area where we anticipated seeing major combat formations, if in fact they were there. So I think we will move into a phase where it is smaller, albeit sharp fights.¹⁴⁶

In a Statement to the Commons the Prime Minister commented:

I should emphasise at the outset that the conflict in Iraq is not yet over. There will be tough times ahead, and fighting as well as peace building still to do. However, less than four weeks from the commencement of the war, the regime of Saddam is gone, the bulk of Iraq is under coalition control and the vast majority of Iraqis are rejoicing at Saddam's departure [...]

Let me give an assessment of the current situation. The south of Iraq is now largely under British control. The west is secure, and in the major town of Al Qaim fighting is diminishing. In the north, Kurdish forces have retired from Kirkuk and Mosul, leaving US forces in control. US forces are in and around Tikrit. They are meeting some resistance. But in essence, all over Iraq, Saddam's forces have collapsed. Much of the remaining fighting, particularly in Baghdad, is being carried out by foreign irregular forces.

In Baghdad itself, the Americans are in control of most of the city but not yet all of it. As is obvious, the problem now is the disorder following the regime's collapse. Some disorder, frankly, is inevitable. It will happen in any situation where a brutal police state that for 30 years has terrorised a population is suddenly destroyed. Some looting, too, is directed at specific regime targets, including hospitals that were dedicated for the use of the regime. But it is a serious situation and we need to work urgently to bring it under control.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ US Department of Defense Press Briefing, 14 April 2003. A transcript is available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030414-0105.html>

¹⁴⁷ HC Deb 14 April 2003, c615

US marines shot dead at least seven Iraqi protesters during a demonstration in Mosul after coming under hostile fire from a crowd that had gathered around a US military compound.¹⁴⁸

A meeting of prominent Iraqi leaders was held in Nasiriya on 15 April as a preliminary step towards the formation of a new interim administration.¹⁴⁹ The meeting, which was chaired by retired US General Jay Garner, agreed on the following 13-point plan:

The following is a 13 point plan agreed at the first meeting to decide the future of postwar Iraq. The conference of exiled activists and community leaders, convened by US officials on Tuesday near Nasiriya in the south of the country, ended with a commitment to meet again in 10 days. About 75 Iraqis were invited from across the country, representing a number of different religious, political and tribal groups that have historically been divided.

1. Iraq must be democratic.
2. The future government of Iraq should not be based on communal identity.
3. Government should be organized as a democratic federal system.
4. The rule of law must be paramount.
5. Iraq must be built on respect for diversity, including respect for the role of women.
6. Future meetings must discuss the role of religion in state and society.
7. Iraqis must choose their leaders, not have them imposed from outside.
8. Political violence must be rejected, and Iraqis must organize for reconstruction.
9. Iraqis and the coalition must work together to restore security and basic services.
10. The Ba'ath party must be dissolved and its effects on society must be eliminated.
11. There should be an open dialogue with all national political groups.
12. Looting and the destruction of documents is condemned.
13. The next meeting should discuss the development of an Iraqi interim authority.¹⁵⁰

5. Transition to the Post-Conflict Phase

By **16 April** the focus of Coalition activity had begun to turn from offensive to civil-military operations, including the provision of humanitarian assistance and conducting joint patrols with Iraqi police in order to maintain law and order. Operations to clear additional zones of regime loyalists were also continued.

¹⁴⁸ “Marines kill protesters during clash in Mosul”, *The International Herald Tribune*, 17 April 2003

¹⁴⁹ For more information on the humanitarian situation in Iraq and the process of allocating post-war reconstruction contracts, see Library Standard Note SN/EP/2132, *Iraq: The Humanitarian Situation*.

¹⁵⁰ *Financial Times* web site FT.com, 15 April 2003

Speaking at the US CENTCOM briefing, Brigadier General Vincent Brooks stated:

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force maintained the isolation of Baghdad north along the eastern side of the city, and also continued its operations within the centre of the city, clearing additional zones and conducting joint patrols with Iraqis. The remaining areas of Baghdad that have not yet been cleared are all suspected to harbour armed regime loyalists. Other 1st Marine Expeditionary Units continued to secure Tikrit. UK forces secured oil facilities in Al Kurna and searched for the remnants of any irregular forces in the vicinity of Basra.

At this point, all coalition land units are conducting humanitarian assistance assessments throughout their areas. Coalition forces report that looting has dramatically reduced throughout the area of operations and normal activities are starting to occur.¹⁵¹

There was speculation in the media on the nature of the future US military presence in the Gulf region. An article in the *Financial Times* reported:

General Richard Myers, the highest-ranking US military officer, said that large numbers of American forces might no longer need to be based in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia following the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.

Noting that US forces - about 8,000 in Kuwait and 8,000 in Saudi Arabia prior to the build-up for the Iraqi invasion - have been in the Gulf region largely to enforce Iraq-related United Nations resolutions, Gen Myers said the Pentagon would "in the fairly near future" announce a new "footprint" for the postwar American military presence. "Clearly, one of the reasons we had US forces in the region was to enforce the UN Security Council resolutions on Iraq," said Gen Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Those forces that were in Turkey for that purpose, they've already returned home. We had forces in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as well, and, clearly, they're not going to be needed in the future for that."

Gen Myers acknowledged US forces would remain a presence in Iraq for the long term. The size of the force has been a point of debate inside the Pentagon, with generals insisting it could constitute 200,000 troops, a figure Defense Department civilians have termed "wildly off the mark".

Gen Myers said he would not predict the number of troops needed, but noted that in several cities, including Basra, the security situation had stabilised with the gradual formation of an Iraqi police force. "Exactly how many people it will take I don't know, but I think the estimates you heard earlier were way on the high side," he said.

¹⁵¹ US Central Command Briefing, 16 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.centcom.mil/CENTCOMNews/TRanscripts/20030416.htm>

US troops continued "mopping up" pockets of resistance inside Baghdad and Tikrit. Most of their efforts were focused on stabilisation operations, to stamp out the rampant looting and civil unrest that have marred the US-led victory in recent days.¹⁵²

Following the conclusion of major combat operations the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, announced on **30 April** that the level of UK forces in the region would be readjusted accordingly. In a Written Ministerial Statement he outlined that:

For maritime forces, the re-deployment of Royal Navy vessels has proceeded as planned. HMS ARK ROYAL has now left the Gulf region and is due to return to the UK in mid-May accompanied by the destroyer HMS YORK and RFA FORT VICTORIA. In addition, we now plan to withdraw the helicopter carrier, HMS OCEAN, together with HMS EDINBURGH and the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries FORT AUSTIN, ORANGELEAF, SIR BEDIVERE and SIR PERCIVALE. The RFA SIR GALAHAD, SIR TRISTRAM and BAYLEAF are undertaking a rolling programme of maintenance in Singapore to allow them to return to the Gulf to continue to provide support to the humanitarian assistance effort. Further vessels will remain there for the time being to conduct mine clearance operations and force protection.

As the need for offensive air operations and close air support has significantly diminished, we can bring back further air assets. We have withdrawn around 45 aircraft from the Gulf region, both fixed and rotary wing, including Tornado F3 and GR4, Harrier GR7, Nimrod MR2, VC10 and E3-D aircraft as well as Chinook and Sea King helicopters. A further 26 helicopters will be withdrawn at the same time as HMS OCEAN.

For land forces, conditions now allow for the return of a further 3,500 personnel to the UK. This will include 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment, with elements of 26 Regiment Royal Artillery, 38 Engineer Regiment and 1st Battalion The Light Infantry. It will also include a number of individuals who were attached to a wide variety of ground units and formations to perform specific augmenting roles. Returning forces are due a period of post-operational tour leave to which they are entitled, following which they will begin to prepare for training and then redeployment on other important operational taskings. In some cases, this will mean a return to Iraq to take part in continuing operations. In addition, we intend to withdraw 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, who were the first of the land formations to be deployed, during the course of May. We will now begin to prepare 19 Mechanised Brigade to take over from forces previously involved in combat operations in Iraq, allowing us to meet the continuing task of providing a stabilisation force within the UK area of operations. We would expect them to start this new task in July, commencing preparations immediately.

¹⁵² US looks to reduce size of forces in Gulf region”, *The Financial Times*, 16 April 2003

In spite of these changes significant pressures remain on the Armed Forces if they are to meet the full range of their commitments. In order to meet our continuing obligations in Iraq, I have authorised the issuing of further call-out notices, against the Order made in January under section 54(1) of the Reserve Forces Act 1996, sufficient to generate up to 1,200 reservists. There will be a requirement to call out further reservists as the operation proceeds, and I will keep the House informed of our plans. In parallel, we will be starting to demobilise those Reserves who are returning home. In time, the overall numbers of Reserves required in Iraq will reduce significantly. I have also decided to extend the tour of the 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, enabling them to continue in their key role of ensuring security in the region of Az Zubayr.

While details continue to be clarified, we envisage that by mid-May 25,000–30,000 UK Service personnel will remain deployed in the Gulf region, continuing to fulfil our responsibilities towards the Iraqi people. The planned replacement of forces is clear evidence of our commitment to them.

Our aim is to leave an Iraq that is confident, secure and fully integrated with the international community. The planning process to establish the precise level of the continuing UK presence needed to achieve this aim is a dynamic one, and is kept under review. We will also need to take account of the contributions of coalition partners. We will continue to withdraw assets and personnel from the region where possible, but we will maintain an appropriate military presence for as long as necessary.¹⁵³

In an address to the nation on **1 May** President Bush announced the end of major combat operations in Iraq. He stated:

Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country [...]

We are bringing order to parts of that country that remain dangerous. We are pursuing and finding leaders of the old regime, who will be held to account for their crimes [...]

And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by, and for the Iraqi people.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort.

¹⁵³ HC Deb 30 April 2003, c15-16WS

Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave – and we will leave behind a free Iraq.¹⁵⁴

As the US did not formally declare war on Iraq, the statement by President Bush was not considered to be a formal declaration of the end of the campaign. However, many analysts concluded that it was “probably as close as the President [would] ever get to saying that the war [was] won and over”.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Address to the Nation by President George W. Bush, 1 May 2003 A copy of his speech is available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2994345.stm>

¹⁵⁵ “Bush declares victory in Iraq”, *BBC News Online*, 2 May 2003. Available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2989459.stm

III Initial Post Conflict Assessment and Lessons Learned

Assessments of the conduct of the military campaign, both from the perspective of strategy and capabilities, have been an inherent part of the coverage of hostilities since they began on 20 March.

A. Strategy

In sharp contrast to the Gulf War in 1991, Operation *Iraqi Freedom* has been characterised by the simultaneous execution of an intensive air campaign and ground offensive on key strategic areas in southern Iraq and in a push towards Baghdad. Coalition forces deployed were also smaller in number than in 1991, reflecting an assessment by US Central Command that Iraqi forces were neither as numerous or as capable as they were in the first Gulf War.

The “rolling start” to the Coalition offensive was precipitated by an opportunistic strike on the Iraqi leadership and defied the expectations of many observers who had anticipated a “shock and awe” aerial campaign on a par with the opening days of the Gulf War in 1991.

An article in *Jane’s Defence Weekly* commented:

The world was told to prepare for “shock and awe” in the opening hours of the conflict, but shock and awe [...] did not happen; at least when Iraq was primed to expect it. Instead, the initial shots comprised a short notice attempt to assassinate Saddam Hussein and his immediate entourage using submarine and ship-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles and precision guided munitions dropped by US Air Force F-117A Nighthawk stealth attack platforms. The result was an initial stiffening of Iraqi regime resolve, fuelled by its ability to transmit unfettered propaganda via its TV and radio outlets, which remained untouched by coalition bombing until the mid-point of the war. Here, some analysts contend, it was rules of engagement hatched by politicians, not the military that were the determining factor. Only when these stations went off-air, they point out, did the strategic “hearts and minds” campaign begin to take a hold.¹⁵⁶

Adam Ward and James Hackett of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) suggested in an article in *Strategic Comments* that:

The allied intention to “shock and awe” the Iraqi regime into an almost immediate collapse or surrender through a sharp and swift bombing campaign was well advertised before the outbreak of hostilities; a fact that will have reduced its likely psychological impact. Nor was the tactic especially innovative: air power proponents have for decades counselled striking hard early in a war,

¹⁵⁶ “What went right?”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003

while the practice of selectively hitting military targets and sparing civilian infrastructure is an idea that builds on the US experience in Afghanistan, Kosovo and *Desert Storm*. The decision to avoid, where possible, attacking regular Iraqi military units was tactically sound but was taken on the common knowledge, rather than special insight, that these forces were much less loyal to Saddam Hussein than the Special Republican Guard, republican Guard and Fedayeen militia units. Ultimately the “shock and awe” concept was not properly followed, as plans apparently changed with the attempt to kill Saddam Hussein on the night of 19 March. Even so, given the degree to which Iraqi forces had become accustomed to coalition bombing in the preceding decade, the effects of “shock and awe” would not have been especially dramatic.¹⁵⁷

Commenting on the conduct of the air campaign Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies argued:

The fact that the US and Britain had in many ways defeated the Iraqi Air Force in the air, and had heavily suppressed the Iraqi land-based air defense system, even before the war began, allowed the coalition to suppress Iraq’s air defenses with remarkable speed, and to concentrate on strike-attack missions almost immediately.

A monopoly of stealth and cruise missiles allowed the coalition to attack any static target in even the most heavily defended air space at any time in any weather... the coalition leapt from air supremacy to nearly total air dominance [...]

More was involved, however, than the ability to use airpower as a killing mechanism. The coalition could use precision-guided weapons and advanced US command and control and targeting assets to limit collateral damage and civilian casualties. It could use new intelligence assets and targeting planning to severely limit the number of targets it had to strike, and then carefully match weapon accuracy and reliability, and the size and effect of the weapons, to the right aim point necessary to destroy the function of a target without imposing unnecessary destruction or risk to target and target areas.

This, in turn, allowed the US and Britain to seek to paralyze and destroy a regime, not bomb a country.¹⁵⁸

Tim Robinson writing in *Aerospace International* suggested:

Even before the...US attempted a decapitation strike, coalition forces had already been in action whittling down Iraq’s air defences as part of Operation Northern and Southern Watch. These no-fly missions were instrumental in chipping away

¹⁵⁷ Adam Ward & James Hackett, “Lessons from the Iraq war”, *Strategic Comments*, May 2003

¹⁵⁸ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003, p.24

at Saddam's SAM defences over the past ten years – the vast majority of attacks being underreported [...]

The effect [of precision weaponry] as seen in Afghanistan is revolutionary [...] It seems the US planners were confident that the slimmed down plan (even with an extra US division actually on its way from the US and the Turkish front closed off) air power would be devastating enough to keep the smaller, faster moving ground units safe and a rolling offensive could be started straightaway. As an example of the scale of use, coalition forces were getting through 1,000 smart weapons per day [...]

What really multiplies the effectiveness of precision weapons and what has been highlighted by this current conflict is the emphasis on time-critical targeting [...] This focus on network-centric warfare appears to have paid off since the only new aircraft to join the US inventory since 1991 are the AH-64D Apache Longbows and B-2 stealth bombers. It is clearly then not platforms that have produced this victory. Further proof of the flexibility are the instances of decapitation strikes that have been produced by intelligence and the followed through. As well as the initial strike against Saddam Hussein, RAF Harriers were also able to locate and kill the notorious 'Chemical Ali' in Basra, while on 7 April a B-1 bomber was retasked in 12 minutes with a second attempt to take out Saddam and regime leaders in a priority attack. With time-critical targeting, surgical strikes against known leaders now become possible.

This intelligence is not only provided by special forces and human intelligence on the ground but also by the large amount of surveillance UAVs used by the US... UAVs are rapidly coming of age, and while the US has used fewer manned combat aircraft compared to 1991, it has increased significantly the UAVs – a pointer for the future.¹⁵⁹

In the first week of the campaign the strategic priorities of the ground offensive were on securing the Al Faw Peninsula and oilfields in the south, securing the port of Umm Qasr and the region in and around Basra and consolidating Coalition positions south of Baghdad ahead of a push on the capital. One of the main elements of the ground offensive during this period had been the rapid advance of the US Army 5th corps north towards Baghdad, bypassing smaller urban areas and leaving areas of likely Iraqi resistance to be dealt with by follow-on forces.

However, the level of Iraqi resistance encountered by Coalition forces, the unconventional tactics of Iraqi paramilitary forces and Saddam's Fedayeen militia and the unwillingness of the Iraqi population to show public support for the Coalition, led many analysts to question whether the US strategy had miscalculated the loyalty of the domestic population and the strength and resolve of the Iraqi forces. This was particularly

¹⁵⁹ Tim Robinson, "Shock and awe assessed", *Aerospace International*, 1 May 2003

pertinent in Basra where Coalition forces had expected some show of public uprising against the Iraqi regime.

A US Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report on the conduct of the Iraq campaign stated:

Greater attention than anticipated is having to be paid to protecting extended supply lines, and securing these urban centres, particularly around An Nasiriya and Najaf, and in the British sector around Umm Qasr and Basra. The anticipated support for the invasion from the Shia population in southern Iraq has not developed.¹⁶⁰

Marvin Leibstone writing in *Military Technology* considered:

Many Iraqi soldiers converted from their conventional role to unconventional guerrilla-style-tactics. This confirmed that multi-tasking would have to be part and parcel of 21st century warfare planning.¹⁶¹

As such, the adequacy of the Coalition forces in theatre to secure bypassed areas and ensure logistical support to the front line while continuing the offensive was questioned; with some critics in the US arguing that the US Defense Secretary's predilection toward a campaign based on lighter and more flexible forces, as seen in Afghanistan, was flawed.

An initial analysis in *Jane's Defence Weekly* commented:

Many of those who believe that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is pushing too hard and too fast for change found themselves rallying around a powerful lobby of senior mainly retired US Army officers who voiced their fears at a critical juncture of Operation Iraqi Freedom – several days into the war when the US Army's V Corp and the US Marine Corps' 1st marine Expeditionary Force found themselves bogged down in southern Iraq by unexpectedly fierce Iraqi resistance. These critics charged that there were too few troops on the ground and that substantial reinforcements would be needed if Baghdad was to be taken without terrible losses on the coalition side. Of added concern, they said, was the fact that supply lines became stretched and vulnerable in the course of the rapid advances on the Iraqi capital. The capacity in particular of Saddam Hussein's Fedayeen militia to harass these lines of supply emerged as one of the few Iraqi strategies to give the coalition real cause for concern.

The US CRS report also stated:

Though CENTCOM commanders continue to express confidence in the adequacy of their force structure in theatre, the Iraqi attacks in rear areas and the length of

¹⁶⁰ US Congressional Research Service Report, *Iraq: US Military Operations*, 31 March 2003

¹⁶¹ Marvin Leibstone, "The war against Iraq: issues and lessons", *Military Technology*, April 2003

supply lines to forward units have led some to suggest that insufficient ground forces are in place to continue the offensive while securing rear areas and ensuring uninterrupted logistical support. These critics fault DoD civilian leadership for overestimating the effectiveness of a precision air offensive and curtailing the deployment of more ground troops, suggesting that an ideological commitment to smaller ground forces and greater reliance on high-tech weaponry has dominated military planning.¹⁶²

However Adam Ward and James Hackett argued:

In the war's first 10 days it was not clear that the allies could sufficiently protect their flanks in areas that they preferred not to seize. The ensuing debate somewhat exaggerated the problem; in a worst case, the allies could have waited a couple of weeks for additional units to arrive with little harm done to the broader strategy.¹⁶³

It had been acknowledged that pressure on Coalition forces pushing toward Baghdad from the south had been raised during the campaign by the inability of CENTCOM planners to carry out an early ground offensive in northern Iraq, due to the lack of domestic support for deploying US forces from Turkish territory. The presence of Coalition Special Forces working with Kurdish forces in the region, and the later incursion of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade, provided vital elements for a conflict of attrition in northern Iraq, including securing the towns of Mosul and Kirkuk and supply routes into Baghdad. However, those forces were unable to open up a northern front during the attack on Baghdad.

The report by the US Congressional Research Service commented:

The attitude of the Turkish government towards US military action against Iraq was a very important consideration for US military planners. The Turkish parliament's rejection of a proposal allowing US ground troops to operate from Turkey delivered a setback to CENTCOM planners...¹⁶⁴

Giving evidence to the Defence Select Committee inquiry on *Lessons of Iraq* on 14 May 2003 the Secretary of State, Geoff Hoon, stated:

If it were the case that we were going to make a substantial operation from the north I accept that there were outline plans for that, but had that continued it would not have affected the overall balance of our forces in that the essence of the planning was to provide Saddam Hussein and his regime with a set of circumstances, not all of which they could cope with at any one time. The idea, therefore, of a northern option was to give another situation to the regime that

¹⁶² Congressional Research Service, *Iraq: US military operations*, 31 March 2003. p.17

¹⁶³ Adam Ward & James Hackett, "Lessons from the Iraq war", *Strategic Comments*, May 2003

¹⁶⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Iraq: US military operations*, 31 March 2003

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 by the regime.¹⁶⁵

On the lessons to be learnt from the US-Turkish impasse over opening up a northern front from Turkish territory, an article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* suggested:

The geopolitical aspects of the conflict were complicated by the shifting international support picture and this will undoubtedly help to shape the US military of the future [...] "We are facing a more fluid and complicated set of alignments than anything seen since the foundation of the alliance in 1949" Robert Hutchings, Chairman of the US National Intelligence Council, said [...] "This will mean that the long-standing pattern of regular and close co-ordination via NATO and especially the four key Western allies – the US, Great Britain, France and Germany – will give way to an ad hoc 'coalition of the willing' on most issues [...]"

"The access problem is going to be much more difficult in the future" Marine Corps commandant Gen Michael Hagee said [...] Vice Admiral Charles Moore, deputy chief of naval operations for fleet readiness went further, "With all due respect to our allies in Turkey, we got a lesson, a glimpse of the future in this situation... where Ankara was able to significantly alter our war plan". Sea basing is a top priority because the US is sure that foreign basing rights will become an ever increasing issue.¹⁶⁶

The relative ease and speed with which Coalition forces took both Baghdad and Tikrit also defied expectations. Predictions that Coalition forces would be lured into urban combat in the streets of Baghdad by the Republican and Special Republican Guard, and that chemical or biological weapons would be used against Coalition forces advancing on the capital, both proved unfounded.

Mark Nicholson writing in the *Financial Times* commented:

Within 48 hours, US forces had moved in a sweeping pincer from a line stretching from Karbala in the west to Kut in the east, slicing straight through two full divisions of the Republican Guard, the Medina to the west and the Baghdad division to the east, meeting suspiciously little resistance.

¹⁶⁵ Defence Select Committee, Uncorrected Evidence of Secretary of State for Defence, 14 May 2003. A copy of the session transcript is available online at:

<http://pubs1.tso.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmdfence/uc695-i/uc69502.htm>

¹⁶⁶ "What went right?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003, p.21

By the end of that days' lightning sweep north US officials claimed, remarkably, that both divisions had been destroyed as fighting units [...]

Two weeks of unrelenting precision bombing had taken their toll but US military officials claimed many of the soldiers simply decided not to fight. But those units that did were either outmanoeuvred or outfoxed by the highly mobile US forces, backed by close air support from A-10 tankbusters, Tornado GR4 and F15 strike aircraft [...]

The victory over the Medina and the Baghdad divisions left US forces with nothing between them and Mr Hussein's defences inside Baghdad, which US and British jets, backed by hundreds of Tomahawk cruise missiles, had been targeting since the first night of the war.¹⁶⁷

Adam Ward and James Hackett commented:

Some genuine cleverness and creativity was displayed in the battle for Iraq's two largest cities, where attempts to seize them quickly would probably have led to high casualties. By contrast, waiting patiently for the 4th mechanized infantry division and other reinforcements would have given Saddam Hussein's forces confidence as well as time to regroup and devise new tactics. The middle ground – using increasingly assertive 'reconnaissance in force' operations to gain information, disrupt Saddam Hussein's forces, embolden the Iraqi population to resist and engage selectively in fire fights against elite Iraqi forces – proved highly effective.¹⁶⁸

Approximately 50 million leaflets were dropped by Coalition forces between October 2002 and 11 April 2003 as part of a psychological campaign aimed at destabilising the Iraqi regime.

An article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* stated:

The Second Gulf War was a war in which psyops was brought to bear on the enemy in new and unusual ways. Psyops against the Iraqi military included the dropping of more than 40 million leaflets prior to hostilities and during the conflict itself. These leaflets, which urged Iraqi commanders not to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and for front-line troops to desert, appeared to have the desired effect [...] Psyops also involved the direct 'piping' of propaganda into Iraq via platforms like the US Air force's EC-130E Commando Solo Aircraft [...]

The targeting of individual Iraqi commanders with mobile phone text messages demonstrated the extent to which it [psyops campaign] was underpinned by new thinking. Special operations forces (SOF), like those who shape psyops strategy,

¹⁶⁷ Mark Nicholson, "US campaign unlike any in history keeps the armchair observers guessing", *The Financial Times*, 8 April 2003

¹⁶⁸ Adam Ward & James Hackett, "Lessons from the Iraq war", *Strategic Comments*, May 2003

traditionally remain in the shadows, but the degree to which SOF operated in the open in 'Iraqi Freedom' was also unprecedented.¹⁶⁹

However, Cordesman has argued that at present "the full scale of psychological warfare operations remains unclear".¹⁷⁰

Commenting on the overall conduct of the military campaign, Mark Nicholson suggested:

The [opportunistic raid on the Iraqi leadership] may have failed to kill the Iraqi leader... but that initiative...was the first taste of what Gen Franks had in mind when he spoke of shock and surprise.

The second surprise was the launch of the land war the next night ... Again it was opportunism. As Gen Franks explained later, he saw the Iraqis trying to mine or detonate the oil wells and infrastructure in the Rumaila oilfield and on the Faw Peninsula but believed they were poorly defended. So he ordered an early start to the land war, designed in part to prevent a massive environmental disaster. But it also marked a quick start to the land assault for Baghdad [...]

These first days stamped the hallmarks of the campaign – pace and opportunity. What followed was a military sprint to Baghdad backed by mighty but precise air power, the most mobile combination of land and air forces, and the biggest assemblage of special forces troops ever choreographed on a battlefield [...]

But for all its pace and decisiveness, the campaign has not been without the unexpected for the coalition. William S. Wallace, commander of V Corps that led the armoured race to Baghdad was forced to admit in the face of obdurate fighting by "irregular" armed Saddam loyalists that this was not proving the enemy he and his troops had "war-gamed for".

Basra and the Shia south of Iraq also failed to ignite in spontaneous uprising against Mr Hussein as British commanders had hoped. Ten days into the war, generals at Central Command in Doha were privately conceding that they had underestimated the degree of fear and caution among Shia Muslims in the south, engendered by the brutality of Mr Hussein's reprisals against their 1991 uprising.¹⁷¹

Cordesman commented that:

One thing is certain, the coalition attack in the Iraq War was certainly highly innovative in many dimensions. If the coalition attack did not meet all the tests of "force transformation" or of the concept of "shock and awe" ... it brought

¹⁶⁹ "What went right?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003, p.21

¹⁷⁰ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003

¹⁷¹ Mark Nicholson, "US campaign unlike any in history keeps the armchair observers guessing", *The Financial Times*, 8 April 2003

together a wide range of different combat elements to deliver a remarkable degree of speed, precision and focus.¹⁷²

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld at a Pentagon press briefing on 15 April also stated that:

Because of the way General Franks conducted the conflict, a lot of bad things didn't happen. The oil wells were not set afire like they were last time. We don't have massive internally displaced people. We don't have a million refugees flooding into neighbouring countries. We didn't have high collateral damage because we didn't have a long air war. We had precision weapons instead of dumb bombs. The ground war went so much faster that the opportunity for people to reorganize and to reconstitute forces in areas where they could provide a more aggressive defense didn't exist; they were passed very rapidly ... there wasn't time to use ballistic missiles in the western part of the country to attack neighbouring countries as happened last time.¹⁷³

At the end of major combat operations the total number of Iraqi Prisoners of War was estimated to be 7,300. At a Pentagon press briefing on 25 April Donald Rumsfeld commented:

the number is somewhere between 7,000-7,500 I'm going to guess [...] I think we're probably down to one or two enemy prisoner of war camps [...] We're keeping the hard cases separate, for the most part. We are systematically going through the less-hard cases and releasing people. I believe we've released over a thousand people already, probably ordinary foot soldiers who were part of an element that surrendered [...] We've been, I think almost every day, moving out something in excess of 100, which is a good thing.¹⁷⁴

B. Capabilities and Planning

An initial assessment of the performance and effectiveness of British capabilities used in the conduct of the military campaign was provided by Sir Michael Boyce at a press conference on 14 April 2003. He stated:

It has been a very good experience in terms of our military capability because we have been very pleased with the performance of our equipment. It has proved where we need to go in the future, so our longer term programmes, if you like, I suspect we will find when we do our lessons learnt are vindicated, but the reliability of some of our equipment, which was much castigated after the exercise in Saif Sareea, which by the way was an exercise to find out the very things we need to find out in order to fight a war properly, such as the Challenger

¹⁷² Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003

¹⁷³ US Department of Defense press briefing, 15 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030415-secdef0107.html>

¹⁷⁴ US Department of Defense press briefing, 25 April 2003

tank, the AS90 artillery, the SA80 rifle and so forth have all performed brilliantly, in fact far higher than specifications. So I am pretty pleased about the way our equipment has actually performed.¹⁷⁵

One of the biggest successes of the Iraq operation is considered by many analysts to have been the effectiveness of joint operations and joint operational planning.

Jane's Defence Weekly commented:

[The] level of 'jointness' – the degree to which all the branches of the armed forces worked well together – emerged as a major plus point of the war. "You have seen in Iraq the power of that teamwork" said Lt Gen Robert Magnus, US Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources. The USAF assigned a two-star general, Maj Gen Daniel Leaf, Director of operational capability requirements on the air staff, to the coalition forces land component commander (CFLCC). His task was to handle joint issues arising from the closely co-ordinated air-land 'blitzkrieg' that characterised the rapid advance on Baghdad.

"One thing that has been a real success – at least on the surface and will require some review – is the establishment of the air component co-ordination element at the CLFCC staff..." said USAF Col Mark Bontrager, deputy director of the Task Force 'Enduring Look' ... "Joint operations are the way to go. I think from that perspective they have worked very hard and it has been a joint airpower, landpower, seapower, coalition show".¹⁷⁶

Ward and Hackett writing in *Strategic Comments* outlined:

Coalition forces were remarkably effective in coordinating ground and air attacks [...] the fight was won by military excellence and a devastating display of combined-arms warfare; it was less brilliance than sheer dominance.¹⁷⁷

Anthony Cordesman suggested:

While they certainly profited from the lessons gained during the Gulf War in 1991, and the conflict in Afghanistan, a detailed day-by-day analysis reveals at least the outline of how air and missile power, rapid and focused armoured manoeuvre, the creative use of Special Forces and air mobile forces, and sea power combined to inflict a massive and sudden defeat on a large traditional army.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Defence Press Conference, 14 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/page3496.asp>

¹⁷⁶ "What went right?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003

¹⁷⁷ Adam Ward & James Hackett, "Lessons from the Iraq war", *Strategic Comments*, May 2003

¹⁷⁸ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003

With reference to joint planning between US and UK forces, Lt Gen Earl Hailston, Commander US Marine Corps Forces, stated:

How was the cooperation with British forces? It couldn't have been better. We worked and planned this for months together. We certainly immediately came together as a team that was able to directly support each other. We did that.

Our forces melded together throughout the fight and even off the shore. One of the very first Marine casualties that we had was, in fact, medevaced to the Argus, aboard the British ship. It certainly was totally almost without bumps. Everything in combat has a little bit of bumps, but mainly for communications.

Lessons learned out of that, I think, is that this is a capability that, first of all, our training and work over the years has certainly paid off. We'll continue to collect data from the operation, and I'm sure that more things will come out of that. But it has proven to us that it's a very effective force to work together and support each other.

The contribution of network centric warfare capabilities and the use of precision-guided munitions during the conflict in Iraq have also been highlighted as areas of notable success. The post-conflict assessment in *Jane's Defence Weekly* stated:

It was a B-1B armed with GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) that was the instrument for an audacious second attempt to decapitate the Iraqi leadership... The strike was especially noteworthy for the way it saw information on the whereabouts of the Iraqi dictator, which emerged at very short notice, transmitted rapidly to allied air planners and then to the B-1B. This short duration 'sensor to shooter' loop is a key component of 'net-centric warfare': the ability to transmit, receive and view data in real time across the coalition spectrum. Netcentric warfare was practised in an embryonic capacity in Afghanistan and honed in Iraq – as the B-1B mission demonstrated [...]

Although net-centric warfare has a long way to go, the way in which it is spreading across the warfighting spectrum was visible in Iraq.¹⁷⁹

Anthony Cordesman commented:

The Coalition applied joint warfare with an unparalleled degree of near-real time situational awareness that shortened the "kill chain" in going from targeting to strike, and the sensor to shooter gap from days to hours in the Gulf War to hours to minutes in the Iraq War [...]

This does not mean that the US and Coalition operations in the Iraq War are representative of the future state of the art. It is clear from discussions...that netcentric warfare is in a rapid state of flux and many further advances can be

¹⁷⁹ "What went right?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003

made. There were many areas at every level from communications in the field to basic procedures for integrating high level decision-making where methods and technology could be improved [...] What is clear is that such technologies offer great promise and will rapidly evolve beyond the level of operations used in the Iraq War.¹⁸⁰

However, Marvin Leibstone, writing in *Military Technology* argued:

The Iraqi army [did not have] in its combat inventory state-of-the-art information warfare means. The anti-Iraq war could not prove that the US-led coalition's network-centric architectures could remain infallible during more dire circumstances.¹⁸¹

On the issue of precision-guided munitions, he went on to state:

Also proven during the first days of the war were the upgrades to cruise missiles and precision-guided bombs, allowing for many more pinpoint strikes than occurred during the first anti-Iraq war, and day/night aircraft reconnaissance confirmations of pre-selected targets, enabling destruction of Iraqi C2, air defence and anti-tank positions.¹⁸²

As of 8 April 2003, approximately 20,000 munitions had been dropped by Coalition aircraft. Of those approximately 70% were precision-guided. During a Pentagon press briefing on 9 May 2003 US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld confirmed:

The air war was long in 1991 and very short here ... [there has been] complete reversal of precision weapons versus dumb weapons on this conflict, percentage wise (1991: 10% precision weapons, 90% unguided; 2003: 70% precision weapons, 30% unguided).¹⁸³

Commenting on the effectiveness of precision-guided munitions, Adam and Hackett stated:

The combination of GPS-guided all-weather bombs, better all-weather sensors and real-time joint communications networks denied Iraqi forces any sanctuary.¹⁸⁴

Anthony Cordesman suggested:

A combination of new ISR assets, new precision weapons, and much better avionics allowed all-weather precision strike operations with excellent targeting,

¹⁸⁰ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003, p.145

¹⁸¹ "Marvin Leibstone, "The war against Iraq: issues and lessons", *Military Technology*, April 2003, p.10

¹⁸² "Marvin Leibstone, "The war against Iraq: issues and lessons", *Military Technology*, April 2003, p.10

¹⁸³ US Department of Defense press briefing, 9 May 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030509-secdef0162.html>

¹⁸⁴ Adam Ward & James Hackett, "Lessons from the Iraq war", *Strategic Comments*, May 2003

an emphasis on “effects-based” strikes and careful limitation of collateral damage. Not only did the US make nearly ten times as much use of precision guided weapons relative to unguided weapons as in the Gulf War, it was able to target them with far more focus and effect. As for sheer number, nearly 100% of the combat aircraft the US deployed in the Iraq War carried precision weapons, versus some 15% in Desert Storm. The Coalition fired some 19,948 precision-guided weapons in the less than four week long Iraq War versus 8,644 in the six week Gulf War and some 955 cruise missile versus 300 [...]

While the JDAM got most of the publicity, the US delivered 30% more laser guided bombs than GPS-guided weapons, in part because laser illumination is more rapid and accurate in dynamic targeting. The GBU-12 Paveway, laser-guided 500-pound bomb was the most commonly used precision weapon in the war. Some 7,114 were used...The fact that a 500-pound weapon could be used so often relative to heavier systems is an indication of both improvements in precision and the ability to execute “effects-based” strikes [...]

Anyone looking at the lessons of the war should, however, be careful to remember that 32% of the munitions remained unguided, and the US dropped some 9,251 conventional bombs. Precision is not the solution to every problem.

185

Confirmation on the number of cluster munitions¹⁸⁶ used by Coalition forces was provided by General Myers at the Pentagon press briefing on 25 April. He stated:

Coalition forces dropped nearly 1,500 cluster bombs of varying types during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Most were precision-guided. An initial review of all cluster munitions used and the targets they were used on indicate that only 26 of those approximately 1,500 hit targets within 1,500 feet of civilian neighbourhoods. And there’s been only one recorded case of collateral damage from cluster munitions noted so far.

We used cluster munitions against surface-to-surface missiles, radar sites, air defence sites, surface-to air missiles, regime mobile communications, aircraft, armour, artillery, troops and other selected military targets. Because the regime chose to put many of these military assets in populated areas, and then from those areas fired on our forces, in some cases we hit those targets knowing that there would be a chance of potential collateral damage.

Coalition forces used cluster munitions in very specific cases against valid military targets, and only when they deemed it was a military necessity.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003, p.143 and p.172

¹⁸⁶ Further information on cluster bombs is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/2116, *Anti-Personnel Mines and Cluster Munitions*

¹⁸⁷ US Department of Defense Press Briefing, 25 April 2003. A transcript is available online at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030425-secdef0126.html>

In a Written Answer on 8 May 2003 the Secretary of State provided figures for the number of cluster bombs used by British forces, up to and including 29 April 2003:

As of 29 April 2003, United Kingdom forces have dropped about 66 RBL 755 cluster bombs in the Iraq conflict. These have been used against large troop concentrations, armour and artillery in the open. A detailed record of the areas where cluster bombs are known to have been used in Iraq is maintained by the coalition in Theatre. We do not comment on numbers of munitions dropped by other nations.¹⁸⁸

C. Casualties

As of 20 May 2003 there had been 34 British casualties as a result of operations in Iraq. Eight of those were killed in action; one during an explosive ordnance disposal operation; one in an explosion in southern Iraq; nineteen in accidents and five as the result of 'friendly fire'. Two British soldiers are also believed to have died from natural causes.¹⁸⁹

As of 20 April 2003 there had been 128 US casualties, 94 of whom were killed in action and 34 in non-combat situations.¹⁹⁰ An online source upgraded the estimate of US casualties to be 146, as of 20 May 2003.¹⁹¹

Various figures were offered by the Iraqi Government during the conflict for the number of civilian deaths, although no details were given on how the figures were calculated. According to an *Associated Press* report of 6 April, Iraqi officials claimed around 600 civilians had been killed and over 4,000 wounded. A *Financial Times* report of 7 April said the Iraqi Government estimated that 1,252 civilians had been killed and 5,103 injured.¹⁹²

Other official sources avoided offering estimates due to the difficulties involved in obtaining accurate information. A spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross said on 6 April that it had not been possible to count the number of casualties admitted to Iraqi hospitals during the conflict.¹⁹³ In some cases, observers reported difficulties in distinguishing between Iraqi combatants and non-combatants. Some Iraqi troops and paramilitaries were alleged to have worn civilian clothing during engagements

¹⁸⁸ HC Deb 8 May 2003, c847-8W

¹⁸⁹ Ministry of Defence. Information available online at: <http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/casualties.htm>

¹⁹⁰ Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003, p.147

¹⁹¹ Information available at: <http://www.100megsfree3.com/levgen/vics/oifcasualties.html>

¹⁹² More detail on the various estimates can be found in the following report: 'The death toll of Iraqi soldiers is in the thousands, but precisely how many have died is anyone's guess', *Associated Press*, 8 April 2003, from the *Fox News* web site at

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,83544,00.html>

¹⁹³ *Financial Times*, 7 April 2003

with Coalition forces. There were also allegations that some Iraqi civilians, including women, had acted as spotters for Iraqi forces.¹⁹⁴

The British and US Governments insisted that Coalition forces had taken “great care to avoid civilian casualties”.¹⁹⁵ Foreign Secretary Jack Straw declared in early April that the coalition had

worked very hard to avoid civilian deaths and casualties. There will be some, very sadly, but I believe that once this military action is over the total number of civilian deaths and casualties would have been shown to be relatively small.

I mourn for the deaths of these people, these babies and these children and the fact that they are Iraqis is irrelevant. They are people. They are human beings.

I'm also certain the result of this military action will be to have spared the hundreds and thousands of Iraqis who would have otherwise faced death at the hands of Saddam Hussein and his people.¹⁹⁶

Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, Deputy Director of Operations at US Central Command, was asked about military and civilian casualty estimates during a press briefing on 8 April 2003:

Q (Inaudible.) At the weekend, your forces broke slightly with the policy of not giving figures for casualties. And indeed, I think first General Perkins (sp) said there had been a thousand casualties in the incursion [into Baghdad] on Saturday, and then that figure was revised upwards to between 2,000 and 3,000.

Can you tell us how many casualties you estimate there have been since then? How many of those were Iraqi forces and how many were civilians? [...]

GEN. BROOKS: First, the number of casualties is a figure that can never be completely well-determined. And so, as I have stated on previous days, I'm not going to speculate on exactly how many have been killed on either side and I'm not going to try to characterize the full dimension of that.

We know that there have been losses of life. We know that many families have been affected by this on both sides. We know that we've seen people forced into situations by the regime that caused a loss of life, civilian non-combatants in some cases.

We know that many have been wounded as a result of combat action, intended or unintended. And certainly, from the regime's perspective, we can't guess whether

¹⁹⁴ See for example *Sunday Times*, 30 March 2003

¹⁹⁵ See for example the joint statement on Iraq released by Prime Minister Tony Blair and President George Bush on 7 April 2003, online at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page3441.asp>

¹⁹⁶ *Agence France Presse*, 3 April 2003

it was intended or unintended. From the coalition's perspective, we always know that it is unintended.¹⁹⁷

Secretary of State Colin Powell told the BBC on 13 April that:

We really don't know how many civilian deaths there have been, and we don't know how many of them can be attributed to coalition action, as opposed to action on the part of Iraqi armed forces as they defended themselves.¹⁹⁸

The day before, Congress passed a measure calling on the Bush administration to identify and provide "appropriate assistance" to Iraqi civilians for any war losses incurred.¹⁹⁹ The author of the provision, Democratic Senator Patrick J Leahy, issued a statement saying that:

Innocent civilians have suffered grievous losses. As we help rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, we should do what we can to assist the innocent, to show that we were not at war against them and that the United States does not walk away. It is the right thing to do, and it is in our own national interest.²⁰⁰

Various unofficial estimates were offered by commentators, although all acknowledged the difficulties involved in obtaining accurate figures. The web site iraqbodycount.net collated reports by various news sources to obtain a figure for the number of reported civilian deaths in Iraq. As of 30 April the number of civilian deaths was given in the range of 2,149 to 2,615.²⁰¹

D. Friendly Fire

The level of 'friendly fire' or 'blue-on-blue' incidents during the conflict has been criticised by a majority of commentators.

Cordemsan stated:

The casualty ...reflects a high rate of deaths to "friendly fire". The exact number of [total Coalition] friendly fire cases remains uncertain at this point, but they seem to include at least five major cases where air or ground forces attack friendly forces [...] This raises questions about the effectiveness of the IFF systems used, ranging from passive readout systems to transponders. For example, after an F-16CJ fired on a Patriot on March 24th, the US had to refine its

¹⁹⁷ CENTCOM press briefing, 8 April 2003

¹⁹⁸ 'U.S. has no plans to count civilian casualties', *Washington Post*, 15 April 2003

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ <http://iraqbodycount.net> Information on the methodology used can be found at: <http://iraqbodycount.net/background.htm#methods>

IFF procedures during the course of the war, and add a back up check using another system to locking the radar on suspected targets.²⁰²

Tim Robinson suggested:

The instances of friendly fire in the Gulf have been thrown into stark relief by the lack of effective organised enemy resistance and relatively low casualties, both coalition military and Iraqi civilian. As low casualties become the norm, media coverage of friendly fire incidents also adds to a growing public demand for better IFF capabilities.

It could well be, then, that this conflict will, as the first Gulf War did with precision weapons, spur on fresh initiatives to reduce ‘blue-on-blue’ incidents. Vehicle identification system, advanced IFF and interoperability recognition training would seem to be three key areas for both industry and governments to look at afresh.²⁰³

An assessment in *Jane’s Defence Weekly* reported:

Gen Magnus [USMS deputy commandant for programs and resources] and Vice Adm Mullen [deputy chief of naval operations for resources, requirements and assessments] said there were far fewer blue-on-blue incidents in this conflict than they would have expected for a war of this length and intensity.²⁰⁴

However, an article in the *New Scientist* argued:

In the first days of the US and British invasion of Iraq, an American Patriot missile shot down a British Tornado fighter, while near Basra one British Challenger tank destroyed another. Then in a disturbing echo of events in the 1991 gulf War, an American A-10 plane destroyed a British armoured vehicle.

At first sight these look like inevitable accidents, triggered by technological failures of 21st century military technology. But the truth may lie deeper. Blame for such accidents usually lies with the culture of rivalry that pervades the armed services, say safety experts. And the way such “friendly fire” incidents are investigated – with the emphasis on finding individual culprits rather than any organisational failings – means that military planners may never get to the root cause.

There is no dispute that high-tech equipment can foster friendly fire accidents. The American and British forces in Iraq use thermal or radar images to engage the enemy at maximum range in limited visibility, says Scott Snook, former head of the Center for Leadership and Organisations at the West Point Military

²⁰² Anthony Cordesman, *The instant lessons of the Iraq war*, 15 May 2003, p.148

²⁰³ Tim Robinson, “Shock and awe assessed”, *Aerospace International*, 1 May 2003

²⁰⁴ “What went right?”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 30 April 2003, p.25

Academy. When troops can't see and check the target with their own eyes, they are more likely to make a mistake. Similarly, electronic identification systems can fail in action: the US Army says a software error led the Patriot system to identify the Tornado as an incoming missile.

NATO is planning an all-embracing digital 'combat ID' system for its members' forces, but this will not be fitted until at least 2006, according to Britain's Ministry of Defence. Until then the MoD expects "fratricide" to account for 10 to 15 per cent of British deaths in combat. Even when the system is fully operational, few expect it to eliminate casualties completely.²⁰⁵

E. Estimated Costs

Financial provisions for the military operations in Iraq were announced in the Budget on 9 April 2003. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, stated:

It is half a century since a Budget has been presented with Britain engaged in large-scale military conflict. On 10 April 1951, the then Chancellor told the House of Commons that, heavy as the burdens may seem at times, they were small set against the cause, which is great and the courage of our armed forces, which is even greater. And even as we look forward to the end of the conflict in Iraq, my first Budget decision is to ensure proper provision for our military, for our domestic security and for international development and reconstruction.

I can confirm that I have set aside £3 billion in a special reserve available to the Ministry of Defence, so that our troops continue to be properly equipped and given the resources that they deserve and have a right to expect.²⁰⁶

In a Written Answer on 8 May 2003 the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Paul Boateng, confirmed the current position:

It would be premature to make such a estimate, but we expect the costs of the military campaign to be covered by the £3 billion reserve announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the Budget.

Mr. Dalyell : Is £4 billion wide of the mark?

Mr. Boateng: I would say to my hon. Friend the Father of the House that we have made available a £3 billion reserve. That is the figure announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and it is our best estimate of the right figure to make available in the reserve at this time.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ "Recognising friend from foe", *New Scientist*, 5 April 2003

²⁰⁶ HC Deb 9 April 2003, c271

²⁰⁷ HC Deb 8 May 2003, c834-5

Further examination of the potential costs of the military operation is covered in Library Research Paper 03/22, *Iraq: developments since UN Security Council Resolution 1441*.

Appendix 1 – British Government Military Campaign Objectives

IRAQ: MILITARY CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Our policy objectives were set out in Parliament on 7 January 2003. The prime objective remains to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and their associated programmes and means of delivery, including prohibited ballistic missiles, as set out in relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs).

2. In UNSCR 1441, the Security Council decided that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations under UNSCR 687 and other relevant resolutions. The Council gave Iraq a final opportunity to comply by co-operating with the enhanced inspection regime established by UNSCR 1441, but warned of the serious consequences of failing to do so. The evidence shows that Iraq has failed to comply with the terms of UNSCR 1441 and is now in further material breach of its obligations. In these circumstances, UNSCR 678 authorises the use of force to enforce Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations.

3. The obstacle to Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations under relevant UNSCRs is the current Iraqi regime, supported by the security forces under its control. The British Government has therefore concluded that military action is necessary to enforce Iraqi compliance and that it is therefore necessary that the current Iraqi regime be removed from power. All military action must be limited to what is necessary to achieve that end. The UK is contributing maritime, land and air forces as part of a US-led coalition.

4. The UK's overall objective for the military campaign is to create the conditions in which Iraq disarms in accordance with its obligations under UNSCRs and remains so disarmed in the long term. Tasks which flow from this objective are set out below.

5. In aiming to achieve this objective as swiftly as possible, every effort will be made to minimise civilian casualties and damage to essential economic infrastructure, and to minimise and address adverse humanitarian consequences. The main tasks of the coalition are to:

- a. overcome the resistance of Iraqi security forces;
- b. deny the Iraqi regime the use of weapons of mass destruction now and in the future;
- c. remove the Iraqi regime, given its clear and unyielding refusal to comply with the UN Security Council's demands;
- d. identify and secure the sites where weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery are located;
- e. secure essential economic infrastructure, including for utilities and transport, from sabotage and wilful destruction by Iraq; and

f. deter wider conflict both inside Iraq and in the region.

Military action will be conducted in conformity with international law, including the UN Charter and international humanitarian law.

6. Our wider political objectives in support of the military campaign are to:

a. demonstrate to the Iraqi people that our quarrel is not with them and that their security and well-being is our concern;

b. 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;

c. sustain the widest possible international and regional coalition in support of military action;

d. preserve wider regional security, including by maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq and mitigating the humanitarian and other consequences of conflict for Iraq's neighbours;

e. help create conditions for a future, stable and law-abiding government of Iraq; and

f. further our policy of eliminating terrorism as a force in international affairs.

7. In the wake of hostilities, the immediate military priorities for the coalition are to:

a. provide for the security of friendly forces;

b. contribute to the creation of a secure environment so that normal life can be restored;

c. 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. work with UNMOVIC/IAEA to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;

e. facilitate remedial action where environmental damage has occurred;

f. 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. lay plans for the reform of Iraq's security forces.

Wherever possible, these tasks will be carried out in co-operation with the United Nations.

8. British military forces will withdraw as soon as practicable. We hope to see the early establishment of a transitional civilian administration. We will work with the international community to build the widest possible international and regional support for the reconstruction of Iraq and the move to representative government.

9. It remains our wish to see 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 own people.

March 2003

Appendix 2 – British Government Paper ‘A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People’

Dated 17 March 2003

Available online at <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page3280.asp>

A VISION FOR IRAQ AND THE IRAQI PEOPLE

A PAPER PUBLISHED BY THE UK GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL BE DELIVERED IN WRITTEN AND VIDEO FORM TO THE REGION, AND HOPEFULLY TO MANY IRAQIS, IN THE EVENT WE ARE FORCED TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION

Iraq is a country with a long history, a rich culture and an educated people. It has huge potential. Yet under Saddam Hussein its people have been driven into poverty and denied basic human rights. His defiance of a long series of United Nations resolutions demanding the disarmament of his nuclear, chemical, biological and long-range missile capability has led to sanctions. Saddam's rule of fear and repression has tortured and killed thousands of Iraqis and led to two wars of aggression against Iraq's neighbours.

For 12 years, Saddam has defied the will of the United Nations and undermined its authority. We have done all that we can to persuade him to disarm and thereby avoid military conflict. If Saddam refuses even now to co-operate fully with the UN, and he forces us to take the military route to achieve the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, we will do all that we can to limit civilian casualties and damage to essential economic infrastructure. We will mobilise the international community to provide emergency humanitarian relief.

Our aim is to disarm Saddam of his weapons of mass destruction, which threaten his neighbours and his people. 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.

We will support the Iraqi people in their desire for

- Peace: a unified Iraq within its current borders living at peace with itself and with its neighbours.
- Prosperity: all Iraqis sharing the wealth created by its economy and its oil reserves, drawing on the talents and skills of its people.
- Freedom: an Iraq which respects fundamental human rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the dignity of family life, and whose people live free from repression and the fear of arbitrary arrest.
- Good Government: an independent Iraq respecting the rule of law, whose government reflects the diversity and choice of its population and helps rebuild Iraq's security and provides its people with food, water and high quality public services, especially health and education.

- International Respect: an Iraq respected by its neighbours which plays its full role as a member of the international community.

We will help by:

- Working to ensure any military campaign is as swift and carefully targeted as possible.
- Working with the UN and international community to help meet the humanitarian needs and prioritise resources to feed and care for the people of Iraq.
- Enabling Iraqis to establish their own effective representative government and encouraging UN involvement in the process.
- Achieving a swift end to sanctions as soon as Iraq is in compliance with UN Security Council resolutions.
- Supporting Iraq's re-integration into the region and the wider international community, with actions including the reopening of land borders.
- Seeking a fair and sustainable solution to Iraq's debt problems.
- Promoting increased aid from the international community.
- Supporting an international reconstruction programme, and helping Iraq make the transition to a more prosperous and dynamic economy.
- Promoting investment in Iraq's oil industry, managed transparently and fairly, and trade in open world markets, for the benefit of the Iraqi people.
- Encouraging the renewal of cultural and educational exchanges with other countries.

Appendix 3 – Parliamentary debates, statements and papers

a. Debates and Statements

The following is a list of debates and statements in the Commons on military deployments and operations in Iraq between 18 December 2002 and 1 May 2003:

18 December 2002, cc845-58, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Contingency preparations for possible military action against Iraq.

7 January 2003, cc23-39, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Iraq and military contingency preparations.

20 January 2003, cc34-46, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Further contingency preparations (posting 26,000 additional troops to the Gulf).

30 January 2003, c50WS, Written Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Call out of Reservists for possible operations against Iraq.

3 February 2003, cc21-38, Statement by the Prime Minister, Iraq and meeting with President George W. Bush.

6 February 2003, cc455-66, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Further contingency preparations in relation to Iraq.

13 February 2003, cc1056-72, Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, on Iraq.

25 February 2003, cc123-40, Statement by the Prime Minister on Iraq.

26 February 2003, cc265-371, Debate on a Motion concerning Cm5769, UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and disarmament of Iraq.

10 March 2003, cc21-39, Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, Iraq and Israel/Palestine.

13 March 2003, cc20WS, Written Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Armed forces deployment for potential military action against Iraq.

17 March 2003, cc703-23, Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, on Iraq.

18 March 2003, cc760-912, Debate on a Motion to approve the actions of Her Majesty's Government on Iraq.

20 March 2003, cc1087-100, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Overnight events in Iraq.

21 March 2003, cc1211-22, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Iraq conflict.

24 March 2003, cc21-35, Statement by the Prime Minister, European Council meeting and the conflict in Iraq.

26 March 2003, cc291-305, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Military operations in Iraq.

3 April 2003, cc70-71WS, Written Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, Meetings held with the US President and Secretary of State and the UN Secretary General 26-27 March concerning the Iraq conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.

3 April 2003, cc1069-87, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Military operations in Iraq.

7 April 2003, cc21-38, Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Military action in Iraq.

10 April 2003, cc405-22, Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, on Iraq.

11 April 2003, cc38-39WS, Written Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Iraq: force level adjustments.

14 April 2003, cc615-34, Statement by the Prime Minister on Iraq.

28 April 2003, cc21-37, Statement by Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, Iraq and the Middle East Peace Process.

30 April 2003, cc15-16WS, Written Statement by Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence, Iraq: force level adjustments.

b. Papers

A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 19 March 2003, available in the Library as Dep 03/837 and in Appendix 2.

Iraq: Military Campaign Objectives, Ministry of Defence, 20 March 2003, available in the Library as Dep 03/845 and in Appendix 1.

Operation Telic: Information for MPs and Peers (first in a series), Ministry of Defence, 24 March 2003, available in the Library as Dep 88.

Joint Declaration by US President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair on Iraq, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 8 April 2003, available in the Library as Dep 03/1100.

Coalition leaflet dropped from the air over southern Iraq, Ministry of Defence, 9 April 2003 available in the Library as Dep 03/1051.

