The Australian Army and the War in Iraq

2002-2010

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The origins of this project lay in a conversation that took place between LTGEN Peter Leahy, then the CA, Roger Lee, the Director of the Army History Unit (AHU) and the author, a Senior Research Fellow with what was then the Land Warfare Studies Centre (now Directorate of Army Research and Analysis). The goal articulated for the book was to provide an initial analysis of the Australian Army’s role in its first war since the end of the Vietnam War. It was to record the Army’s accomplishments; highlight the key issues and problems the organisation faced and their resolution; and identify the critical questions with which commanders and planners had to contend. The work also had a secondary goal, to lay the foundation for further analysis once the closed period came to an end in 30 years time. In its original conception the resulting volume was intended for publication as a part of the AHU’s Australian Army Campaign series, of which the author had already contributed two volumes. The book was to be unclassified, brief, heavily illustrated and aimed at a junior officer audience.

Soon after the project’s commencement its original mandate began to unravel. The requirements of working in the closed period and the need to access classified materials meant that it would

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prove impossible to produce an unclassified book. The author was not helped in this situation by the ADF’s practice of minimising the amount of information it released to the open domain. It was also not possible to keep the book’s singular focus on the experiences of the Army. While this work does not purport to be an ADF-wide study it did prove necessary to delve into the experiences of the RAN and RAAF, albeit to a much lesser extent. But perhaps most importantly, as the book developed, it became increasingly clear that the truly significant lessons of Australia’s participation in the Coalition against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq lay at the policy level, not at the war’s conduct at the sharp end. This realisation sparked an entire rethink of the author’s approach to his task as well as the identity of the target audience.

This book has taken more than three years to research and write. It is no longer a brief quick cut of the war for the enjoyment of the junior officer and general public. Instead, it is a more measured analytical tome whose conclusions will benefit those already of senior rank – or those destined for the highest levels of the ADF – whether military or civilian. It tells the story of an Army that in 2002 was not ready for war and of a defence organisation that would struggle to articulate a mission for the troops it dispatched and maintained in the MEAO over its long course. To some this work may appear overly critical, but if this is its tone it is only because the author believes war to be
a serious business, and that the recognition of a problem is the first step in the implementation of its solution.

All books must have limits. Consequently, one of the most important responsibilities of an author is to decide which parts of the story will be left to others. To have done otherwise would have resulted in a shallow book of unusable length that would have been of little utility to its readers. In addition, authors must shape their works in the direction they believe most suited. The book’s concentration on the strategic and operational levels of war does not slight the accomplishments of those who worked primarily at the tactical, but their story awaits a different telling.

As part of the rationale for this book was to record the memories of war’s participants before they began to fade, and to access documents before they were lost, a note on its sources for the benefit of future scholars is in order. The author interviewed over 75 individuals and corresponded with many others. All gave their time freely and frankly, although it must be admitted that a few needed encouragement from the chain of command. The author would like to thank all of these individuals.

Defence holds a wealth of documentary materials on Operations BASTILLE/FALCONER/CATALYST/KRUGER and the author had no significant difficulties with access. If anything it was the sheer quantity of information that was the issue. Moreover, few records have been transferred into document repositories, examined by an archivist or organised for research purposes which meant that this
author had to wear multiple hats. Some records were even still in use and on more than one occasion the author temporarily borrowed documents from their creator’s desk. Again, these individuals have my thanks.

Most of the documents accessed for this project are stored electronically within the Defence data management systems. Where possible the author has provided the document’s electronic ID tag, although he must admit that this was not done in all cases. In addition the author was provided with documents from private sources and these are identified in the notes as fully as possible. Any omissions in citations were not deliberate but are rather a reflection of the haste in which the materials were created.

Some note of caution on sources would also be prudent, however. The author was struck by the speed with which some types of documents disappeared. For example, he was never able to compile a complete set of post operation reports, a mandatory document that was to be prepared by all force elements. In addition, the long tradition of units maintaining a war diary appears to have lapsed as the author never encountered one, at least not one that reflected the richness of experience of those prepared during previous conflicts. Moreover, some force elements returned from the MEAO with all of their documents stored on portable storage drives. Much of this data remains on these drives and is inaccessible from within Defence’s data management systems. These omissions in the source trail did not impede this project as
the author was able to compensate with other sources. However, whether this happy state will hold with the passing of time is at best uncertain.

As this author’s task nears its end one final issue remains in the telling of the story of the Australian Army’s war in Iraq. That is the distribution of this volume. As a classified work the author is well aware of the difficulties that this poses for its ready access and dissemination. It is hoped that the Army will be able to overcome this challenge and be willing to distribute this book as widely as possible. The memory and recognition of those who served in Iraq warrants no less.

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Chapter 1
The Decision for War

The United States and the Case for War

For the administration of the US President, George W Bush, the attacks of September 11th by the al-Qaeda terrorist organisation of Osama bin Laden on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon Building near Washington DC were a watershed event. Bush found himself the leader of a nation at war, and of a people who had just witnessed — and would view over and over again on their televisions — the nation’s greatest loss of life on domestic soil from a foreign attack.

As would be expected the United States immediately began to plan to strike back at al-Qaeda, and its leader bin Laden. On 20 September 2001 Bush addressed Congress and delivered an ultimatum to Afghanistan’s Taliban government. Afghanistan had provided al-Qaeda with a safe haven, and Bush made it clear in only slightly tempered language that the Taliban would suffer the same fate as al-Qaeda if they did not meet his demands. These included the handing over of the al-Qaeda leadership to the United States and the permanent closing of all terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, conditions that the Taliban refused to meet. The US invasion of Afghanistan commenced on 7 October 2001 and in a rapid

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campaign toppled the Taliban and scattered al-Qaeda. Although bin Laden eluded capture he remained in hiding for nearly 10 years until his death at the hands of US Special Forces on 2 May 2011.

What is remarkable in this chronicle of events outlined here is that virtually at the same time as the Bush Administration began planning for the attack on Afghanistan it also commenced consideration for a war against Iraq and the removal its despotic leader, Saddam Hussein. The earliest open source confirmation of the Bush administration exploring its desire to topple Saddam and his Baathist Party loyalists is on 12 September 2001, just one day after the collapse of the World Trade Center. Operating on the initiative of the Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, Pentagon staff began work on a plan that was comically known as ‘Operation Schwack Iraq,’ or more properly Operation VIGILANT GUARDIAN. Two days later the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, outlined to the President a concept for the invasion of Iraq. The President authorised its further development. Bush himself would shortly signal that the defeat of al-Qaeda would not mean the end of the ‘War on Terrorism’. When he delivered the United States’ ultimatum to the Taliban he also let it be known that, ‘Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been

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5 Ibid, p. 16.
found, stopped and defeated.\(^6\) Within the Australian Government there was the suggestion that Iraq was back on the agenda for the United States within hours of September 11\(^{th}\).\(^7\)

Some historians have asserted that Bush arrived in office with a willingness to remove Saddam, but that until September 11\(^{th}\) there was no immediate intent.\(^8\) The attacks of that fateful day changed the agenda and made Iraq a firm target in the US War on Terrorism. There is no exaggeration in George Packer’s conclusion that the Bush Administration began to consider its options regarding Saddam as the dust still settled over the ruins of the World Trade Center.\(^9\) In fact, the invasion of Afghanistan could be considered tangential or a distraction to what Bush and his senior advisors believed to be the more important task, that of removing the Iraqi leader. After all in 1998 the US Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act which made it government policy to support efforts to remove the Saddam regime and promote the emergence of a democratic replacement. The Act allocated nearly 100 million dollars towards this goal.\(^10\) The then President, Bill Clinton,


dutifully signed it into law, although he did nothing of substance to bring its stated goals into effect.\textsuperscript{11}

Many of Bush’s leadership team and advisers - Vice-President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Bush’s brother and Governor of Florida Jeb Bush, and various academics such as Francis Fukuyama - were associated with a think tank called the Project for the New American Century whose members were colloquially known as neo-conservatives or ‘neocons’. Through this organisation these individuals and their associates had long sought an interventionist US policy in the Middle East. From outside of government they had urged the previous President to remove Saddam by force, going so far as to write an open letter to Clinton calling for the dictator’s removal, and carried out a campaign in the media urging the ‘finishing of the task left undone in 1991’.\textsuperscript{12} Wolfowitz had called for Saddam’s overthrow even earlier.\textsuperscript{13} After his election Bush appointed leading neocons to positions of influence within his administration, particularly in the Department of Defense. After September 11 their advice took on a


single and urgent focus – Saddam was connected to the attacks and he had to go.\textsuperscript{14}

While the neocons argued that Clinton’s strategy of containment had failed and that the only remaining option was direct military action, it would be unwise to credit them with too much influence in the decision for war as other factors were present.\textsuperscript{15} For many within and without the Bush Administration there was a sense of unfinished business between the United States and Iraq.\textsuperscript{16} Saddam had managed to remain in power despite defeat in the 1990-1991 Iraq War, uprisings by the Marsh Arabs and the Kurds, frequent bombing and missile strikes from US warplanes and ships, the debilitating effects of the UN’s sanctions regime, and the 1998 crisis that followed the withdrawal of the UN’s weapons inspectors. As the US public focused on revenge for September 11, Bush and his senior advisers saw the attack as the opportunity to redress their grievances against Saddam and attain far-reaching strategic policy goals that included the realignment of the entire Middle East and inculcation of US values amongst its people.\textsuperscript{17} By the northern Spring of 2002 Bush administration rhetoric had changed from ‘if’ Saddam would be removed to more definite

\textsuperscript{14} Packer, The Assassins’ Gate, pp. 39-41.

\textsuperscript{15} Hall Gardner, American Global Strategy and the “War on Terrorism”, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005, p. 12.


language.\textsuperscript{18} Iraq was to be the first step in that region’s transformation, or in the words of one commentator, a ‘misadventure in utopian social engineering.’\textsuperscript{19} In addressing the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank that was also a bastion for the neocons, Bush outlined his administration’s full agenda. He declared that, ‘A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.’\textsuperscript{20} This was what has been called a ‘grand project’ whose audacity was nothing short of remaking of an entire region by force along lines that were more conducive to US strategic interests.\textsuperscript{21}

Moreover, never far from the US national security agenda was the need to sustain the domestic economy by assuring the country’s access to reliable sources of energy. Vital to this goal was the availability of cheap oil. The growing dependence of the United States on imported petroleum, coupled with the refusal of successive Administrations to take serious steps to curtail domestic consumption, led to an inexorable and growing US military

\textsuperscript{18} Metz, Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom,’ p. 25.

\textsuperscript{19} Lee Harris,\textit{ The Suicide of Reason: Radical Islam’s Threat to the West}, Basic Books, New York (2008), p. 72.


presence in the Persian Gulf region that dated to the beginning of the Presidency of Ronald Reagan in 1981.\textsuperscript{22}

The Bush Administration identified two interrelated issues which it could use to justify an unprovoked invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam. The concerns it highlighted were Iraq’s possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and its support of international terrorism. Bush’s rhetoric also tied Saddam to September 11 and predicted that if not stopped in time the next al-Qaeda attack would be even more deadly. The President stirred up the public’s passion with statements such as, ‘We did not ask for this present challenge, but we accept it,’\textsuperscript{23} and included Iraq in an axis of evil that also included Iran and North Korea.\textsuperscript{24} WMDs and international terrorism were emotive laden issues that resonated with the American people in the aftermath of September 11. Later events would suggest that the allegations of imminent WMD attack were also deliberate fabrication.\textsuperscript{25}

Preparing the environment for military action took shape with the promulgation of what has subsequently become known as the Bush Doctrine. In a speech to the 2002 Graduation Class of the United States Military Academy Bush built upon a foundation that President Jimmy Carter had laid in 1980. In the aftermath of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Bacevich, \textit{The Limits of Power}, pp. 49-51.
\end{itemize}
seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran by the Islamic revolutionary government of Iran, Carter announced that US interests in the Persian Gulf were so important that he reserved the right to act unilaterally by force if necessary.26 Bush accepted what had become known as the ‘Carter Doctrine’ of unilateralism and extended it to claim the right to use force pre-emptively anywhere in the world in order to prevent terrorist attacks on United States territory or interests.27

The prerogatives of unilateralism and pre-emption are not new but have been long invoked by governments. Bush went further, however, and asserted that since ‘terrorists and terror states do not reveal these threats with fair notice … responding to such enemies only after they have struck first is not self-defense, it is suicide.’28 Thus under the Bush Doctrine the US Government could use the potential actions of a non-state actor to justify an attack on a sovereign state. Bush then framed his position by claiming that, ‘the security of the world requires disarming Saddam Hussein now.’29 With the publication of The National Security Strategy in September 2002 the Bush administration further established the right of pre-emptive strike against


29 Ibid.
terrorist organisations or rogue states, especially if they possessed or sought WMDs.\(^30\)

**Iraq: Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Terrorism**

Of the two rationales advanced by the Bush Administration to support an attack on Iraq the threat posed by WMDs was the one that was more soundly based. While there was convincing proof that Saddam provided financial support to terrorist organisations – Iraq after all paid the families of Palestinian suicide bombers $25,000 USD, in part to entice other volunteers to come forward\(^31\) – the evidence that there was a more significant link between Iraq and Islamic extremism was not well supported.\(^32\) It is difficult to accept that as a despot renowned for the suppression of internal opposition and the summary execution of rivals Saddam would have allowed a terrorist organisation to establish itself in his territory. Moreover, chemical, biological and/or nuclear weapons have traditionally provoked a strong visceral response from individuals, and their possession and use is seen by many as being immoral, as well as being outside the legitimate boundaries of war. For these reasons their use was proscribed in international conventions as early the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. By focusing on WMDs the Bush Administration successfully employed the


tactic of fear to lower the threshold of justification for a pre-emptive strike against Iraq.

Despite the lack of convincing evidence for Saddam’s role in the support of international terrorism, there is clear irrefutable proof that under his rule Iraq had built a sophisticated and capable weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program. Iraq had developed, produced and employed chemical agents; researched and stockpiled biological agents; and conceived and begun a nuclear weapon program. Saddam’s Iraq had used chemical agents against both military and civilian targets on numerous well-documented occasions. It is also beyond dispute that Iraq engaged in a systematic policy of deception to hide its WMD infrastructure from United Nations inspectors.

Iraq’s involvement with WMD is so well known that only the briefest summary is required here. During Iraq’s war with Iran (1980-1988) its forces made widespread use of vesicant and nerve agents including Mustard, Tabun, and Sarin gases. The Iraqi Army employed a variety of methods to disperse these chemicals, including air dropped bombs, artillery, mortar and rocket fire, and as an aerosol sprayed from fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft.33

In 1987 and 1988 Saddam authorised the use of chemical agents to suppress a rebellion by Iraq’s Kurdish minority. Saddam appointed his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid to the position of

Secretary General of the Northern Bureau of the Baath Party, effectively making him the governor of Iraq’s Kurdish region. Through brutal and ruthless means al-Majid successfully re-exerted Baghdad’s control over the north. In the process he killed thousands of Kurds, forced many more to flee their homes, and in doing so earned the nickname ‘Chemical Ali’. In one instance the town of Halabja was bombarded with lethal gas which resulted in the death of 5000 civilians.\(^\text{34}\) In 2007 Al-Majid was tried and sentenced to death by an Iraqi court for his crimes against the Kurdish people. In three subsequent trials covering different atrocities, including the gas attack of Halabja, he received three further death sentences. Al-Majid was executed in January 2010.\(^\text{35}\)

Although the United States had long suspected that Iraq had a biological weapons program it was not until 1995 when inspectors confirmed its existence. For years the Iraqi government had strenuously denied any involvement with biological weapons, and only admitted to the program’s reality after a high level defection – Saddam’s son-in-law – provided irrefutable evidence.\(^\text{36}\) The inspectors were able to ascertain that Iraqi scientists had successfully weaponised anthrax, botulinum toxin, ricin, and other


\(^{36}\) Ron Huiskin, *We Don’t Want the Smoking Gun to be a Mushroom Cloud: Intelligence on Iraq’s WMD*, SDSC Working Paper No. 390, Canberra, 2004, p. 3.
agents. Iraq had also adapted several delivery systems for biological attack, including the al-Saddam (Scud) Missile, aerial bombs, and artillery shells.\(^{37}\) However, there is no known example of Iraq having used its biological weapons, except in a test.

It was also well known that Iraq harboured the ambition to produce nuclear weapons. However, in 1981 the Israeli Air Force thwarted this objective through its destruction of Iraq’s Osirak Reactor.\(^{38}\)

Saddam’s willingness to use WMD prompted the international community to deny him such capability. On 3 April 1991, in the aftermath of Iraq’s defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 687. This Resolution imposed on Iraq a WMD inspection and disarmament program that was to become known as the United Nations Special Commission or UNSCOM.\(^{39}\) Resolution 687 also placed Iraq under international economic sanctions. Working with staff of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), UNSCOM inspectors were to ‘monitor, verify and destroy Iraq’s WMD arsenal and limit its ballistic missile program.’\(^{40}\)

Originally conceived as a task that would require only a few months to complete, inspectors toiled for more than seven years

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\(^{38}\) Abdullah, *Dictatorship, Imperialism & Chaos*, p. 52.


against Iraqi obstruction, deception and non-compliance until a frustrated United Nations withdrew its personnel in December 1998.\textsuperscript{41} The UN’s official report on its inspection program described the cooperation its representatives received as ‘uneven at best’ and that ‘Iraq sought to claw back concessions at every opportunity and tried to negotiate terms for site access and inspection procedures, which it clearly had no basis to do.’\textsuperscript{42} Officials often denied inspectors’ access to sites; destroyed, shifted and secreted documents and equipment; failed to submit accurate declarations; and on one occasion detained for four days in a car park an IAEA team that refused to relinquish documents it had uncovered on Iraq’s nuclear program.\textsuperscript{43}

Iraq’s refusal to comply with numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions precipitated a four-day bombing campaign by the United States and the United Kingdom. This commenced on 16 December 1998 and was known by the US designation as Operation DESERT FOX.\textsuperscript{s33(a)(iii)}

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\textbf{\underline{\text{\textsuperscript{s33}(a)(iii)}}}

\begin{itemize}
\item[-] A ground campaign was considered but averted. Had it gone ahead it is highly likely that it would have involved Australian Special Forces troops serving under Operation POLLARD.
\end{itemize}

Iraq agreed to a further round of inspections in late 1999. This

\textsuperscript{41} A summary of Iraq’s effort to undermine UNSCOM can be found in \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 3-11.


\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 23-25; and Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: \textit{A Net Assessment}, p. 6.
resulted in the formation of a new body called the United Nations Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

Coalition political leaders, including the Australian Prime Minister John Howard, repeatedly drew attention to Iraq’s use of WMD and its undermining of the inspection process to increase pressure on Saddam to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and to marshal international and domestic support. The US President adopted a particularly strident tone when speaking on the issue. For example on 7 October 2002 Bush observed that ‘Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction are controlled by a murderous tyrant who has already used chemical weapons to kill thousands of people.’ In this speech the President also announced a list of further Iraqi ventures in proscribed areas including the rebuilding of chemical and biological weapon production facilities, the possession of WMD capable ballistic missiles and UAVs, and the attempt to purchase nuclear bomb components. In making these assertions Bush relied on a recently compiled CIA assessment of Iraq’s WMD program. This document, while stressing a lack of specific information, claimed that Iraq had resumed manufacture of chemical weapons, stockpiled 500 tons of agents,


commenced production of biological weapons and reinvigorated its nuclear research program.\textsuperscript{46}

On 8 November 2002 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1441. The resolution called upon Iraq to accurately account for its WMD program and to provide UN inspectors with access. The resolution held Iraq under ‘material breach’ of its obligations under previous resolutions, termed this latest warning as a ‘final opportunity to comply’ and warned of ‘serious consequences’ if compliance did not occur.\textsuperscript{47}

In early February 2003 the US Secretary of State Colin Powell presented a detailed summary of Iraq’s refusal to disarm to the United Nations Security Council, in a final effort to gain international recognition for the coming conflict. In his speech Powell outlined Iraq’s resumption of WMD production, detailed the development of mobile biological research laboratories, and highlighted the continued undermining of the work of the UN inspectors. Powell summarised the situation facing the international community as, ‘Saddam Hussein and his regime have made no effort--no effort--to disarm as required…. Indeed, the facts and Iraq’s behavior show that Saddam Hussein and his regime

\textsuperscript{46} Huiskens, We Don’t Want the Smoking Gun to be a Mushroom Cloud, pp. 7-8.

are concealing their efforts to produce more weapons of mass
destruction.’48

On the eve of war Bush again reiterated the need to disarm
Iraq of its WMD and of Saddam’s connection to world-wide
terrorism. In an address to the nation Bush spelled out the
danger: ‘Intelligence gathered by this and other governments
leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and
conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised.’ He
continued, ‘The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or one
day, nuclear weapons obtained with the help of Iraq, the
terrorists could fulfil their stated ambitions and kill thousands
or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any
other.’49

In Australia the link between Iraq’s WMD and terrorism, the
need to disarm Saddam, and the responsibility to do so by force if
necessary, was also made explicit. Howard identified Iraq’s WMD as
a threat to the nation, especially if Saddam made his arsenal
available to terrorist organisations. The Prime Minister commented
that ‘if terrorists get their hands on weapons of mass destruction
that will … constitute a direct, undeniable and lethal threat to

48 Colin Powell, ‘Address to the UN Security Council,’ at

49 George W Bush, ‘President Says Saddam Hussein must leave Iraq within 48 hours: Remarks by the President in
(accessed 12 March 2008).
Australia and its people.’\textsuperscript{50} Howard accepted that if Iraq was allowed to retain its weapons of mass destruction then proliferation would occur and Australia’s vulnerability to ‘borderless’ terrorism would increase.\textsuperscript{51} For Howard the imperative to disarm Iraq was not just to prevent more ‘Bali Bombings’—which next time, he feared, would be of greater scale and on domestic soil—as he also saw Iraq as a threat to the international community. For example, Howard believed that if the world did not act then Saddam would continue to work towards an Iraqi nuclear capability. Moreover, he expected that once Saddam achieved this goal he would use these weapons to dominate the Middle East.\textsuperscript{52} The Prime Minister joined the President in concluding that they did not want a world in which WMDs were in the hands of the leaders of rogue states, a belief he repeated to the Australian Parliament to which he described it as ‘the ultimate nightmare’.\textsuperscript{53}

As will be discussed later in this book, the US WMD rhetoric was subsequently shown to be exaggerated and misinformed, and the intelligence assessments upon which it was based were to be judged


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} John Howard, ‘For and Against … The Iraq Debate,’ \textit{The Age}, 5 February 2003.

as faulty. A major review of the US intelligence failure in Iraq included a ‘hearty condemnation’ of those agencies involved. Some commentators have even argued that the war was brought about ‘under false pretenses,’ and it is now known that in 2003 Iraq no longer possessed an active WMD program. However, in early 2003 the situation was not nearly so clear, and most analysts accepted that the possession of WMDs remained a goal of the Iraqi regime. In September 2002 the independent Institute for Strategic Studies published a net assessment of Iraq’s WMD capability and highlighted that there ‘are widely divergent views on the magnitude of the threat.’ The point that needs to be made here is that from an operational planning perspective, as the decision point for war neared, the latent threat of WMD remained a key factor in Coalition considerations. Consequently, the risk posed by Iraq’s WMDs would have a significant influence on the formulation of the coming war’s strategy, operations and tactics.

The Howard Government and Australia’s Participation in the War


57 Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Net Assessment, p. 3.
If September 11 was a watershed event for the US President it was a ‘defining event’ for the Australian Prime Minister. On the day of the attack, John Howard was in Washington DC where he had been holding talks with the US President. Three days later Australia invoked the relevant provisions of the ANZUS Treaty, ‘an attack on the other partner would be dangerous to our own peace and safety and that we would act to meet the common danger ....’ In doing this, Howard also reaffirmed that Australia’s relationship with the United States was the keystone of its national security strategy.

Howard saw September 11 as more than just an attack on the United States, however. He perceived international terrorism as a threat to all nations; particularly those states that adhered to Western values and defended the rights of those committed to freedom and liberty of the individual. The 2002 Bali Bombing and the 2004 attack against the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, whose perpetrators had links to al-Qaeda, further highlighted the risk of terrorism to Western targets. In committing ADF forces to the war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, Howard did so in the belief that it was only proper that Australia

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59 Ibid.

share in the costs and risks of a global effort to eradicate terrorism.\textsuperscript{61}

As the crisis with Iraq developed over the course of 2002 the Howard Government made it clear that it shared with the United States the belief that Saddam Hussein posed a threat. In an address to the Australian Defence College the Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, juxtaposed Iraq’s possession of WMD with the possibility of their acquisition by terrorist organisations.\textsuperscript{62} As war neared, Howard outlined the case for Australian participation in a US-led Coalition. Speaking to the National Press Club he established a link between Saddam, international terrorism and the security of the Australian nation and its people. More broadly, the Prime Minister also saw a connection between Islamic extremism and hostility to the values of the West, of which Australia was a part.\textsuperscript{63} In announcing Australia’s commitment to the war, Howard highlighted Iraq’s WMD program and the ability of these weapons to cause ‘death and destruction on a mammoth scale,’ as well as the likelihood that these devices would make their way into the hands of international terrorists.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{64} John Howard, ‘Transcript of the Prime Minister The Hon John Howard MP: Address to the Nation,’ 20 March 2003, GET URL.
As was the case after September 11, Howard recognised that Australia’s alliance with the United States was a key factor in his government’s position towards Iraq. In this he was ‘unapologetic’ and admitted that ‘no nation is more important to our long-term security than that of the United States.’\(^65\) He accepted that as the United States had helped to defend Australia in the past, Australia had a long-term security interest in assisting its ally in its time of need. This relationship with the United States, the Prime Minister anticipated, would ‘grow more rather than less important.’\(^66\) In this the Prime Minister was correct and the Iraq crisis led to what one senior officer has termed a renaissance in the ANZUS relationship.\(^67\)

Too much, however, can be made of the ‘insurance policy’ aspects of the US-Australian security relationship. It is true that Australia must be seen as willing to help if it is to receive US support in times of its own need. However, there must still be national interest at stake, and it is for this reason that the Howard Government went to such great lengths to justify its participation in the war. Moreover, it would be unwise for the United States to ever assume that Australia would always help out,

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\(^67\) Interview Comments DDD.
and indeed Canberra did decline to participate in the intervention that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Yet Australia’s ties to the United States had depths of connection that went beyond those of a formal agreement. Australia’s defence relationship with the United States, as well as its traditional security ties with the United Kingdom, represented more than the dependency of a medium power on the protection of a great power. The three countries also shared similar philosophical and cultural values. These created a deeper rationale for Australia to join in the Coalition against Iraq, exceeding mere security self-interest. Alan Ryan has observed that Australia’s defence is inextricably linked with the fortunes of the United States and with other liberal democratic countries around the world. Despotic regimes, such as Saddam’s Iraq, were the antithesis of democratic values. From this angle, Australia’s participation in the war had an element of the safeguarding of its own values.

Supporting Howard’s decision to intervene was his determination to shift the government’s strategic policy focus away from his predecessor’s ‘Defence of Australia’ model. In issuing the 1997 White Paper the government signalled its desire to follow a more active policy that protected national interests, not just physical territory. Australia’s 1999 intervention in

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East Timor was the first evidence of this change. Although the Middle East was geographically distant from Australian shores, the Howard Government believed that critical national interests were still at stake. It was because of this that the Minister for Defence, Hill, was able to observe in June 2002 that the ‘defence of Australia and its interests does not stop at the edge of the air-sea gap.’

The Howard government did not share – at least not publicly – the Bush Administration’s avowed determination to topple the Saddam regime, however. When Howard broached the possibility of a deployment of personnel to the Middle East he insisted that they did not represent a commitment for war but rather an increase in diplomatic pressure, and that Australia would welcome a peaceful solution to the crisis. When he farewelled HMAS Kanimbla the Prime Minister termed its sailing as being part of an existing multinational maritime force – the RAN had maintained ships in the Persian Gulf under Operations DAMASK and SLIPPER since 1990. Still, he also acknowledged that circumstances could change,


71 Ibid.


bringing about the ship’s involvement in ‘wider operations’.74 Despite the rhetoric from Canberra, however, it is hard to imagine that as Australian troops arrived in the MEAO the Iraqi government could reach any other conclusion than that it was under imminent threat of attack.

Australia’s Strategic Objectives in the War against Iraq

While Australia had little influence on the development of US aims in the war against Iraq, the Howard Government did seek to set specific strategic objectives around which to shape the nation’s participation. This was an unusual development. In most of Australia’s previous conflicts – for example the Vietnam War – the Commonwealth normally ceded all strategic direction to a senior coalition partner. The result of this change in practice was that in the Iraq War ADF personnel operated under the influence of two interrelated but actually quite distinct strategic goals.

Strategy has many definitions, but in the context of Australia’s effort in the Iraq War the words of the distinguished historian Professor Michael Howard are particularly appropriate. He wrote that strategy concerns ‘the deployment and use of armed forces to attain a given political objective.’75 His words echoed those of B H Liddell Hart who had written earlier that strategy


was ‘the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy.’

As Michael Howard and Liddell Hart have suggested, in order to assess the effectiveness of Australia’s strategy in the war in Iraq it is necessary to determine if the country’s goals for going to war were met. Goals are defined as the objectives Australia planned to achieve in going to war. The means consist of the personnel, equipment, materials, monies and political capital allocated by the government to the task. At this point in this work it is only necessary to outline the goals the Howard Government sought to achieve by its decision to join in the invasion of Iraq with the United States.

It is the responsibility of the nation’s political leaders to decide a military operation’s strategic guidance. Once stated the ADF disseminates this guidance through a number of conventions. Australia termed these the:

- National Interest
- National Strategic Endstate
- Military Strategic Objective
- Military Strategic Endstate

Operation BASTILLE’s Concept of Operations identified the National Interest as:

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The AS National Interests are in Iraq disarming and eliminating its WMD program so that it no longer poses a threat to its neighbours or to global security.\(^{77}\)

The ADF also defined a series of Strategic Endstates and Strategic Objectives for Operation BASTILLE. The attainment of these Endstates would determine when Australia had achieved its strategic goals. The National Strategic Endstates were:

- Australia has met its domestic and regional security responsibilities.
- Australia has provided appropriate support to the US as an alliance partner.
- Australia has supported its international stance on WMD non-proliferation.
- Australia has protected its economic, trade and security interests in the Middle East.
- Australian citizens in the MEAO had been protected.\(^{78}\)

The ADF’s Military Strategic Objectives largely mirrored Australia’s National Interests – the need to provide a meaningful contribution in support of US military operations in Iraq and to

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\(^{78}\) Ibid.
assist in the elimination of the Iraqi WMD threat. However, the ADF advanced the further goals of remaining engaged militarily in the Australian region and retaining the ability to meet domestic and regional preparedness tasks.

The Military Strategic Endstate for Operation BASTILLE identified a number of conditions to achieve. They were:

- The ADF has met its domestic and regional security responsibilities.
- The ADF has provided a meaningful contribution to the US led contribution in the elimination of Iraqi WMD.
- Australian public support for the role of the ADF in actively supporting global security is maintained.
- Australian force elements assigned to operations in the MEAO have effected transition to routine operations, and returned to Australia or other AOs.\(^{79}\)

The features shaping Australia’s strategic guidance and endstate, as outlined above, can be simplified into a more concise list than that which is contained in the documentation. In effect, the core features of the strategic guidance that the government provided to the force elements deploying on Operation BASTILLE were that the ADF was to:

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
• help remove the Iraqi WMD threat;

• demonstrate support for Australia’s alliance with the United States;

• protect Australian interests and citizens in the MEAO;

• return deployed elements to Australia in order to reconstitute the force; and,

• in achieving these goals, the ADF was to retain its ability to meet its domestic and regional security responsibilities.

These observations are not presented in priority order, but, as will be seen below, certain points were clearly more important than others points.

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The difference in emphasis between the Australian and US National Interests never became a point of contention between the two allies. This was because the Howard Government was fully cognisant of the scope of the American objective, and was so informed by US officials from a quite early point in the operation’s development.  

81 Ibid.

Ibid., pp. 5-6.
s33(a)(ii) & s34(1)(a)&(b)  

s33(a)(iii) & s34(1)(a)&(b)  

s34(3)
ADHQ EWO W3/722 334

Ibid.
By early September 2002 Australia had good access to the emerging CENTCOM campaign plan. The evolving operation divided the war against Iraq into a series of stages. Six months later the discussion at a meeting of the Strategic Command Group highlighted Australia’s tacit acceptance of the US intent for Iraq and the Middle East. On the agenda was a review of COMAST’s draft of Operation BASTILLE’s CONOPS (Concept of Operations). The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, questioned the absence of any mention of ‘regime change’, because he explained the mission statement ‘will impact on what we can do’. The CDF’s reply to Leahy is not noted but the minutes do record Cosgrove directing that ‘subordinate orders do not need to include mention of “regime change”.’ Instead, he ordered that the ADF’s first endstate will be the need to meet domestic responsibilities. On 13 January 2003, when the CDF issued Operation BASTILLE’s ALERTO (Alert Order), it described the ADF’s contribution in terms of ‘support of US led coalition operations to remove the threat of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction.’

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88 AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 006 (as at 06 1900Z Sep 02).

89 ‘Minutes of Meeting of the Strategic Command Group,’ 14 December 2002, HQJOPS Files.

90 ‘Operation Bastille, Alerto 01/03,’ 13 January 2003.
Howard never identified the over-throwing of Saddam as one of Australia’s strategic objectives. Subsequently for the British the issue of WMDs became the justification for a war that had been decided upon on other terms. Unfortunately the Australian Prime Minister, however, could only obscure not escape the intent of US policy. For example, when the COMAST, Rear Admiral Mark Bonser, identified the US war goals in the CDF’s intent for Operation BASTILLE he overlooked key aspects of the senior coalition partner’s aim. He defined it as to ‘provide … a meaningful ADF contribution to support possible military action by a US-led coalition to remove the threat of Iraqi WMD.’ While Bonser was technically correct his words did not capture the full extent of US ambition. Even if Howard did not admit so publicly, as a quite junior member of a US-led Coalition the Australian Government had little choice but to accept the high probability that the conflict would result in the end of Baathist rule in Iraq. Once the war began, ADF personnel who engaged Iraqi forces did so under US operational command and by default in support of their ally’s desire to


92 For an example see, C249146, ‘COMAST EXECUTO 01/03 Operational Bastille Phase I (Deployment)’ 20 January 2003.
overthrow Saddam, no matter the sophistry of the more limited
Australian intent. Whereas directives, orders and documents
pertaining to Operation BASTILLE consistently described the
country’s participation in the war from the perspective of a need
to support United Nations disarmament efforts – and legitimised
its resort to military force by recourse to United Nations
Security Council Resolution 1441 – the true centre of gravity from
Canberra’s perspective was to not jeopardise the Washington
alliance.93

93 ‘Security Council Holds Iraq in “Material Breach” of Disarmament Obligations, Offers Final Chance to Comply,
Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1441,’ 8 November 2002, at
Warning for War

Australia received early warning that the United States was actively considering a war with Iraq. To facilitate the coordination of the Australian and US forces the Howard Government agreed to position a liaison element at HQ CENTCOM in October 2001. Shortly thereafter, then Brigadier Ken Gillespie arrived to establish an Australian National Command Element for Operation SLIPPER, the Australian designation for its participation in the Afghan War. The US term for this aspect of its response to the September 11 attacks was Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.
Gillespie’s objectives, therefore, was to raise Australia’s standing and influence within the Coalition.94

Gillespie subsequently deployed to [redacted] in order to be closer to the ADF forces then serving on Operation SLIPPER in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Persian Gulf. This proved a fortuitous move on Gillespie’s part as his office at the US-operated base was in close proximity to that of the commander of the US 3rd Army, Lieutenant General Paul T Mikolashek. The US general generously provided his Australian counterpart with full access to his headquarters.

While the ‘heads-up’ provided by Gillespie was Australia’s first step towards its joining the Coalition against Iraq, it was, in fact, not the first clue provided by the United States of the coming conflict. On 1 October 2001, a team of journalists led by Michael Hirsch revealed that the Pentagon Defence Policy Board had recommended that ‘Iraq should be targeted quickly after


95 Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, p. 27.
Afghanistan.96 The article also reported that within the Bush Administration there were numerous hard-liners pressing for a strike on Saddam.97 Less than a week after the publication of the Hirsch piece the US Ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte, delivered a letter to the Security Council confirming the commencement of operations in Afghanistan. The document included a statement of intent that the United States would act further as required in self-defence against ‘other organizations and other States.’98 The latent threat did not escape Iraq’s notice. Saddam’s Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, speaking ahead of a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference accused the United States of using the September 11 attacks as an opportunity to settle old scores.99 George Bush’s inclusion of Iraq in an ‘axis of evil,’ offered another thinly veiled hint.100


97 Ibid.


101 Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, p. 28.
The Minister for Defence, Robert Hill, provided the first overt suggestion that Australia might be willing to assist the United States in an unidentified and as of yet hypothetical military operation. In a June 2002 address at the Australian Defence College he referred to the possibility of terrorist organisations obtaining WMDs from Iraq. Hill observed that:

The United States is clearly no longer going to allow problems to fester and threats to remain unresolved. The need to act swiftly and firmly before threats become attacks is perhaps the clearest lesson of 11 September, and is one that is clearly driving US policy and strategy. It is a position which we share, in principle.¹⁰²

Within days of Hill’s address Australian representatives in Florida and received overtures from senior CENTCOM officers. Two days later the COMAST ASNCE, Brigadier Gary Bornholt, reported to the Head of the Strategic


¹⁰³ Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, p. 29.
The HSO summarised Bornholt’s report in a minute to the CDF, then still Admiral Chris Barrie, and the Minister for Defence. He pointed out that admittance to US planning compartments was critical if Australia was to remain aware of the developing US campaign plan. He also forecast that the Howard Government should anticipate the arrival of a CENTCOM request for the deployment of an Australian planning team to Tampa.\textsuperscript{104}

The Minister for Defence outlined these developments in a letter to the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} Minute, HSO to CDF and Minister for Defence, ‘Op Slipper: US Planning for Operations Against Iraq,’ June 2002. The document does not precisely identify who was the HSO as the transition from Air Vice Marshall Alan Titheridge to now Major General Kenneth Gillespie occurred at this time. Unfortunately, the document’s date is non-specific and given as Jun 02.

needed to investigate force options that might be available to support US operations against Iraq.\textsuperscript{106}

Also in June 2002, Australia, received an invitation to attend a high level briefing in Washington on planning for possible operations against Iraq. Barrie decided that Australia should be represented by the outgoing HSO, Air Vice Marshall Alan Titheridge, and his incoming successor Gillespie, now promoted major general. The two officers attended the Washington briefing on the 28\textsuperscript{th} and visited HQ CENTCOM the next day. This was Australia’s first official exposure to US planning for Iraq.\textsuperscript{107}

On 3 July 2002 General Peter Cosgrove took over from Barrie as CDF. Three days later he left for Tampa where he held discussions with the Commander of the US Special Operations Command, Major General Charles R Holland, and the Commander-in-Chief CENTCOM, Franks. Cosgrove informed Franks that he intended to withdraw Australia’s SAS contingent from Afghanistan. \textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} ‘QTB: Australian contingency Planning,’ 3 February 2003; and Horner and Rees, \textit{Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War}, pp. 29-30.

\textsuperscript{108} Horner and Rees, \textit{Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War}, p. 32.
Senior Australian officers also attended subsequent CENTCOM commanders’ conferences.

Attendance at these meetings provided the ADF with access to highly sensitive information that provided insight into the current state and direction of CENTCOM, planning as well as to the intent of its commander – Franks. More importantly, these briefings signalled potential problems that the ADF, and the wider bureaucracy in Canberra, had to address if Australian forces were to be in position to support the Coalition when – and if – the Howard Government decided to participate in a war with Iraq. After the September Commanders’ Conference, for example, Gillespie

109 ‘QTB: Australian contingency Planning,’ 3 February 2003; and Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, p. 34.


111 B252107, Minute, ‘Op Bastille Planning Team Details,’ 7 February 2003, p. 5.
prepared a report that summarised the key issues discussed. Among the points he highlighted were:

- s33(b)
- s33(a)(iii)
The ADF assigned the members of the Australian Planning Team – Tampa to CJTF 180, the organisation CENTCOM had established at Bagram Air Base near Kabul in Afghanistan to coordinate the US response to international terrorism in that region, and to which Australia had already embedded a team of four Army staff officers.114

The Team’s members began to arrive at HQ CENTCOM during the second half of August. Its commander was Brigadier McNarn who had


the title of Senior National Liaison Officer, US CENTCOM (SNLO). He arrived on 28 August, having spent a week in the Persian Gulf on a familiarisation tour. The team was largely an Army organisation with an initial establishment of 18, although it included RAN and RAAF personnel and one civilian member. As the tempo of US planning increased so did the Australian contingent, eventually reaching a maximum size of 32.

In addition, various augmentation teams conducted short-term visits to provide the Planning Team with specialist information. The Planning Team built upon an existing Australian COMAST LO presence at HQ CENTCOM that had been in place since before the activation of Operation SLIPPER.\(^{116}\)

The majority of the Planning Team’s members were based at HQ CENTCOM in Tampa, although some personnel served at CENTCOM component headquarters.\(^{117}\)


\(^{117}\) Ibid.
Cosgrove outlined McNarn’s duties in an appointment directive of 26 July 2002. The CDF explained that the purpose of the Planning Team was to McNarn’s instructions also covered several precautionary and procedural matters. Cosgrove made it quite clear that no member of the Planning Team had the authority to offer, or even to suggest, force elements that Australia might provide for a war against Iraq. The CDF also instructed McNarn to take into account the advice of his civilian member who was a policy adviser from the Defence’s SIP Division. In regards to reporting arrangements McNarn as the SNLO was to be the sole conduit for information sourced from CENTCOM. He was to pass material on current operations in the Middle East to the COMAST through the CENTCOM LO, whereas information on other operations was to be sent directly to the Head Strategic Command Division for the CDF’s attention. In addition, McNarn was to keep the Head, Australian Defence Staff (Washington), Major General Simon Willis, informed of developments. In his conclusion, Cosgrove once again stressed

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120 Ibid.
the sensitivity of the Planning Team’s mission and that ‘special care must be taken not to make a commitment of ADF forces or to offer an indication of what the ADF might provide without guidance from CDF.’ However, despite any government announcement regarding the commitment of forces, McNarn worked under the assumption that the war was on and that Australia would be present.

Cosgrove slightly modified his intent on 15 August. In a new Directive he outlined the Planning Team’s mission as to:

- gather information on the US requirements to assist GOAS in determining if a contribution might be made to coalition operations against Iraq and subsequently, should Government so direct, to plan for the integration into the US led coalition of any ADF contribution.

In fulfilling this goal the CDF again reiterated that all members of the Team were to ‘ensure no commitment, or indicative commitment, of AS forces is to be offered without specific instructions and direction from CDF.’

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121 Ibid.
122 Comments by Interview Subject OO.
124 Ibid.
The CDF took the opportunity of the new directive to clarify McNarn’s reporting path. He now explicitly mentioned SLIPPER by name and instructed McNarn to report all matters on it to the COMAST. However, information on what Cosgrove termed ‘OP SLIPPER sequels or operations in a new Middle-East Area of Operations’ were to be sent to the CDF via the Head Strategic Command.\textsuperscript{125}

The CDF’s reporting directions effectively removed the COMAST from the line-of-communications for non-SLIPPER related operations. This decision requires some explanation since the command of operations was the responsibility of HQ Australian Theatre, and the COMAST would expect to play a leading role in the development of any plans for war. There are a number of potential explanations for Bonser’s exclusion which in concert explain Cosgrove’s control of the reporting chain. It should be remembered that Bonser had only recently become the COMAST, having taken over the position only in June. Newness in the job, however, is not a convincing excuse for Bonser’s being bypassed since the CDF’s treatment of Gillespie who was also new in his position as Head Strategic Operations Command and yet was given tremendous responsibilities by Cosgrove in the planning and management phases of the war. Compounding Bonser’s situation as COMAST was that he was in the unenviable position of being equal - or even junior - in rank to his subordinate maritime, air and land component.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
commanders and Cosgrove might have sought to reduce the possibility for inter-personal friction.\textsuperscript{126}

Another factor shaping Cosgrove’s command and control decision was that the CDF was aware that the planning and conduct of the war, the negotiations with CENTCOM on the nature of Australia’s contribution (if any at this stage), the management of the ADF’s relationship with the US military, and the shaping of public opinion were issues that rightly belonged in the strategic domain. This, of course, was the CDF’s responsibility as he was the strategic adviser to the government. Thus, the CDF believed that he had to have direct control over much of the operation’s development at this stage, especially the unimpeded flow of information.

Cosgrove also knew from his experience in the East Timor Intervention that the Government would have a great interest in the coming conflict. In fact, the command and control chain that Cosgrove decided upon for Iraq bore a great deal of similarity to the one employed by the then CDF, Admiral Chris Barrie, for INTERFET. David Horner has observed that due to that operation’s international nature, Barrie changed the chain of command so that his field commander – Cosgrove – reported directly to him. More directly, Barrie placed Cosgrove under his command. The effect was to cut out from the reporting chain the then COMAST, Air Vice-Marshal Robert Treloar. In addition, Barrie’s key subordinate

\textsuperscript{126} Horner and Rees, \textit{Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War}, pp. 96-97.
became the head of the Strategic Command Division, who at that time was Major General Mike Keating. In planning for Iraq Cosgrove largely replicated the same command and control arrangements that had proven effective for the East Timor intervention.\textsuperscript{127}

The consequence of Cosgrove’s action was the marginalisation of the COMAST’s position in the management of the war in Iraq. Bonser never recovered from his “sidelining” from the information chain, and Cosgrove instead built on his direct relationship with McNarn as the war developed. Consequently, the key command and control node in the war’s conduct became Gillespie as Head Strategic Command Division (later Strategic Operations) who reported directly to Cosgrove. As one senior officer commented, ‘Bonser was irrelevant.’\textsuperscript{128}

McNarn sent back to Gillespie and on to Cosgrove frequent situation reports. These covered a host of matters including issues such as access to bases in the MEAO, and the state of US equipment and ammunition shortages. However, the most important details he provided were those that dealt with the direction of CENTCOM planning and the anticipation of what assets the United States hoped Australia would provide.\textsuperscript{533(a)(iii)}

\textsuperscript{127} David Horner, ‘Deploying and Sustaining INTERFET in East Timor in 1999,’ in Peter Dennis & Jeffrey Grey, Raise, Train and Sustain: Delivering Land Combat Power, Canberra, Army History Unit, pp. 204-29; and Bob Breen, Struggling for Self Reliance: Four Case Studies of Australian Regional Force Projection in the Late 1980s and the 1990s, Canberra, SDSC – Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, no. 171 (2008), p. 138.

\textsuperscript{128} Comments by Interview Subject OO.
The reception provided by CENTCOM staff to the Australians was a highly positive one. By formally committing to the provision of planners Australia signalled to the United States that it was part of the team, albeit a tentative one that had not yet provided confirmation of its intentions. The result of even this qualified degree of commitment to the war, however, was that CENTCOM commanders allowed McNarn’s team into the heart of the US planning process and Australian officers worked on real, even critical, problems. McNarn provided an early assessment of the welcome he received in Tampa. He wrote:

Although he cautioned, ‘Some answers we want they do not have.’

Controlling the Plan: Commitment and the Compartment

Those personnel involved in the planning for the coming war with Iraq worked under a number of restrictions that, while making their task more complex, were essential for the preservation of

129 ‘AS Planning Team Centcom Sitrep 002 (as at 30 2000Z) August 02 - Plan Bastille’.
the conflict’s operational security and the achievement of the government’s intent. The most significant of these impediments were the Howard Government’s reluctance to provide the Bush Administration with an early commitment to the war, and the necessity of limiting the number of people inside the ‘compartment,’ the group responsible for conducting the operation’s planning.

From the point of first approach by the United States in mid-2002 through to the eve of the conflict’s commencement, the Australian Government maintained a policy of non-commitment to the war against Iraq. Right through the entire planning, force preparation and deployment phases Canberra refused to make any formal decision for war, and retained the right to step back from the brink right up to the onset of hostilities. For those personnel involved in preparations for what was to become known first as Plan and later Operation BASTILLE, especially those working inside CENTCOM establishments, engagement with US planners was done under the mandate of ‘prudent planning.’ What is meant by this term is that while Australian military personnel did undertake planning for a war with Iraq, neither the United States nor other Coalition parties should conclude that such planning represented a commitment to the conflict. Reinforcing the idea of prudent planning was the government decision to explicitly limit the scope of Operation BASTILLE to that of the deployment to the

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130 For an example of the use of this phrase see, HQAST 445-17-172 Pt2, ‘COMAST’ s Concept of Operations for Plan Bastille – ADF Operations in Iraq,’ 10 January 2003.
MEAO, ROS&l, and training for potential coalition operations. If the government did decide to authorise a transition to war-fighting the ADF would have then had to designate a new operation.\(^\text{131}\)

Whenever the CDF and COMAST issued directives or orders on Operation BASTILLE their instructions invariably contained a clause that stated that nothing presented in the document should be taken by its readers to infer or be construed as a commitment to a conflict against Iraq. For example, the COMAST issued his Warning Order for Operation BASTILLE in the context that such ‘force preparation is prudent preparation and does not signify that GOAS has given agreement to the commitment of identified ADF FE to operations in support of a US led coalition against Iraq.’\(^\text{132}\) Even after troops arrived in the MEAO the Australian Government continued to qualify its participation in any possible conflict, although it is unclear if the Iraqi Government made such a distinction.\(^\text{133}\)


\(^{132}\) ‘COMAST Warning Order 01 Plan Bastille,’ 6 December 2002.

Coalition increased its pressure upon Iraq, Australia maintained its distance from a formal commitment to war by describing its deployment to the MEAO as being ‘in support of current diplomatic efforts against Iraq.’\textsuperscript{134}

The Australian Planning Team’s instructions stated that their responsibility was limited to the identification of possible options for Australian involvement in the MEAO. In turn, Planning Team personnel made it quite clear to their CENTCOM opposites that they should not misconstrue their presence as a commitment by the Australian government to military operations against Iraq.\textsuperscript{135}

However, without a remarkable and unlikely capitulation by Saddam, war was the most probable outcome in the dispute between the United States and Iraq, and the probability of Australia’s participation in the conflict grew more likely as time passed. This was a reality that the ADF’s leaders recognised, and for which they planned accordingly.\textsuperscript{136}

While the lack of a formal commitment to the war made integration with US planners awkward, the smallness and relatively late expansion of the planning compartment held more serious complications for planners. The formation of a compartment to


\textsuperscript{136} ‘Minutes of Meeting of the Strategic Command Group,’ 14 December 2002, HQJOPS Files.
conduct planning for the war with Iraq was a sensible step in protecting the mission’s operational security and those who had been made privy to the process were well aware that a compromise of information could result not only in a loss of life but also in damage to Australia’s privileged position within the Coalition. What may be questioned, however, are the compartment’s size and the rate of its expansion.

At its commencement the planning compartment was intentionally kept quite small. It consisted of just 60 personnel who included the CDF, the Secretary, the service chiefs, the COMAST, staff from the Strategic Operations Division, HQAST and the service headquarters. Restricting the movement of information further among this small group was that different officers had different access privileges. Access to the compartment was controlled by the HSO - Gillespie.\textsuperscript{137}

While limited membership helped to maintain the compartment’s security it smallness did have a negative effect on the planning process. At HQ AST, for example, only one logistician was ‘in the know’ for far too long in the operation’s development. The small size of the compartment also meant that its members could not consult with their colleagues or with specialists at other agencies. This made the analysis of technical data difficult because the subject matter specialist was often not in the compartment, and, as a result, errors did occur. For example, the

\textsuperscript{137} Horner and Rees, \textit{Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War}, p. 37.
planners did not realise that the wartime establishment of RAN vessels was higher than that used for peacetime, which resulted in the Government being presented with a lower and incorrect personnel figure for approval. In another example, compartment members were unable to consult with contractors and suppliers regarding the ability of industry to mitigate Australian shortfalls in equipment.

At times the challenges facing those within the compartment must have garnered a farcical appearance. Successful planning requires access to information, yet the objective of compartmentalisation is to restrict such access. To overcome this contradiction compartment members had to resort to opaque language or requests of the knowledge holder that they not ask why the planner needed to know.

Perhaps the greatest problem of the compartment was that for an overly long time period its focus was on the operation’s strategic dimension. Tactical planning, by contrast, began last and very late in the planning process. The result was that deploying force elements had to truncate the time available for planning as they rushed to complete the myriad other tasks that had to be completed prior to moving overseas. In addition, as one of the prime purposes of the compartment was to protect the Government’s freedom of action the effect was to funnel tactical level information into the Strategic Command Division, at which
point it was lost to those personnel involved in the day-to-day preparation of force elements for deployment.\textsuperscript{138}

In his post operation report the Commander to the Special Forces Task Group (SFTG), Brigadier Michael Hindmarsh, commented on the rigidness of the compartment and the severe consequences it had for his tactical level planning. For example, the compartment members in the Special Forces community were unable to engage with the members of their own Combat Service Support Group and, as a result, they played no role in the design of their support organisation. This was not unusual, unfortunately - the commander of the SFTG Combat Service Support Group himself was not involved in setting the establishment of his own unit. This was done by HQ AST planners.\textsuperscript{139}

At times the effect of the Australian government’s reluctance to commit to the war openly and the rigidity of the compartment combined to hinder timely planning. The SFTG commander understood that the Howard Government wanted to retain maximum flexibility before committing to a military option. This, however, had the effect of creating gaps in planning between Australians and their counterparts at CENTCOM. The status of Special Forces’s planning highlights the potential for such a disjunction to develop.\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{139} Ibid; and information provided by interview subject T.
Chapter 3
Preparing for War

Basing in the MEAO

Under Operation SLIPPER, the Australian contribution to the US-led operation against international terrorism, the ADF had maintained a small foot-print ashore in the MEAO. Combined, both facilities typically contained less than 20 personnel. Since Operation BASTILLE would require a much larger ADF presence in the MEAO the Howard Government had to secure more extensive basing rights in the region. Basing rights was a ‘war-stopper’. Without the consent of at least some of the Middle East’s sovereign states the ADF would be unable to participate in operations against Iraq, except perhaps in a limited maritime capacity.

Under international practice there are several types of intra-state instruments that define the rights and privileges of a nation utilising the territory of a host country for military

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141 Information for this section provided by interview subjects M & N.
purposes. The Australian Government recognises three levels of such instruments, each of which have different characteristics. They are:

1) Those that are legally binding in international law; are concluded between countries, the governments of countries, or international organisations; are preferably called ‘agreements’ or ‘treaties’; contain mandatory language; and are unclassified.

2) Those that are legally binding in the domestic law of a country or part of a country; are concluded between parties which are legal entities under that domestic law; are preferably called ‘agreements’ or ‘contracts’; contain mandatory language; and may be classified.

3) Those that are not legally binding in international law or a domestic law but are politically and morally binding only; can be concluded between any parties; are preferably called ‘arrangements’ or ‘memorandums of understanding’; do not contain mandatory language; and may be classified.\textsuperscript{142}

The most encompassing type of these instruments, and typically the most time consuming to negotiate, are called Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA). Under the Australian definitions outlined above a SOFA level instrument falls under level one. The other degrees

\textsuperscript{142} Defence Instruction (General), ADMIN 48-1. ‘International Agreements and Arrangements,’ 3 November 1996.
of international instruments falling in levels two and three are less far-reaching, easier and faster to negotiate, and, most importantly, may be kept secret if deemed necessary.

Although the ADF did not enjoy SOFA arrangements for its forces deployed to the MEAO its MOUs provided SOFA-like values which were adequate to ensure Australia’s participation in the coming conflict. Neither, however, was willing to negotiate any formal arrangement for ADF
144 B99249, ‘Update on Basing Requirements in the Middle East,’ 10 December 2002.


158 Albert Palazzo, Deploy, Sustain, Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq, Canberra, Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2008, pp. 82-83.
s33(a)(iii)

159 Ibid., p. 82.
On 1 March 2003 the approximate rate of conversion between the two currencies was 1 AUD =
He then continued:

Offshore operation requiring basing in other countries requires a long lead-time for planning ....I strongly recommend that the current SOFA and MOU with the Middle East Nations be maintained and grown to ensure standing arrangement remain in place in an area of likely operations for the ADF.162

It is hard to challenge Hindmarsh’s and Bonser’s assessments or their conclusions.


164 See, B952403, ‘COMAST ROEREQ Serial One – MEOA Force Protection ROE,’ 24 January 2003. An identical version that was issued by the CDF can be found at B249749. It is dated 20 February 2003.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.

The Strategic Lift Choke-point

Prudent Planning created considerable complications for the ADF’s planners which from the Army’s perspective were not offset by the political benefits it provided to the Howard Government. This was particularly true in the realm of force projection, a complex area that typically required large lead-times and carried major financial implications. Further complicating the movement plan for Operation BASTILLE was the RAN’s limited strategic sealift capacity and the RAAF’s complete absence of strategic transport assets. The consequence of prudent planning and the ADF’s lack of strategic transport was Australia’s dependence on movement assets that it did not control.

The ADF organisation that manages force projection is 1 JMOVGP. Its commander during the lead-up to Operation BASTILLE was Group Captain Andrew Kilgour. The movers at 1 JMOVGP knew that strategic lift was a “war-stopper”. If Kilgour’s staff could not organise the necessary transport within the operational time-frame then the ADF would not participate in the war with Iraq, or if it still did so, at a minimal, probably maritime, level.

At the direction of the CDF 1 JMOVGP developed a number of options for the deployment of the force to the MEAO. Each option balanced the reliance on non-ADF lift, risk profile and operational acceptability. The CDF’s request came about from the

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169 Parts of this section are taken from the author’s Deploy, Sustain Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq, pp. 76-81.
16 October 2002 meeting of the SCG at which its members discussed the engagement of commercial airlift. The SCG also wanted Kilgour to identify the ‘last safe moment’ at which the ADF could negotiate contracts with transport providers (based on the then assumed deployment date of 15 December).¹⁷⁰

The movers proposed four options, each representing a mix of Australian, United States, and contractor assets. By contrast option one, the only option that did not rely on any USAF lift assets (a real possibility given the demand by US deploying elements on their own transport), called for a 95 day deployment sequence. This was the worst case situation and deployment planners knew that it meant that Australian forces would arrive in theatre so late that they were unlikely to make a meaningful contribution to the war with Iraq, thereby undercutting the Howard Government’s objective of providing visible support to the United States.¹⁷¹

All four options, however, suffered from a high degree of uncertainty. For operational security reasons the movement


¹⁷¹ Ibid. and ‘Summary of Movement Appreciation,’ n.d.
planners were not able to consult with the deploying force elements. This meant that the planners did not have accurate Deployment Planning Data Sheets (DPDS). In fact, the movers did not have any data at all for the RAAF’s Expeditionary Combat Support Squadrons (ECSS), and for the SFTG the movers received no DPDS data and they assessed the level of confidence in the currency of the information that they did have on hand as ‘low’. In addition, the lift requirement for the HQ ASN-MEAO was given as ‘unknown.’\textsuperscript{172} The movers’ planning also did not include the requirements for the PC-3A aircraft of 92 Wing, whose transfer to the MEAO predated the development of Operation BASTILLE and which was to take place as a part of Operation SLIPPER. The lack of this information meant that the planners could not accurately predict the amount of cargo that the force elements needed the movers to ship to the MEAO, or the time frame and flow sequence in which the equipment had to arrive. Thus all of the options that 1 JMOVGP developed at this time could only be considered ‘first cut’ planning, despite the rather late date on which the analysis commenced. The reality was that the movers were planning in the dark.

RAAF assets the deployment timeline would be extensive and the CH-47 detachment would have to remain in Townsville. To deploy just the SFTG, less the helicopters, required 25 to 30 C130 loads for the equipment and 22 C130 loads for the vehicles. Moreover, 1 JMOVGP would still have to charter 2 AN-124s for the SFTG’s over-dimension items. If the helicopters were to reach the MEAO then a further nine C130s and 3 Antonov sorties were needed.\(^{173}\) The movers also noted that the deployment would have to be done sequentially.

The staff of 1 JMOVGP did not ignore the benefits of movement by sea and they investigated the possibility of accessing US augmentation sealift, the use of contractor shipping, and the more intensive use of the RAN’s LPAs. Lastly, they also identified a requirement to obtain access to USAF KC-10 air-to-air refuelling fleet for use by the RAAF’s squadron of F/A-18 planes during their transit to the Middle East.\(^{174}\)

Part of the movers’ craft is the responsibility to balance cost with time. While sea transport is relatively cheap it was only feasible for Operation BASTILLE if the government provided the assigned force elements with sufficient notice to deploy. While the various sealift possibilities that the movers investigated were clearly cheaper than any airlift arrangement, they had to concede that the long timeline required by ships made this a problematic choice. Sea movement was doable only with an

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early Government decision, which was not forthcoming. Yet, as late as mid-November 2002, 1 JMOVGP staff continued to monitor the regional availability of commercial Roll-On/Roll-Off vessels, even though by that point these ships were at best a long-shot option as the ADF needed between six and nine weeks notice just to arrange a charter. 175

The reality was that time constraints and the Government’s reluctance to confirm the deployment meant that the movers had little choice but to focus their efforts on the most expensive option — air transport. In the end the only sea-lift that the ADF would use for Operation BASTILLE was the limited capacity of the Kanimbla. In any case the ship was even less useful than the movers had originally hoped. Once the RAN decided to take two of the Army’s LCM8s to the North Arabian Gulf the Kanimbla needed its deck space to carry the landing craft. 1 JMOVGP planners had anticipated using the deck for shipping containers carrying sustainment stores, and once they became aware of its unavailability they had to source additional air transport. The only stores that the Kanimbla carried were the Commander’s Reserve of NBC equipment and clothing, and the vehicles and stores allocated to the LCM8 detachment and CDT-3. 176

In order to deploy the force it was essential for 1 JMOVGP to enter into discussions with the United States Transportation

175 Email, ‘Strat Movt – Plan Bastille,’ 14 November 2002.

176 Ibid.
Command (USTRANSCOM) for the provision of USAF air lift capacity, and the coordination of ADF’s requirements into the Coalition’s strategic air movement plan.  

The ADF did incur some risks in using TRANSCOM to meet its strategic air lift requirements. The primary one was fiscal since


178 ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 020 (as at 08 1900Z Sep 02).}
the ADF might still have to pay for any aircraft which TRANSCOM had arranged and which it did not use, particularly if Australia chose not to commit to the war. The ADF would also have to coordinate its force flow to the MEAO with the availability of the aircraft provided by TRANSCOM. However, the potential problems in using TRANSCOM were more than offset by some additional benefits, in addition to the availability of planes. By using TRANSCOM 1 JMOVGP simplified access to landing slots at airbases in the MEAO and had authorised space on crowded aprons for the unloading of the deployment’s cargo. The involvement of TRANSCOM also helped to maintain the ADF’s operational security of the developing plan. To facilitate these arrangements 1 JMOVGP maintained a liaison officer at HQ TRANSCOM.¹⁷⁹

1 JMOVGP also employed Adagold, an air charter company, to source some of the requisite charter aircraft. Adagold’s primary subcontractor was Volga-Dnepr, which provided the Ilyushin 76 and Antonov 124 aircraft that flew between Perth and the Middle East. The ADF already had a considerable commercial relationship with Adagold, and these types of planes, as 1 JMOVGP used them for the sustainment flights it chartered for Operation SLIPPER. Adagold also contracted the Boeing 727s used to transfer cargo between Richmond and Perth. Lastly, Adagold arranged Boeing 757s from Air Holland for the transport of personnel. Qantas also provided some aircraft capacity for personnel and freight carriage. TRANSCOM was

responsible for organising the thirteen Boeing 747 (freighter) flights from commercial suppliers, as well as providing the USAF C-5 and C-17 aircraft. In addition to contract hire, JMOVGP also made use of scheduled commercial flights, especially Emirates Airlines. The RAN, due to its long presence in the Persian Gulf, had an existing relationship with Emirates. The RAN continued to ship cargo with this carrier throughout Operations BASTILLE, FALCONER and CATALYST.

Table 3.1 outlines the strategic lift that the ADF required for Operation BASTILLE.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Flights</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>C-130</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boeing 707</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAF</td>
<td>C-17</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C-5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>Il-76</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An-124</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>Boeing 747</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Boeing 747 (freighter)</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boeing 757</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boeing 767</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The cost of these charters was in excess of AUD 69 million. USAF also provided KC-10 aircraft to refuel the RAAF’s F/A-18 Squadron as it flew to the MEAO.

Despite their limited lift capacity JMOVGP made heavy use of RAAF transport aircraft. The RAAF employed its C-130 and Boeing
707 aircraft primarily for the carriage of materials that were not suitable for movement by a foreign military plane or commercial carrier. This included dangerous goods, such as explosive ordnance, and items that due to security concerns could only travel on an Australian military aircraft, principally secure communication and cryptographic devices. Their shorter range of these aircraft did require them to take a longer route with more stops for re-fueling, but all arrived without incident.

Another problem with this plan, although of lesser magnitude, was that the RAN decided that it could not spare the second LPA from its already scheduled participation in Operation RELEX II.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{180} Email, ‘Strategic Movements in Support of Plan BASTILLE,’ 13 November 2002.

The ADF’s dependence on commercial aircraft companies for transport for a military operation did pose additional problems that would not have been present if the RAAF had possessed a strategic lift capability of its own. There were no guarantees that a commercial carrier would agree to fly into the ADF’s preferred air-point.

Two other critical issues for airlines were liability for staff and equipment and the potential for damage to brand-names. These were not new concerns. In 1997, the Strategic Logistic Branch negotiated a memorandum of understanding with Qantas and Ansett Airlines that provided blanket indemnity. In 1999, this was followed by a standing offer from Qantas for the fast-tracking of charter requests.

182 Email, ‘TAPG Bastille,’ 10 December 2002.
This was a critical matter, a real ‘war-stopper’. The crisis point came in January 2003 when the Government announced its decision to send troops to the Middle East. At that point negotiations with Qantas were still underway. In fact, the first Qantas-borne load of personnel left Australia before the new agreement’s finalisation. Qantas undertook the flight under a one-off indemnity. A new agreement went into effect shortly afterwards, assuring the ADF’s access to the Qantas fleet, but this was a close-run thing.

Getting the Army’s CH-47 helicopters to the MEAO by air proved a challenging exercise for the staff of 1 JMOVGP and 5 Aviation Regiment. At the time the Army did not have much experience in this task, nor the specialist equipment required to secure these large helicopters into the cargo hold of a transport plane. An essential item that the Army required, but which it did not own, was called an air transportation kit. This consisted of a frame on which the fuselage of a Chinook rested and storage crates for the disassembled rotors, engines and gear boxes. The ADF looked into borrowing such kits from the United States and the
United Kingdom but as a precaution it also investigated the possibility of having them manufactured locally.\textsuperscript{184}

The records do not reveal if the ADF did approach the United States but contact with the United Kingdom did take place. On 12 December 2002 Gillespie wrote to the Head of Britain’s Joint Helicopter Force, Air Vice Marshal P. D. Luker, to ask if his organisation had any spare transportation kits. If yes, Gillespie offered to arrange their movement to Australia and their return to Britain. The HSO also informed Luker that he had asked the Head of the Australian Defence Staff - London to raise the matter on a government-to-government basis.\textsuperscript{185}

By the time Gillespie contacted Luker the ADF had already engaged a Townsville based company to produce three kits. Gillespie’s approach had become the back-up option and was made out of concern that the Australian company might not be able to produce them in time. The cause of this worry, however, had more to do with the inability of 1 JMOVGP to provide the manufacture with a definite completion date than with the efficiency of the firm’s workers. The Howard Government continued to handicap the movement plan through its reluctance to confirm the force’s commitment to the war, and to authorise a firm deployment plan. Thus the movers could not ask the firm to authorise overtime nor to work through its normal Christmas break because they were not

\textsuperscript{184} B763786, ‘CH47 Notes’, (?) November 2002.

\textsuperscript{185} B99357, ‘Major General K J Gillespie, HSO to Air Vice Marshal P D Luker, Head Joint Helicopter Force,’ 12 December 2002.
sure of the absolute final departure date, nor even if the transportation kits would in the end be needed at all. Moreover, had the movers gone ahead and authorised an accelerated work pace – particularly to work through Christmas – it would have raised the community’s interest, which might in turn have led to the Government’s embarrassment. In fact the movers agreed that they had to ‘go softly on the amount of push we apply to the local company given we still have no Government commitment.’\(^\text{186}\) It was these factors, therefore, which compelled 1JMOVGP to seek alternative sources, and as a precaution to examine the requirements of shipping the transportation kits from the United Kingdom.\(^\text{187}\)

In the end the locally made transportation kits were completed in time, and the Chinooks moved directly to the MEAO from their base in Townsville in USAF C-17 aircraft.

There is little doubt that with more time 1JMOVGP would have made greater use of sea transport due to its cost benefit over air transport. However, the Government’s refusal to provide the ADF with a precise timeline denied this option. Working under ‘prudent planning’ guidelines, the movers had to plan movement dates ‘in advance of Government decisions and before lift requirements were finalised.’ US movers at TRANSCOM were aware of the handicaps under which 1 JMOVGP worked, and tried to be flexible in

\(^{186}\) Email, ‘CH47 Air Transportation Stands,’ 10 December 2002.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.
committing resources and fitting flight schedules to Australian requirements. However, the two nations did reach the point where Australia’s tentative plans either had to go ahead or face cancellation.

Because of its unwillingness to make an early announcement of the nation’s participation, the Howard Government boxed itself into a corner, while at the same time abdicating one of its few strategic decision opportunities to the United States. TRANSCOM had to coordinate a worldwide movement of US forces to the MEAO. This required the careful management of an extremely scarce resource, namely strategic air lift. The need to rely on the United States slowly forced 1 JMOVGP’s movement plan into a narrow window of opportunity during which the United States was able to provide the necessary transport. The Howard Government, therefore, had to make its decision by a deadline that, in effect, was set by the rigidity of the campaign plan of the United States. If Howard failed to make an announcement by that point, Australia would not have access to the necessary air capacity, and would have no choice but to leave the Army at home and limit its contribution to a maritime presence. A post-activity report concluded that the Government must decide upon its plans at the earliest opportunity, otherwise it was likely that circumstance, including aircraft availability, would determine deployment dates.

The Inoculation Program
Perhaps the most controversial and poorly thought out aspect of Operation BASTILLE’s planning was the ADF’s vaccination program. It was also one of the most critical aspects of force preparation that the ADF had to get right – it was another “war stopper” in its own right. If the ADF could not protect its forces from biological attack the deployment would probably not have gone ahead. The two diseases that concerned planners most were anthrax and smallpox. Both were deadly, readily dispersed, and had the potential to cause mass casualties. The planners believed that Iraq had produced militarised strains of anthrax and possibly smallpox, and they accepted that Saddam might use them if the

of investigating enemy bases, munitions facilities, and storage bunkers, particularly if they discovered any clandestine WMD dumps. It was for similar reasons that the members of the UN Inspection Teams had been inoculated against a number of diseases.

This was not the ADF’s first inoculation program brought about by the risk of exposure to biological weapons. The ADF had mandated vaccination for smallpox during Operation SLIPPER, but

only for the ground troops based in Afghanistan. This limited the program’s applicability primarily to members of the SASR. The experience of this earlier program was memorable because many SAS troopers suffered an unexpectedly severe and painful reaction to the serum.

The disease Anthrax is caused by bacteria called Bacillus anthracis. In its non-weaponised form humans contract the disease through contact with infected animals, wool, meat and hides. It typically takes the form of a skin disease whose symptoms are skin ulcers, fever and fatigue, and if untreated it has a fatality rate of approximately 20 per cent, which with treatment drops to just one per cent. Anthrax takes a much more dangerous form when dispersed as an aerosol, as is the method when employed as a weapon. Inhaled into the lungs the victim initially shows minor symptoms that may include a sore throat, mild fever and muscle aches. However, within a few days the symptoms become more serious and include severe problems with breathing, shock, high fever, and inflammation of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) culminating in death. Once any of these symptoms appear the disease is almost always fatal. Because of the possibility of exposure and due to the disease’s high mortality rate there was a clear need to inoculate deploying personnel against anthrax.

Treatment of non-vaccinated victims must begin as soon after exposure as possible, if there is to be any chance of preventing death. Treatment is typically with a range of powerful antibiotics. However, the degree — if any — of the reduction in
the disease’s severity in non-vaccinated populations that results from the timely application of antibiotics is unclear, and there is no compelling proof that supports treatment with antibiotics, largely because of the dearth of opportunity for human trials. The COMAST ADMININST for Operation BASTILLE admitted that once symptoms present themselves the ‘efficacy of antibiotic treatment is very poor.’\textsuperscript{189} Therefore this treatment option derived from the considered judgement that antibiotics might be of use in countering an infection because simply there were no other options. What can be stated is that, at the time of this writing, there have been some positive indications from the treatment of infected animals with antibiotics.\textsuperscript{190}

Smallpox is a viral illness that is caused by the Variole virus and it is one of the great scourges of mankind. Its presence in the human population dates to approximately 10,000 BC and even well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century it was responsible for the death of millions of victims a year. If untreated, the fatality rate from the disease is approximately 30 per cent of the exposed population. Even in a vaccinated population the fatality rate is still about 3 per cent.\textsuperscript{191}

Although smallpox no longer occurs in nature – the World Health Organisation certified its eradication in 1979 – it remains

\textsuperscript{189} C4872999, ‘Anthrax Information: Appendix 1 to Annex E to HQAST ADMINIST 005/03,’ 15 July 2003.

\textsuperscript{190} ‘Anthrax Vaccine: What You Need to Know,’ US Department of Health and Human Services: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (April 2003); and Interview Subject G.

\textsuperscript{191} B121663, ‘Smallpox Vaccination Plan,’ 16 December 2002.
an attractive WMD and there is fear among bio-security theorists that weaponised strains remain in the inventory of certain states.

On 13 December 2002 the United States announced a widespread vaccination program for its military personnel, although prioritising its Special Forces. The United States would also inoculate against Plague.192

Interestingly, even though smallpox was responsible for some of the greatest plagues that mankind has faced, ADF planners regarded it as the lesser of the two potential Iraqi biological threats. Australia was to prove hesitant to initiate a universal smallpox inoculation regime. In its final form the ADF’s health plan required only those personnel with a heightened risk of exposure to the disease to receive the vaccine. In effect, this limited the vaccination program to select members of the SFTG, primarily those serving in the NBC Troop that had been drawn from the IRR. What signalled out the NBC Troop’s members for smallpox vaccination was that they were responsible for the conduct of sensitive sight exploitation, the provision of biological hazard

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warning and reporting, and the carrying-out of limited detection and decontamination of organic materials. The operational requirement to perform these tasks meant that the troop’s members were at a greater risk of exposure to smallpox than was the case for other personnel.¹⁹³

There were also a number of policy considerations that influenced the ADF’s smallpox vaccination decision-making. The key ones were:

2) The complete lack of holdings within Australia of a critical smallpox adjunct vaccine — Vaccinia Immune Globulin or VIG. ¹⁹³

VIG was used to treat a sometimes fatal adverse reaction to the smallpox vaccine. It was the recommendation of Defence Health that VIG be available prior to the commencing of a smallpox vaccination program in case soldiers experienced a severe adverse reaction to inoculation.

3) The ongoing controversy over the origins and nature of Gulf War Syndrome, and growing concerns over the causes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, suggested that it would be sensible for the ADF to follow a relatively conservative vaccination policy.

4) The lack of defence personnel with experience in the administration of a smallpox vaccine program. Moreover, it had been more than 20 years since Defence had trained medical personnel in smallpox vaccination techniques.

5) Smallpox’s pathology differed from that of anthrax in that it still responded well to vaccination if given up to a week after exposure.194

As a result of these factors the ADF recommended that without confirmation of a well-validated threat it would not proactively vaccinate deploying personnel.195

For Operation BASTILLE the CDF decided that inoculation against anthrax should not be mandatory. Instead, it was to be a condition of service. The distinction is subtle. By a condition of service the CDF meant that in order for an individual to deploy on Operation BASTILLE he or she had to agree to be vaccinated against anthrax. Personnel could refuse freely — there would be no

194 Ibid.

punishment — but if they did so they could not deploy. If someone refused who was already in theatre the ADF would return them to Australia, and a replacement would be dispatched to the MEAO. Smallpox vaccination was also a condition of service, but only for those whose duties were of such a nature as to warrant inoculation.

The CDF also instructed that personnel serving on third-country deployments and who deployed to the MEAO with a Coalition partner, or had the potential to deploy, were also subject to the ADF’s inoculation requirement. In addition, Cosgrove extended the ADF’s inoculation policy to include foreign military personnel serving on Operation BASTILLE with Australian force elements.196

News of the inoculation program came as a surprise to most of the troops who were awaiting deployment, en route to the MEAO, or already in the Persian Gulf. For some individuals it caused considerable angst, in part a result of the way in which the ADF presented the issue. Both anthrax and smallpox recipients had to sign consent forms agreeing to accept vaccination. Within the body of the form was a statement that the Therapeutic Goods Administration had not licensed the vaccine for general use in Australia.197 Although notification was the usual practice in such circumstances, it caused some personnel to question the vaccine’s safety, and in an age of rapid communication these concerns soon

197 B259990, ‘Op BASTILLE – Anthrax Vaccination Program Update, 14 March 2003.'
reached the Government leading to Parliamentary hearings. The veteran’s community was also quick to voice their fears. On 3 March 2003 the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Donna Vale received a letter from the President of the Vietnam Veterans’ Federation. In it he expressed the concern that in signing the consent form service personnel absolved the government from any ‘obligation to compensate anyone injured by the inoculation’. The veterans wanted official confirmation that this was not the case. Vale’s staff forwarded a copy to Gillespie.198 It should be noted that the COMAST’s ADMININST directly addressed this issue. It contained the statement that, ‘signing a consent form in no way affects an individual’s right to access medical or military compensation schemes. The consent form does not represent a waiver of Commonwealth liability.’199

Within a unit’s or ship’s close environment rumours abounded, fuelled in part by access to the internet and the receipt of information – often exaggerated – on serious side affects, the potential risk to reproductive function, and lingering concerns over the unexplained cause[s] of ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ whose symptoms continued to trouble US and UK veterans of the previous conflict with Iraq.200 Causing further anxiety among the deploying force was the multiple doses the vaccination course required. This


meant that personnel had to make repeated visits to medical officers. As with all vaccinations the injection of the anthrax vaccine did have the potential to cause a reaction, and although it could be painful, it was temporary and there was no clinical evidence to suggest any long-term effect including on the reproductive system.\(^{201}\) Such was the troops response to the vaccination program that one officer described it as an ‘own goal’.

As the media and the public became aware of the vaccination program it attracted, in Cosgrove’s words ‘significant … attention.’\(^{202}\) The CDF and his senior leadership group appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, as did the DGDHS, Air Commodore Tony Austin. One returned sailor even gave an interview to the ABC.\(^{203}\) Such was the flow of queries and correspondence – including those from other government agencies – that the ADF organised a detailed brief on the matter, prepared an extensive set of anticipated questions and answers, and gathered background material from the Commonwealth Department

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\(^{201}\) C4872999, ‘Anthrax Information: Appendix 1 to Annex E to HQAST ADMINIST 005/03,’ 15 July 2003; and B89926, Brief for CDF: Anthrax Vaccination for SF Members,’ 3 October 2002.


of Heath and Aging. The CDF also directed Gillespie to act as the issue’s point of contact.\textsuperscript{204}

Accompanying the consent form was a multi-page information sheet which outlined the nature of the disease, the level of threat and treatment options.\textsuperscript{205} The consent form for smallpox inoculation contained similar language. See Document 3.1 for a copy of the anthrax consent form.

\begin{center}
Document 3.1
Consent Form for Administration of Anthrax Vaccine
\end{center}

The RAN and the RAAF were the services most affected by the anthrax vaccination program; no member of the Army declined inoculation. Two of the RAN’s frigates, Anzac and Darwin were already on station in the Persian Gulf, serving under Operation SLIPPER. They lost approximately 10 per cent of their crews, which the Navy returned to Australia. On the Kanimbla the commanding officer briefed the ship’s crew on the inoculation program on 4 February 2003, the day after it sailed from Darwin for the North Arabian Gulf. The vessel’s captain delayed the program’s commencement because he had not wanted to load cargo with a crew that might potentially be suffering from reactions to its


\textsuperscript{205} C487299, ‘Anthrax Information Immunisation Sheet,’ 6 February 2003.
inoculation.\textsuperscript{206} Still, while justifiable reasoning, this was an avoidable error in timing that encouraged the ship’s company to conclude that their superiors were applying deliberate pressure to ensure their compliance. The \textit{Kanimbla}’s captain had to transfer three of his crew to the HMAS \textit{Warramunga} near Christmas Island after they refused to accept inoculation, while several others were unsure if they would accept the next dose.\textsuperscript{207}

For commanders preparing their units for war the timing of the vaccine program could not have been worse. The \textit{Kanimbla}’s post activity report stated that, ‘the ship’s company was distracted by controversy surrounding the inept implementation of Anthrax vaccinations by superior headquarters.’ It continued that ‘the ship’s company lost focus at a vital time in the preparatory phase of the deployment.’ \textbf{[GET CITE]} In addition, the ships had to take on hastily summoned sailors to bring the vessels back up to strength, and integrate the new arrivals into an established working culture. In the end Task Group 633.1 lost 42 sailors and Task Group 633.2 ten air personnel. All members of Task Groups 633.0, 633.3 and 633.4 accepted vaccination. Not all personnel were replaced, however. A review of requirements resulted in the dispatch of just 36 sailors and nine air personnel.\textsuperscript{208}

Just one member of the SFTG refused inoculation against smallpox, and was returned to Australia. As of late February 2003


14 members of the SFTG had contra-indications for the disease, a common problem with this vaccination. If confirmed, the finding would have prevented their inoculation and the CDF raised the possibility of their return to Australia. The SFTG intended to monitor the situation of these individuals as contra-indications can be temporary.\textsuperscript{209}

In deciding on the vaccination program the ADF had to overcome two major problems that, if not resolved promptly, would have impaired the ability of the ADF to deploy in a timely manner, if at all. The two critical issues were the supply of serum and the timing of injections.

On 8 October 2002 Cosgrove ordered the implementation of an anthrax inoculation program in anticipation of Australia’s participation in operations against Iraq. Initially he limited the program to Special Forces, and directed the inoculation of two SAS Squadrons. The primary squadron was to be the one that was currently in Afghanistan serving on Operation Slipper. He wanted two squadrons inoculated in order to maintain flexibility in deployment options.\textsuperscript{210}


\textsuperscript{210} B253216, ‘Anthrax Inoculations – Chronology,’ 13 February 2003. The date of the program’s authorisation is given as 14 October 2002 in B255950, ‘Anthrax Vaccination Program,’ 26 February 2003 and on 18 October 2002 in B98268, ‘Dot-Point Brief for HSO: Anthrax Vaccine Status,’ 22 November 2002. Despite the conflict in dates it is clear that the decision was taken no later than mid-October and that it initially only applied to the Special Forces. See also, B89926, ‘Brief for CDF – Anthrax Vaccination for SF Members,’ 3 October 2002.
However, the previous time that it had been used the soldiers being inoculated experienced what was termed a 'high incidence of adverse reactions.' Consequently, the ADF quarantined the serum until it could ascertain its safety. It was feared that a break in the cold chain had occurred which rendered the vaccine unsafe.

The availability of supply led to changes in the target personnel for vaccination. It was for this reason that the CDF initially revised his decision downwards and mandated that only one SAS squadron was to receive inoculation. However, the increasing availability of anthrax vaccine would lead to the progressive extension of the program to the remaining personnel in the SFTG, then to the staff of the

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ASNCOMD-MEAO, and finally to include all Operation BASTILLE personnel.\textsuperscript{215}

While Australia had been assured of the receipt of sufficient doses of vaccine for all deploying personnel it still required careful management to assure that those at the greatest risk of exposure received their doses in the timeliest manner. This led to the development of a priority list, which was:

1) Personnel who could potentially be involved in detailed response to or exploitation and investigation of NBC weapons or sites (in effect the SFTG);


4) Personnel who could be operating in the Northern Arabian Gulf (maritime elements, maritime patrol elements); and

5) Other personnel in the MEAO (ANHQ-MEAO, RAN LSE)²¹₈

There were several other factors in the extension of the inoculation program to include all deployed personnel, once it became clear that supply would be available. They were to:

- Provide flexibility of movement of personnel around the MEAO;
- Match the level of protection against anthrax that was being afforded to the personnel of the other Coalition nations; and
- Protect rearward personnel from disease exposure caused by a terrorist attack.

The last rationale was particularly significant because of the potential of a non-Iraqi terrorist group to make an attack. This was not without precedence in the region, as the October 2000 attack on the USN Cole suggested.²¹₉


²¹⁹ Information provided by interview CC.
It should be recognised that what made Australia’s inoculation program achievable – and hence allowed the country to participate in the coalition against Iraq –

Faced with the possibility of a serious delay Australia resorted to a different tack.

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By the time vaccine became available in mid-December some Australian personnel were already in the MEAO, primarily the staff of the ASNHQ-MEAO as well as some embedded personnel. Australian planners inquired of their CENTCOM opposites whether McNarn’s staff could be inoculated in theatre at a US facility. The response was that this would require approval at the highest level as policy was that formed bodies of foreign troops — of which the ASNHQ-MEAO was one — had to provide for their own vaccination needs, although the US was willing to consider the requirements of embedded individuals.\textsuperscript{222}

The CDF was willing to begin the Special Forces inoculation program prior to a public announcement because of their higher ‘OPSEC’ posture. He believed that in regards to the Special Forces starting early it was ‘worth the risk.’\textsuperscript{223} However, because of the deployment’s late start many participating personnel would not complete their full vaccine course before the onset of hostilities. Table 3.2 outlines the status of the vaccination program by task groups as of 13 March 2003.

\textsuperscript{221} B89931, ‘Supply of American Anthrax Vaccine to Australia,’ 23 October 2002.


\textsuperscript{223} See margin note to B252552, ‘Brief for CDF – Anthrax Vaccination for SF Members,’ 11 October 2002.
Table 3.2

Status of Vaccination Program, as of 13 March 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Group</th>
<th>Personnel in Task Group</th>
<th>Persons Receiving 1st Inoculation</th>
<th>Persons Receiving 2nd Inoculation</th>
<th>Persons Receiving 3rd Inoculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>633.0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.1</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.2</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.3</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.4</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2061</td>
<td>2051</td>
<td>1841</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure exceeds manpower cap of 2058 due to presence of short term visitors.

The estimated completion date for each task groups was:

- TG 633.0 - 1 April 2003
- TG 633.1 - 21 March 2003
- TG 633.2 - 12 April 2003
- TG 633.3 - nearly completed as of 13 March 2003
- TG 633.4 - 17 March 2003

Again, the completion dates demonstrate the ADF’s success in prioritising the SFTG.

That the SFTG was the top priority in obtaining anthrax vaccine is reinforced by the figures for the inoculation program


225 Ibid.
as of 26 February 2003. By that date nearly all of TG 633.3 had received their third injection, whereas only about one-third of the members of TG 633.4 had. Moreover, no one in TG 633.1 and 633.2 had even received their second inoculation.226

While not everyone would have completed their series of inoculations by the onset of the war, the situation outlined Table 3.2, while a cause for concern, was not as risky as it appears at first glance. In addition, the sailors and soldiers of the Maritime Task Group faced greater danger from a nautical mine than an Iraqi Scud armed with a biological warhead. In fact, it was the staff of the ASNCOMD-MEAO who remained at the most risk, but only if the Iraqi military still possessed operational missiles. From a perspective of risk management the ADF had successfully focused on those personnel facing the greatest danger, namely the SFTG, and had obtained an acceptable level of protection prior to the war’s start.

However, the shortage of supply and the compressed time frame of the operation mandated that the ADF accept a degree of risk to which deployed personnel would be exposed from anthrax. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the vaccine series for anthrax consists of six doses, not the administered three. The first three doses are given at two week intervals,

followed by a forth at 6 months, a fifth at 12 months and the last at 18 months. In addition, an annual booster dose is needed for ongoing protection. The CDF was aware of the required regime and in a brief prepared by the HSO he was advised that:

To attain reasonable protection against Anthrax, ADF personnel need a course of three vaccinations over a 6 to 8 week period. A full program consists of six vaccinations, with the remaining three spread over up to 18 months.

In another document Defence identified that ‘an effective measure of protection is achieved after a course of three injections of the vaccine, give over a four to six week period.’

The conflict’s time line eliminated the possibility of personnel receiving more than three doses, even if supply had been available. When the ADF made these decisions a November deployment remained a possibility with the goal of having the SFTG ready for in-theatre tasking by mid-December 2002. Therefore, when Joint Logistic Command sought to fast-track a delivery of serum for late October 2002 it did so with the understanding that it would

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provide sufficient doses for the initial coverage – three injections, at least until additional vaccine became available.230

In making three doses its deployment policy the ADF did except a higher degree of risk than if it had had the opportunity to provide the full recommended course of six injections. There is no doubt that weaponised anthrax is deadly. While estimates vary, one defence document estimated that with a three dose regime, up to 10 per cent of the deployed force would not have attained protection from the disease.231 Examined from this perspective it meant that the ADF had accepted an approximate 10 per cent fatality rate from anthrax alone if Iraq resorted to biological warfare. From the perspective of getting its forces ready for war the ADF had little choice but to accept this possible casualty rate.

However, the risk may not have been as great as this estimate suggested. It is difficult to be so prescriptive when assessing the effectiveness of a vaccination program. There are many variables that affect the protection afforded by a vaccination, including such factors as time-line from last dose and general health of the individual. What should be clear is that a three dose program did not confer complete protection, however. Yet Defence Talking Points prepared on 3 March 2003 provided an


optimistic spin when discussing the force’s protection against anthrax. While it admitted that the vaccination program was not complete, the Talking Points went on to state that ‘those who are at the highest risks of exposure are fully protected.’\textsuperscript{232} This was not quite true, although such an assessment hinges on how literally one interprets the word ‘fully’. As noted above, a complete course of treatment for anthrax vaccination required six injections. While the ADF’s policy of three injections did offer a robust level of protection the use of the word ‘fully’ implies 100 per cent coverage which was not the case. When they first mooted the vaccination program ADF planners described the level of protection against anthrax offered by three injections as ‘reasonable’.\textsuperscript{233} This was a more accurate assessment, and the one that was more defensible from a military operation perspective, although one that was more suited for internal – not public – consumption.

The universal anthrax policy remained in effect until amendment by the CDF in 17 April 2003 when he suspended the vaccination program pending the reassessment of the level of threat. At that point the RAN’s rotation ships, HMA Ships Sydney and Newcastle, had commenced their vaccination programs, although only the crew of the Newcastle had received their first course of injections. Cosgrove subsequently decided to discontinue the


inoculation program, except for those personnel who were involved in sensitive site exploitation. Any personnel who were mid-way through a course of injections were not to complete the series. The change in policy reflected the decrease in the threat environment resulting from the collapse of the Saddam regime.234

The long-time line required for an individual to obtain a high degree of immunity from anthrax poses a difficult dilemma for all military organisations in a world in which the potential for biological warfare is growing. A single dose, for example, would leave a military force extremely vulnerable to anthrax, and a nation may not have the luxury of eight weeks notice before the commencement of operations with which to implement a three dose policy. In the case of a terrorism attack the warning notice may be as brief as that which the workers in the World Trade Centre Towers received. In the case of a surprise biological attack personnel will not have time to obtain any degree of immunity, even if a supply of serum is readily available. On the other hand, a military organisation may not be able to maintain the necessary high levels of protection by imposing an inoculation service requirement. After the completion of Operation BASTILLE Defence did consider the implementation of an anthrax vaccination as a service requirement, but this initiative did not proceed far before its abandonment.

Determining the Australian Army’s Contingent

The investigation of Australian force options commenced shortly after Hill delivered his speech to the Australian Defence College on 18 June 2002. From his position as Director General Joint Operations and Plans in the Strategic Command Division, McNarn took the initiative and began an appreciation into what forces Australia could contribute to a coalition against Iraq. His assessment identified a possible ADF contribution as including:

- Light armour battlegroup
- Special forces
- F/A-18s
- Ships in Gulf
- AP-3Cs
- C-130s

The consideration of force options only gained official sanction when the CDF obtained the Minister for Defence’s authorisation the following week. In a minute to Hill, Barrie asked permission to develop a range of, ‘force options that may be available to support US operations against Iraq’. This was the

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235 Comments by interview subject OO.
same document in which the CDF requested permission to dispatch a planning team to Tampa. In addition, Barrie recommended that the force options presented should serve as a basis of discussion between the Minister of Defence and the CDF prior to Cosgrove’s visit to the United States scheduled for 8-11 July 2002 [by that date Cosgrove would have succeeded Barrie as CDF]. Barrie also expected that the outgoing and incoming HSC would discuss the matter of force options with the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff during their joint visit to Washington D.C. on 28 June.\textsuperscript{236}

The timeline outlined in Barrie’s minute was extremely tight. The urgency was necessary in order for Australian officers to have the government’s authority to speak on force option matters during upcoming meetings with US officials that had already been scheduled. Hill then sought Howard’s agreement to these steps.\textsuperscript{237}

To provide the outgoing HSC with a degree of guidance for his visit to Washington, McNarn rushed his list of force options to Titheridge, literally bringing them to the airport in person. The

\textsuperscript{236} It is difficult to precisely date this minute as the copy that this author was able to obtain was undated other than “June 02”. However, from the temporal evidence contained in the minute its origin must date to between 24 and 27 June 2002 inclusive. See, CDF /02, ‘Op Slipper: US Planning for Operations Against Iraq,’ June 02.

\textsuperscript{237} ‘Hill to Howard,’ nd.
which does call into question the rationale for the detailed force assessment process that the ADF – particularly the Army – would shortly undertake.

It is not clear precisely when the in depth analysis of force options began, but it must have begun shortly after Cosgrove’s return from his meeting with Franks in Tampa, or perhaps even earlier after Titheridge and Gillespie arrived home.  

The speed with which Army considered various force options suggests that the task was undertaken on an urgent basis. The initial step was provided by Gillespie, now the HSC, who identified a range of Army capabilities for further considerations. On 22 July 2002 the CDF tasked the CA to determine approximate personnel levels and costs for a number of possible Army contributions. The other Chiefs received similar requests.

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for their respective services. By late July an Army HQ planning team – soon to be supported by several staff officers from Land HQ – had started the process of winnowing back the options for recommendation to the CDF and the SCG, **s34(3) masked.** Those officers involved in force option planning were an exclusive group that due to the requirement for secrecy probably did not exceeded six people, including the CA and the Land Commander, Major General Peter Abigail.

The need to rush the process was driven by several factors. First, the ADF needed to catch up with CENTCOM whose force planning was already well-advanced. Consequently Defence officials knew that they would have to compress the planning time line in order to reduce the response lag between a US request for assistance and the Australian government’s consideration of that request. Second, although the United States had not yet made a formal request, the Howard Government needed to be in a position to respond, if and when such an overture was received. It was essential therefore that Defence provide timely information in advance of a US request that would offer ‘an appropriate basis for Government to consider its position and to make any commitment decision at a later date.’

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Those involved in the planning process did not receive any specific instructions. The critical requirement was to identify those assets that might be of use to the United States and which were already available for deployment, or which could be made ready with the purchase of essential items of equipment under the Defence’s Rapid Acquisition Program, within necessary timelines. The planners did make a couple of assumptions, however. In making their force option recommendations the planners strove to minimise the number of personnel required. While they had not received any explicit instruction on this matter, it was clear to those involved that manpower constraint was an issue, especially since it had been a core condition of planning for previous operations. One planner acknowledged that manpower policy was, ‘back of the mind knowledge.’ The planners also realised that the Army could only provide a ‘one-shot force’, because the organisation lacked the depth needed to provide a rotation element for any significant deployment, particularly in light of other existing commitments. This second condition did not have any material effect on the selection of force options, however, as it was also a condition of US planning.

The Army’s planning process was decisive and quick, and considered a wide range of force package options. One early effort took the form of a spread sheet. It contained a wire diagram for each proposed option, included an outline of the sub-units.

243 Interview subject BB comments.
required, and an estimate for the necessary personnel. The spreadsheet also considered transportation requirements because the number and mix of A, B, and C class vehicles and trailers would be a major factor in determining shipping options and costs. The possible force packages identified were:

- Reconnaissance battlegroup (150/1917 or 154/2031 if a medium battery was included)\(^{244}\)
- Armoured battlegroup (157/1931)
- Light infantry battalion group (133/1951)
- Infantry company group (17/292)
- STA battery (12/105)
- Surveillance troop (8/49)
- Medium battery (9/137)
- Engineer support squadron (11/141)
- Engineer troop group (12/149)
- Medium lift [CH47] helicopter detachment (12/51)
- S70A [Blackhawk] detachment (21/70)
- Intelligence augmentation team (5/7)
- Intelligence support element (13/37)
- Electronic warfare troop (15/54)
- SAS squadron group (155 personnel all ranks)
- Commando squadron group (185 personnel all ranks)

\(^{244}\) Figures in parenthesis show number of officers/other ranks (#/#).
Incorporated into the establishments for the reconnaissance, armoured and light infantry battlegroups was a force support battalion (40/619) to provide for the formations third line support, and a combat service support team – (20/198) for the reconnaissance and armoured battlegroups and (12/112) for the light infantry battlegroup – for their second line support. The spreadsheet did not provide an operational assessment of any of the various force options. The only notation offered concerned the personnel figures for the force support battalions and combat service support teams whose establishments it identified as ‘worse case planning figures.’

Within a couple of days the planning team had expanded the spreadsheet’s raw data to include possible tasks for each force element, along with identifying corresponding advantages and limitations. In addition, the planners provided the CA with a recommendation on the suitability of each proposal. The new spreadsheet generally mirrored the first iteration, although there were some changes in the force options considered. Table 4.1 outlines the revisions.

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246 Ibid.
### Table 4.1

#### Plan BASTILLE Army Force Options at 30 July 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Element</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Main Advantages</th>
<th>Main Limitations</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National HQ</td>
<td>National C2</td>
<td>Deployable C2 Organisation currently exists</td>
<td>Tasks need better definition</td>
<td>Suitable, DJFHQ preferred if JTF formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armd BG</td>
<td>Attack, deny, occupy</td>
<td>Collective training recently completed, Mech coys preparing for deployment to East Timor</td>
<td>Leopard tanks lack night capability, ammunition shortage, major sealift and support requirement, outgunned by Iraqi T72 tanks</td>
<td>Not suitable for proposed tasks, may be suitable for flank protection or rear area security operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Regt</td>
<td>Recon, VAP within role, degree of commonality with US LAV</td>
<td>Recon and VAP within role, degree of commonality with US LAV</td>
<td>Minimal anti-armour capability, no integral tactical RW available</td>
<td>Suitable if strategic lift is available. BG deployment for flank rather than main force role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Inf Bn</td>
<td>Airmobile, block, hold</td>
<td>Both 1 &amp; 2 RAR in advanced state of collective training</td>
<td>Minimal anti-armour capability, minimal integral mobility, no integral tactical RW available</td>
<td>Not suitable for block and hold tasks against enemy armoured elements unless provided with javelins or US support. Suitable for airmobile or blocking operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<p>| Light Inf Coy | Protect air assets, follow on QRF | Company group on-line and available, easily deployable | Lacks anti-armour assets, not viable as stand alone unit | Suitable for tasks described or if subsumed into coalition unit. Would require javelin purchase. |
| CH47(4 acft) | SF lift, CSS lift | Commonality with US, good cargo lift capability | ADF only have six aircraft, lack IFF/EWSP suite, not trained for NBC environment | Not suitable for SF lift as are CSS support aircraft. May be suitable if used for rear-area CSS and IF/EWSP installed. |
| S-70A (6 acft) | SF, Cdo lift | Tactical RW lift available for Australian forces | Severe impact on CAPD, CT capability effected, no IFF/EWSP suite, orphan aircraft | Not suitable due to CAPD problem and require IFF/EWSP installation |
| Surv Tp | ISR | Readily deployable | Severe effect on CAPD | Suitable for task |
| Engr Tp | Demining, force protection | Readily deployable, compatible with US, minor CAPD effect | Does not provide much capability due to small size of FE, requires own force protection | Not suitable as stand alone. Suitable if incorporated into Bn Gp. |
| Spt Sqn | Mobility and counter-mobility, survivability | Compatible with US, sustainment through US supply chain | Requires entire Spt Sqn capability if simultaneous with East Timor commitment, large plant element makes deployment | Suitable if deployed as part of US or Australian unit - otherwise large force protection and sustainment requirement. Eng Spt Sqn more suitable. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mdm Bty</td>
<td>Close fire support</td>
<td>M198 in use by US, ammunition compatible with US, could be integrated into US Bn or in support of Australian force element</td>
<td>Suitable if US deploy M198 capability or offers access to M1 ammunition. Not supported due to manoeuvre and ammunition limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EW Tp</td>
<td>I&amp;W, force protection</td>
<td>Good interoperability with US</td>
<td>Suitable as stand-alone force element or part of Australian force element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS Sqn (-)</td>
<td>Force Comms Spt</td>
<td>Essential if Australian force element deployed</td>
<td>Suitable only if deployed in support of Australian force element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med FST (level 2)</td>
<td>Health, trauma</td>
<td>Capability exists within CSSB</td>
<td>Not suitable as stand-alone, requires AME supplementation, would require much of capability of force’s HSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Engr Regt</td>
<td>Mobility &amp; counter mobility, survivability</td>
<td>Deployable as stand-alone or integrated into US Engr formation</td>
<td>Suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int Capability</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Stand alone, interoperable with US</td>
<td>Some trades will effect CAPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery Analyst</td>
<td>Image analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only a few individuals qualified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA Bty</td>
<td>Surveillance, target acquisition</td>
<td>Compatible with US &amp; UK, environment suitable for equipment</td>
<td>Represents entire ADF STA capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD Bty</td>
<td>Ground based air defence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires most AD personnel, RBS 70 committed to RAN, GBAD not compatible with US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS Squadron</td>
<td>SR, strike, SRO, UW</td>
<td>Highly valued by US, easily deployable,</td>
<td>Currently committed to Op SLIPPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cdo Coy</td>
<td>QRF, raids</td>
<td>Easily deployable, can be integrated with SASR Sqn</td>
<td>External validation not yet completed, no anti-armour capability, no integral mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engr NBCD Tp</td>
<td>NBCD decontamination and detection</td>
<td>Can be added to any force element, provide Australian specific NBCD reporting and advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSB</td>
<td>Force logistics support</td>
<td>Can operate in multiple L of C, provide full support functions</td>
<td>Large footprint, utilises a range of critical trades, composition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On 31 July 2002 the CA presented a brief to the CDF that built upon the advice advanced in the two previous spread sheets, and offered a more refined analysis of the Army’s force options. Some differences were evident in the types of elements considered as well as the number of personnel required. More significantly, the brief contained an estimated costing for each option and listed those options that the planning team had determined to be non-viable. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the CA’s proposals.

Table 4.2248

CA Force Option Proposals for the CDF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capability</th>
<th>Approx Strength</th>
<th>Estimate of Net Additional Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2 Elm (Tac)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$3.22m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTF HQ (Lt Inf)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>$23.15m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTF HQ (Armd)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>$27.41m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armoured BG</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>Not Viable (night fighting ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance BG</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>$230.61m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt Inf Bn Gp</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>$225.73m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt Inf Coy Gp (+)</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>$30.41m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS Sqn Gp</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>$17.82m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDO Coy Gp</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>$22.31m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

248 ‘Brief to CDF on CJTF 180 Force Elm Options,’ 31 July 2002.
In developing their recommendation the planners considered numerous issues that shaped their conclusions. These included the force requirements of concurrent missions, such as Operation REFLEX and the personnel needed for East Timor, as well as concerns that included NBCD, anti-armour, training and repair cycle, force protection, IFF coordination, and medical evacuation.\(^{249}\) Some issues were more important than others. For example the planners believed that:

\(^{249}\) Unless otherwise noted this section is taken from B728680, ‘Brief to CDF (through CA and DCA): Cost estimates for possible future Army contributions to CJTF 180 – Op SLIPPER,’ 31 July 2002.
• The Army’s lack of electronic warfare capabilities for its helicopters would impose severe limitations on the scope of their use;

• While it was necessary to retain an IRR capability in Australia in case of NBC attack it would be possible to form a troop size element for service in the MEAO;

• Deficiencies in stocks of 84mm Carl Gustav ammunition could only be resolved with the acquisition of a new anti-armour weapon system; and

• Concerns over vehicle survivability could not be resolved in the short-time frame allowed, a problem made worse by the planner’s inability to consult civilian contractors because of operational security reasons.

The planners identified a number of intractable problems – “war stoppers” – that made it impossible to advance some of the force options. As a result the planners withdrew such options from consideration and did not provide them with a costing. The non-viable options were identified as:

• Armoured Battle Group: The planners did not deem it possible to deploy an armoured battle group built around the Leopard I Tank because of a lack of night fighting capability. A project was underway to provide the platforms with thermal sights but these would not have arrived in time. There was a
possibility that four night vision systems could be expedited in time for their use by the armoured battle group’s Special Equipment Troop but the planners could not consult with industry to confirm the idea. However, even had the Army been able to mitigate the night vision deficiency there remained other impediments to the deployment of an armoured battle group. These were:

- The Army held such low reserves of 105mm tank ammunition that there was not sufficient stocks in-country. A resupply of ammunition would have had to come from Germany, but that country’s opposition to the coming war made it unlikely that the shells would have been forthcoming had the Australian government decided to commit tanks to the MEAO. Indeed, this would prove the case when the delivery of other materials that the ADF had procured for the SFTG.

- The armour protecting the Army’s Leopards had not kept pace with advances in gun and ammunition technology and were consequently vulnerable to fire from Iraqi T-72 tanks. To provide its tank crews with a higher degree of force protection the Army would have had to purchase, under the Rapid Acquisition Program, bolt on armour from the vehicle’s manufacturer. Again,
Since the US Army and USMC did not field the Leopard Tank, Australia would have had to provide a robust support capability of its own for their maintenance and sustainment. This would have necessitated the deployment of a larger support contingent to the MEAO, including additional mechanics and storeman, violating the objective of manpower minimisation, and undercut the Australian government’s preference to shift as much of the deployment’s support burden to Coalition and/or contractor sources.

One of the reoccurring themes of the force option selection process was the discovery by planners that the ADF maintained ammunition stocks at such low levels that it made the deployment of certain capabilities virtually impossible without the immediate purchase of additional supplies. One of the reasons the planners withdrew the deployment of a medium battery from consideration was the acutely low levels of 155mm ammunition then in inventory. There was only between one and two thousand rounds of basic 155 in the country; a figure that was barely enough for decent training and certainly inadequate for an army about to go to war. The availability of special ammunition was also extremely tight. For example, on senior officer described the inventory of the
M712 Copperhead round in terms of just ‘ones & twos’. So short was the supply of ammunition that it was highly doubtful that the Army could have deployed a medium battery with its first and second line stocks.\footnote{Comments by Interview Subject AAA.}

Planners did give consideration to the purchase of additional 155mm ammunition, but there were no domestic manufacturers and operational security concerns overruled the placing of an order with a foreign firm. However, it would be inaccurate to place too much emphasis on these impediments in evaluating the Army’s decision not to deploy a medium battery. The guns were always a low priority option and had the Howard Government really wanted to deploy an IDF capability it would have pursued diplomatic and military channels in Washington and Tampa in order to secure the release of the requisite ammunition. This technique was used for other critical items that Australia held in limited or even non-existent quantities. Moreover, the absence of Australian guns from the MEAO did not represent a critical shortfall in capability,

\footnote{See ‘Brief for HSC (through DCA) on the Contribution of a Recon Battle Group to CJTF 180 – Op SLIPPER,’ 12 August 2002.}
because firepower - if needed - could be obtained from Coalition sources.

- The Army’s Ground Base Air Defence Systems were either obsolete or already committed to other tasks. The Rapier platform was incompatible with coalition air defence systems and also lacked sufficient reserves of ammunition. The RBS 70 platform also suffered from ammunition shortages and was needed to support the RAN.

- The Army’s Blackhawk Helicopter fleet was already committed to East Timor. Consequently, it would have been difficult to provide sufficient aircraft for a deployment to the MEAO without adversely affecting the training and maintenance cycle. More significantly, the Blackhawk Helicopters lacked critical electronic protection systems that were needed if they were to be capable of operating in a hostile environment. In addition, their IFF devices were incompatible with the US recognition system.

- The planners also withdrew the Independent Engineer Troop from consideration, but for organisational not equipment shortage reasons. Its proposed establishment was so large that it was effectively a squadron size unit. Therefore, the planners believed that it would be better to deploy an existing engineer squadron rather than to create an ad hoc unit.
The AHQ planners also expressed reservations over the suggestion to deploy a light infantry and/or commando company. They feared that an independent infantry company lacked sufficient mass to protect itself, and they set the condition that if the Army did dispatch a company size infantry unit to the MEAO it should serve as a part of a larger Australian force. The planners’ hesitation over the deployment of a company from 4 RAR (Cdo) was that the battalion had not completed its validation, and the planners doubted the commandos would be ready to deploy by 1 November. The validation trial was scheduled for the end of October.

That more force elements were not withdrawn from consideration was only because the planners sought solutions to some of the issues that could have impeded deployment. Of particular importance was that they highlighted equipment deficiencies that the ADF could overcome by purchase from friendly states under Defence’s Rapid Acquisition Program. By utilising this scheme the Army was able to obtain:

- Electronic warfare suites for the CH-47 helicopters;
- IFF equipment for the SFTG vehicles;
- Javelin anti-armour weapons for the SFTG to supplement the Carl Gustav system;
- Vaccinations for anthrax; and
- Individual protection and NBC counter-measure clothing and devices.
Without the possibility of these purchases even more elements of the Army would have fallen afoul of “war stopping” problems and been removed from further consideration.

Although concern over ammunition supply was the reason given for the withdrawal of the medium battery from the list of contenders there is some evidence that 155mm shells would have been available in theatre if needed. At the end of August McNarn informed Gillespie and Cosgrove that The government had made its decision and the gunners’ chance had past.

Of the surviving force elements the one that AHQ’s planners examined in the greatest depth was the reconnaissance battle group. This may have been because it was one of the ADF assets that senior US officers and CENTCOM planners consistently expressed a keen interest in. US planners had identified a capability gap in their force structure – the security of the Western flank of the 1st Marine Division during its drive on

252 AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 002 (as at 30 2000Z Aug 02).
251 ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 004 (as at 04 1900Z Sep 02).’
Baghdad - and looked to the Australian Army to remedy the problem. This was a task for which light cavalry had been designed, and AHQ pushed for the deployment of an ASLAV-based contingent.

From Australian perspectives the inclusion of a cavalry battle group in its contribution to the Coalition presented a number of problems. It was one of the larger force options under consideration - as initially considered it included an integral force support battalion, CSST and medium battery, and numbered approximately 2000 personnel. Upon costing it also proved to be one of the more expensive proposals. Thus while not an impossibility the battle group’s organisation was such that its deployment was a daunting, manpower heavy and costly prospect for the Howard Government and the ADF. Thus, when Leahy pushed for the cavalry’s deployment Cosgrove pushed back.  

On 12 August AHQ presented Cosgrove with an updated design for the reconnaissance battle group. The operational premise upon which the planners based their determinations remained the same; the unit was to provide flank security for a coalition advance,

Several conditions shaped the

planner’s investigation. These were that the BG must be capable of:

- maintaining the coalition rate of advance;
- defeating up to a platoon (+) strength force;
- securing key terrain and assets such as airfields;
- clearing small villages;
- directing and controlling coalition provided direct and indirect fires; and
- liaising and communicating with Coalition Special Forces elements.

The threat level assumption remained comparable to that of Operation ANACONDA - that is the need for a reconnaissance battle group to be capable of waging low- to mid-intensity conflict.²⁵⁵

The brief’s authors focused their attention on reducing the unit’s C2, fire support, and combat support components and they sought Coalition substitution where possible. For example, it was believed that the Coalition would provide the Reconnaissance Battle Group with:

- level 2 and 3 medical and dental support;
- forward and strategic AME, and environmental health;
- 2⁰ and 3⁰ line road transport;

²⁵⁵ Ibid.
• NBCD detection and decontamination requirements;
• Linguists as needed; and
• Prisoner of war handling.256

The brief offered the CDF with four options for the reconnaissance battle group. They were:

• Option 1 modified the original proposal by:
  o Reducing the communications element by 75 percent from a squadron to a troop;
  o Reducing the CSST by 50 percent;
  o Increased the Support Squadron by 40 percent to compensate for the smaller CSST;
  o Imposed small reductions in the establishments of the SEQ troop and the electronic warfare troop;

• Option 2 eliminated the medium battery but provided a JOSC/JOST. This meant that while the reconnaissance battle group did not have any integral indirect fire capability it could control coalition fire support.

• Option 3 included the recommendations for option two with the further removal of the unit’s electronic warfare assets.

• Option 4 deleted the medium battery and JOSC/JOST personnel but retained the electronic warfare troop257

256 Ibid.
However, when the planners presented their revisions to Cosgrove the CDF still found the reconnaissance battle group’s manpower requirement too large. According to the CDF the unit’s establishment had to be on the order of 600 soldiers if it was to receive the Government’s assent. At that size the AHQ planners had concerns over the unit’s ability to provide for its self-protection. An establishment of 600 may have been politically viable but may not have been large enough to balance force security requirements with mission objectives.

257 Ibid.
259 Ibid.

260 Data taken from Ibid
The unit required a variety of capability upgrades if it was to operate in the Iraqi threat environment. These included the outfitting of Javelin, installation of threat warning and IFF kits, provision of interoperability enhancements, and purchase of sufficient stocks of NBC, IPE and cold weather equipment and clothing. Most importantly, the ASLAV required an upgrade to what one expert termed their ‘very thin armour,’ if they were to provide any useful degree of protection to their crews. The pre-2004 ASLAV’s armour was proof only against 7.62x39 ball round—the type of ammunition used by the AK-47—and all light anti-armour weapons were capable of penetrating its skin. Critically, the vehicles also lacked Spall Liners. Land 112 Phase 4 was intended to address these deficiencies, but at that time the upgrade had not yet begun.\textsuperscript{261} Despite these potential impasses the submission’s authors did not consider any of them to be “war stoppers”. It was possible that all of these problems could be overcome with timely purchases under the Rapid Acquisition Program.\textsuperscript{262}

\textsuperscript{261} Comments by Interview Subject ZZ.

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid. See also B728680, ‘Brief to CDF (through CA and DCA) Cost Estimates for Possible Future Army Contributions to CJTF 180 – Op SLIPPER,’ 31 July 2002.
The ADF had to commence the acquisition process immediately if the equipment was to arrive in time to meet the deployment requirements of the US campaign plan, assuming the government decided to commit forces to a ground campaign. Thus, in order to preserve its options and flexibility the Howard Government had to expend these funds with some haste – the US plan called for deploying forces to be ready by 1 November – but in doing so it had to accept the prospect that it might subsequently decide against a commitment to the war in general or to the deployment of a reconnaissance battle group in particular.

It had always been a near certainty that if the Howard Government did decide to commit to the war against Iraq the Australian contribution would contain a Special Forces component. Cosgrove had hinted at this during his meeting with Franks in July. CENTCOM was familiar with the Australian SAS and the US-Special Forces community had been impressed with their performance in Afghanistan. The only major impediment to their deployment on Operation BASTILLE was that it would be necessary to withdraw the SAS Squadron currently serving in Afghanistan as the Regiment could not support two concurrent commitments. Once home – albeit temporarily – the SAS soldiers would need a brief period to regroup and refresh.

The planners believed that the SFTG should consist of a SAS Squadron, a commando platoon, a CH-47 detachment and a CSST. The overall personnel establishment was identified as just 290.\textsuperscript{264} This estimate would prove overly optimistic and would be subsequently increased.

The planners perceived the necessity for the deployment of a NBCD Troop due to the potential for Iraq to disperse chemical and/or biological agents, or for the Australians to discover and/or exploit a WMD storage site. The planners admitted that there were some problems with this proposal, largely due to the scarcity of the capability within the ADF. The deployment of an NBCD troop to Iraq would need to be balanced against domestic IRR requirements.\textsuperscript{265}

The final ground force option was a Joint Force Support Battalion. The planners stressed that they had not finalised the unit’s establishment which was ultimately dependent on the scale of Australian in-theatre requirements and the degree of support the deployed forces would receive from US logistic elements. Both of these variables were still unknown.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{264}}

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.
The ADF’s ground commitment would consist of the SFTG, an NBCD element (subsequently incorporated into the SFTG), and possibly a Joint Force Logistic Battalion of some as yet to be decided composition. The deployment of the CH-47 aircraft in support of the SFTG remained uncertain, however. In the end the CH-47 helicopters did deploy, but only after the government received a US promise of in-theatre remediation of their electronic suites.

The official explanation provided to CENTCOM for the deletion of the reconnaissance battle group was that Australia would need 60 days from the government’s decision to commit to the war in order for a cavalry contingent to complete its force preparation and deployment. This was well outside the US planning guidance for

266 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
Other intractable problems remained, however. While it was true that the USMC’s LAV and the Australian LAV were basically the same vehicle there were in fact considerable differences. Australian planners had hoped that as a result of vehicle compatibility they could reduce or eliminate the need for the ADF to deploy a 2nd/3rd line LAV maintenance asset. In theory, the Australian cavalrymen would have relied on Marine support for their sustainment and repair requirements. This would have minimised the deployment’s logistic overhead and thereby lowered the operation’s overall cost. However, planners discovered that the similarity between the Australian and USMC vehicles was superficial, and that there was significant variation in their interiors. The differences were of such a degree that instead of leveraging off USMC logistic assets, Australia would have had to

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269 ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 007 (as at 07 1700Z Sep 02).

270 Ibid.
deploy its own RAEME and RAAOC cells, as well as manage a depot for Australian-specific spare parts and repairable items.\textsuperscript{271}

In addition, deploying a reconnaissance battle group to the MEAO would have been a difficult and expensive exercise. In early August, when the consideration of force proposals was being made,\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{271} Information provided by interview subject M.

\textsuperscript{272} 'Brief for HSC (through DCA) on the Contribution of a Recon Battle Group to CJTF 180 – Op SLIPPER,' 12 August 2002; and ADHQ EWO W3/722, S34
It would also have been virtually impossible to conceal the departure of armoured fighting vehicles from the eyes of the Australian media and people. The revelation of the movement of ASLAVs would have undermined Plan BASTILLE’s cover story and would have highlighted the threat of combat operations to the public.

The final element in the government’s reasoning for not deploying

If the intelligence assessments for the war against Iraq proved true, a combat environment in the predicted low- to mid-intensity range posed a not insignificant risk to the members of a reconnaissance battle group deployment.

273 'AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 003 (as at 02 1900Z Sep 02).
On 9 September 2002 McNarn met with LTGEN McKiernan, the new ARCENT commander. There was a McNarn advised him of the ADF’s 60 day deployment requirement which made an Australian cavalry element impractical for CENTCOM’s campaign plan. In his next situation report McNarn mentioned

275 ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 009 (as at 10 1930Z Sep 02).
that to do so would require a formal request from Bush to Howard.\textsuperscript{276} The particular mission broached by CENTCOM and ARCENT was the support of the Special Forces in the West, although McNarn already knew that the Special Forces were less than eager to have conventional forces operating in their AO.\textsuperscript{277}

From McNarn’s perspective, the most important point to be resolved was Australia’s response to a potential formal request for a cavalry capability. He feared that the government’s rationale – insufficient time to meet the 60 day requirement – was about to become untenable if the hints he had received regarding changes to the campaign time-line, a lessening in the necessary secrecy level, or the option for a follow-on role were about to become a reality. In his situation report of 10 September he inquired if there were ‘considerations other than the time and space argument that I am not aware of that mean we do not want to commit the Cav[,] or to be asked.’\textsuperscript{278}

Moreover, if such a request was made it would then bring to the fore a host of planning issues that would need to be addressed quickly, including strategic lift, fire support, IFF, communication interoperability, and acquisition of Javelin. In addition, the identification of the cavalry AO was of some

\begin{footnotes}
\item [276] AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 008 (as at 09 1930Z Sep 02).
\item [277] AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 011 (as at 12 2120Z Sep 02).
\item [278] AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 009 (as at 10 1930Z Sep 02).
\end{footnotes}
Throughout this back and forth exchange of polite inquiries from CENTCOM officials and courteous deflections by McNarn, the Howard Government held resolutely to the position that it had removed the reconnaissance battle group from the table and would only reconsider the option if it received a formal request for cavalry capability from the United States. This was a step that the Bush Administration hesitated to take and a task for which Australia had no intention of volunteering. McNarn’s surviving subsequent Situation Reports do not mention the issue further, and, tellingly, the information contained in the section concerned with ARCENT is most frequently given as NTR, or ‘nothing to report.’ With the passing of the cavalry option McNarn’s Planning Team representatives in Atlanta found themselves with little to do and sought work in ARCENT planning cells working directly on the US campaign plan.279

279 Comments by Interview Subject D.
From a political policy angle Australia’s participation was an alliance issue, not a military one. In the end, due to the political requirements of the Bush Administration, it probably did not matter what Australia brought to the table, which allowed Howard to offer only niche capabilities and to take steps to minimise the risk to the personnel the ADF did send to the MEAO. There were some consequences in the Australian attitude, however. Some US officers began to make the derisive comment that the ADF’s commitment was ‘a series of headquarters.’

For example,

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280 ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 011 (as at 12 2120Z Sep 02).
281 Comments by Interview Subject OO.
officials identified this as a critical shortage.\textsuperscript{282} The ADF did have some of these capabilities in the Army’s inventory. However, the HSO replied to McNarn that the ADF was unable to meet the request.\textsuperscript{283}

As the war neared, the United States made further request to Australia for support. For example, identify just a few. After undertaking an internal audit of available personnel the Australian Department of Defence declined. The reason given was that while the ADF did have personnel with the required skill-sets the majority of them were already committed to Operation BASTILLE or UNMOVIC. In regards to the Army

\textsuperscript{282} ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 012 (as at 24 1800Z Sep 02).

\textsuperscript{283} ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 004 (as at 04 1900Z Sep 02); and B89857, ‘Untitled Excel Spreadsheet.’
the audit noted that ‘personnel appropriate to fill positions in this area are already earmarked for deployment under Operation Bastille or are involved with the Incident Response Regiment.’\textsuperscript{284} The audit did identify potential personnel from the RAN and RAAF, but conceded that Defence required them to meet domestic and regional security tasks. The report went so far as to investigate the dispatch of civilian staff from the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO), the Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office (ASNO) and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). However, Defence decided that the threat environment was too great to deploy civilians.\textsuperscript{285}

Refining the ADF’s Commitment to Iraq

As AHQ underwent its force option assessment process the other services undertook a similar process of their own.  


\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.
as a priority.\textsuperscript{286} This would prove the case once operations began.

Table 4.4 outlines the decisions taken by the NSC.

\textsuperscript{286} S34(1)(a)&(b)

\textsuperscript{287} B98920, ‘Bastille Options Table – as of 26 August 2002,’ 4 December 2003.
The force structure presented in Table 4.4 was not the final version of Australia’s commitment; that would only become evident on the eve of the conflict’s commencement. In particular, over the coming months the number of personnel assigned to each task group would vary as requirements became clearer. However, what would not change materially was the overall number of assigned personnel.

The only significant increase to the manpower cap was the addition of a RAN clearance diving team of 30 sailors to the maritime contingent (later raised to 32). The RAN organised them as Clearance Diving Team – 3 and their commitment increased the
manpower cap to 2,058, a figure which henceforth became
inviolable, and from which the CDF permitted no increase. If after
arriving in the MEAO a Task Group commander discovered an
unanticipated requirement he had to make-up the deficiency from
within his designated manpower cap. If it proved impossible to
meet the gap in capability from in-theatre assets the CDF would
approve the dispatching of a new person – or persons – with the
required skills, but only on the condition that the task group
commander identify an already deployed person – or persons – for
return to Australia.

For the Australian Army the evolution of force options for
Operation BASTILLE led to a further reduction in its utility for
the war against Iraq. Although long under consideration, the
government finally removed the Army’s Force Support Battalion from
the list of potential assets. There are several reasons that
explain this action. The most significant was that following the
elimination of the cavalry based battle group from the mission the
remaining land elements would no longer need a third line support
organisation. The Army’s sole major ground component still
remaining was the SFTG and it had an integral CSST which met most
of its needs, and the Coalition’s SF community agreed to make-up
any deficiencies. The Coalition’s cooperation proved a major
factor in allowing Australia to minimise its dependence on the
national line-of-communications, thereby reducing the need to
deploy logistic staff. Of course, this meant that the ADF’s
sustainment processes would again not be tested under realistic
pressures, thereby putting off further into the future the development of a self-support capability for the organisation.

The Army did provide a number of additional smaller force elements for the war in Iraq that were subsumed into larger organisations. These included the two LCM-8s with crews and the three RBS-70 teams that served with the fleet. In addition, the Kanimbla’s crew contained a Ship Army Detachment (SAD) that was responsible for the loading, unloading, stowage and security of the ship’s Army cargo. The Army’s force option planners played no role in the selection of the force elements that served with the RAN. The Army’s maritime soldiers had a long association with the navy, and 16 Air Defence Regiment had often supplied gunners to the fleet in the past. It was the RAN’s force option planners that had put forward the request for the service of these soldiers and, as would be expected, they served as part of the Maritime Component chain of command.

The Army also deployed a number of personnel who possessed highly specific skills. These included historians, operational analysts and public relation staff. In addition, a four person psyop team joined the SFTG. Lastly, the Army provided the majority of the various liaison officers who served in US and UK headquarters, while the joint Australian National Headquarters was largely an Army affair. Its commander was Brigadier Maurie McNarn.

It is perhaps surprising that the CDF, the SCG and the gradually reduced the scope of the Army’s participation in the war
against Iraq to the point where the only deployment option remaining was the SFTG. After all, the war against Iraq was always going to be largely a land campaign. Yet the fact remains that from the perspective of personnel the Army’s contribution ranked third, behind the RAN and RAAF. The number of soldiers deployed was so small and fragmented amongst so many organisations – or belonged to Special Operations Command – that there was no need for Land Command to maintain a chain of command to the MEAO during Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER. One unfortunate conclusion of the winnowing process stands out, however. From the perspectives of the stocks of available the reality was that in mid-2002 little of the Australian Army’s order of battle was readily deployable for a war with Iraq, even against an opponent that would prove as strategically, operationally and tactically inept as that of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

**Force Option Planning – An Assessment**

Throughout the approximate five week period that AHQ and Land Command planners had in which to assess force options for the Iraq War they made their deliberations in an information environment that was so flawed that it must call into question the validity of the exercise. The planners made their judgements without the guidance of a critical force planning requirement – strategic guidance. Neither the Howard Government nor the Minister for Defence, the CDF or even the CA would provide the force option planners with any strategic direction. Cosgrove had ordered the
COMAST to develop a Concept of Operations for Australia’s participation in the war with Iraq, but that document was not ready when the Army force option planners undertook their task. It would only arrive after the NSC had made all the critical decisions regarding the composition of the forces that Australia would make available to the Coalition.

The methodology that the ADF followed in selecting its forces for the war with Iraq violated a key norm of force planning. The retired British General, Rupert Smith, in his book *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, outlines the need for an intimate connection between a nation’s political objective in going to war and the forces provided to achieve this goal. Calling upon General Alanbrooke, the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff during the second half of the Second World War, Smith explains that:

> The art of strategy is to determine the aim, which should be political; to derive from the aim a series of Military Objectives to be achieved; to assess these objectives as to the military requirements they create, and the preconditions which the achievement of each is likely to necessitate; to measure available and potential resources against the requirements and to chart from this process a coherent pattern of priorities and a rational course of action.\(^\text{288}\)

In its force option planning process the ADF turned Alanbrooke’s precept on its head. Instead of beginning with the aim it began with the identification of a force option list from which the government would choose the nation’s contribution to the war against Iraq. The distillation of a strategic goal followed instead of led.

The only direction that those in the force option compartment might have received was the “shopping list” with which Titheridge and Gillespie returned after their visit to Washington D.C. and Tampa in June 2002. Thus, instead of trying to match force structure with strategic objective the planners were compelled to base their judgments on far simpler criteria, that is:

- what was available in the ADF cupboard;
- what could be deployed within the required time-frame;
- what could survive on the modern battlefield and, if necessary, what could be upgraded in time to allow it to survive if deployed; and
- lastly and perhaps most importantly, what force elements would the United States appreciate.

In light of the meeting’s decisions Cosgrove...
sent Bonser a planning directive. In it the CDF directed the COMAST to undertake detailed planning for a possible contribution to a war against Iraq. The document’s tone and content drives home the point that the ADF was planning a war for which the government had not yet defined a strategic intent. In the section titled ‘National Planning Guidance’ Cosgrove highlighted that there, has been no formal US request for an Australian contribution to possible US operations to effect regime change in Iraq. No decision has been taken by Government to commit the ADF to operations against Iraq and formal Government consideration will not occur until a formal US request is received.289

Cosgrove then gave consideration to what he called the operation’s ‘Military Strategic Planning Guidance’. The CDF notes that his intent was to assist government decision-making by the provision of accurate and timely advice. To accomplish this he informed the COMAST that ‘the planning effort is to remain firmly focussed on developing and confirming options and clarifying time-lines.’ Cosgrove continues that ‘the critical immediate task is to confirm the viability of the strategic options that Government has agreed to be further developed and to confirm the time-line to support decision-making and any potential commitment.’ The priority, therefore, was to continue to advance options should the

Government, at some later date, decide to commit to operations. What is missing from the document is any mention of what Australia actually hoped to accomplish in Iraq with the forces that it would make available.290

From the above it is evident that Australia removed itself from any role in the war’s strategic decision making process, or in the selection of its political aim. As a minor coalition partner this was probably inevitable. That the Government’s only option was to follow the US lead can be inferred by the equanimity with which Cosgrove, and one assumes the Prime Minister, accepted the Bush Administration’s intent to impose regime change on Iraq.

This conclusion that Australia was bereft of strategic guidance is not as clear cut as it appears on first analysis, however. Australia and the United States have enjoyed a long and friendly association and the two countries share cultural values and ideals that are firmly founded in the Western political tradition. In response to its own security concerns a succession of Australian Governments have deliberately cultivated a close defence relationship with the United States, a policy which dates to the darkest days of the Second World War. In some circles this relationship has taken on the term ‘the insurance policy.’291 At its most basic it means that the Australian Government looks to the United States as the ultimate guarantor of the nation’s security,

290 Ibid.

a solace again officially highlighted in the 2009 Defence White Paper.\(^{292}\) Thus, the true centre of gravity of Australian strategic policy is the maintenance of the good opinion of government officials, military leaders and policy makers in Washington. The achievement of a specific strategic aim in a war with Iraq was incidental to the more important and more enduring goal of advancing the Australian-US relationship.

Consequently, there was no need for Australia’s government officials, military leaders and policy makers to define, at least overtly, a strategic aim by which to inform the deliberations of the ADF’s force planners. Any officer would have known that the real focus of Australian intent lay to the East not the West. That the Howard Government intended to support the Bush Administration in a Middle East conflict was sufficient guidance for force planners. All the Government required was for the ADF to provide force options with which it was comfortable, and which would offer a welcome contribution to the Coalition while not compromising its domestic agenda. In this quest the ADF’s force planners were remarkably successful.

\(^{292}\) Department of Defence, Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2009, p. 50.
It is correct that there were numerous impediments that complicated the deployment of a reconnaissance battle group. However, none of these were insurmountable without some rapid and intelligent modifications of the ASLAVs and the purchasing of needed equipment under the Rapid Acquisition Program. Other problems were of the government’s own making, for example the refusal to make an early commitment to the coalition meant that the cavalry could not meet the US deployment window.

There were also procedural flaws in the force option selection methodology which shaped the recommendation regarding the ASLAV in a certain direction. Planners tended to assess capabilities as stand alone kit rather than from the perspective of a combined arms team. It is true that the ASLAV’s armour was thin and that it had other deficiencies, most significantly the lack of spall liners. However, cavalry commanders were never given the opportunity to lessen the risk through battlefield manoeuvre or by interaction with the other arms. Writing in 2004 then LTCOL Roger Noble, CO 2 Cavalry Regiment, made this point. He admits
that the ASLAV’s armour was indeed thin, but it was, he sarcastically noted, still thicker than an infantrymen’s uniform and provided more protection than that afforded by a Special Force’s vehicle. Noble then called for the Army to take a more holistic approach to its assessment of the ASLAV’s force protection ability, and to consider the platform’s ‘mobility, optics, situational awareness, connectivity and suitable tactics’.293 From this perspective Noble was correct as an ASLAV alone was a vulnerable weapon system, but its ability to fight and survive changed considerably with the addition of a properly trained commander and crew.

Noble also observed that the ASLAV’s survivability would improve by its integration into a combined arms team. Noble made a valid point when he wrote, ‘the combination of armour, infantry, artillery, and engineers is designed to ensure that in combat the whole of the military machine is greater than the sum of its parts.’294 While correct, Noble did go too far for the simple reason that in 2003 the Australian Army was incapable of conducting formation-level combined arms warfare against even a mildly competent opponent. Its Leopard I tanks were incapable of deployment, its engineers were without an effective under-armour breaching capability, its towed guns could not keep up with a mobile battle and its lack of any form of armed helicopter


294 Ibid.
precluded a rapid response in a shifting battlespace. A review undertaken by the Strategic Operations Division in June 2003 came to a similar conclusion. In damning terms its author’s insisted that from the critical perspectives of protection, mobility and firepower ‘the ADF land force is critically deficient of capability across all three areas. In essence the ADF has a 1950/60s capability in this area, which is unlikely to meet the needs of modern warfare as displayed in Op FALCONER.’

Perhaps Australia could have overcome the problems facing a cavalry deployment by increasing its dependence on Coalition assets, but this would still not have overcome an important remaining issue. Had the Howard Government taken CENTCOM’s hints and deployed a cavalry battle group it is likely that the unit’s mission as flank security for the USMC would have involved it in close combat, resulting in causalities. Unlike the SFTG, the cavalrymen did not have the option to pick or chose their targets or bypass centres of resistance. The government was uncomfortable with the prospect of losses due to the possible negative effect on the domestic political environment. This reluctance had been made quite clear to the ADF’s senior officers from the earliest point in the work-up to a commitment and became a policy from which the Howard Government would not budge, even after CENTCOM offered to augment an Australian cavalry contingent with supporting tank and

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attack helicopter assets. From the Howard Government’s perspective, therefore, the war’s effect on the domestic political situation took precedence over the country’s international relationship with the United States.\textsuperscript{296}

\textit{Final Force Evolutions}

The capabilities that Australia would contribute to the Coalition for the war with Iraq did not materially vary from that with the exception of the addition of CDT-3. Table 4.5 outlines the makeup of the ADF’s Task Groups, as at 16 January 2003.

\textbf{Table 4.5}\textsuperscript{297}

\textbf{Plan Bastille – Force Assignment}

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Group and Capability</th>
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<td>SAS Sqn Gp</td>
<td>162</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{296} Comments by interview subject OO.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>CH 47 det</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBCD det</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSG</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJSOTF-W augmentees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$333(a)(ii)$</td>
<td></td>
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<td>AC Planning staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>MC det</td>
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<td>STA det</td>
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<td>MPA</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCE</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/A-18</td>
<td>272</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-130</td>
<td>136</td>
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<td>$333(a)(ii)$</td>
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<td>MOST</td>
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<td>RICKSAT</td>
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<td>STA</td>
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<table>
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<td>Other Assigned Force Elements</td>
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<td>Joint PA det</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIS Mgt Elm</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYOPS det</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMAST Los</td>
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</tr>
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<td>TRANSCOM LO</td>
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<td>RAMCC LO</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>ARCENT LO</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historians</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational Analysts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASNHQ-MEAO staff officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>2058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- LPA Crew 270; SK50 det 22; GBAD det 24; DFAG det 12.
- Maritime Task Group LCM8 and EOD dets embarked on LPA.
- Special Forces Task Group FCE plus 1 assigned to PA det numbers.
- Special Forces Task Group NBCD det plus 1 assigned to ASNHQ.
While the precise mix of personnel assigned to the task groups continued to evolve it always remained within the manpower cap of 2058. For example, a fortnight after the compilation of the force assignments outlined in Table 4.5 Cosgrove sent to Hill an outline of the latest force breakdown. The maritime component had grown to 813, the air component to 647 and the Special Forces component had reached 496. Overall, this was a net gain of seven personnel. To offset these additions, the CDF reduced the establishment of the ASNHQ, and its associated additional personnel, by the same amount, thereby adhering to the mandated figure of 2058.298

To command its forces in theatre the ADF divided the organisation into five Task Groups. Each Task Group was mission specific and dominated by the personnel of a single service, although the national headquarters was a joint organisation. Table 4.6 outlines Operation BASTILLE’s Task Group Structure.

**Table 4.6**

Australian Task Group Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Group</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>633.0</td>
<td>Australian National Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.1</td>
<td>Maritime Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.2</td>
<td>Maritime Patrol Aircraft Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.3</td>
<td>Special Forces Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633.4</td>
<td>Air Component</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Higher Administration of the War

The evolution of the ADF command and control arrangements for Operation BASTILLE began on 30 August 2002 when Cosgrove directed Bonser to advise on options.299 The COMAST presented the CDF with his findings in a minute dated 10 October 2002.300 These were subsequently modified by the CDF and issued as a directive on 10 January 2003.301 The resulting arrangements created for the ADF’s relatively small deployment represented a complex array of multiple lines of command and reporting authorities which had the additional effect of vesting most of the key decision-making in the office of the CDF. The command and control arrangements also ignored the ADF’s recent advancements towards an organisation that was capable of managing an operation at the joint level. One senior officer later commented that the deployment’s command and control arrangements lacked clarity and that it worked ‘despite itself’.302 However, in the face of these shortcomings the adopted command and control arrangements also allowed Australia’s deployed force elements to integrate and coordinate their tasks closely with those of the Coalition. Moreover, the lines of command and

299 Unless otherwise noted, for this section see Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, pp. 47-55.


302 Comments by Interview Subject CCC.
control that Cosgrove dictated provided him with the visibility he required in order to inform the Howard Government on the course of operations, and also to anticipate issues that he might need to mitigate prior to either their presentation to government or their discovery by the media.

The CDF’s direction of 30 August 2002 to the COMAST was that Bonser should provide:

- Recommendations for alternative command and control models for the CDF’s consideration.
- Options for the direct command of operations by the CDF or command exercised through the COMAST.
- Definitions for the tasks and responsibilities of the National Commander, as well as the handing of operational control to appropriate US Component Commands.

Bonser was also to address the operation’s communication infrastructure requirements.303

Bonser offered Cosgrove two command and control options, each with a variation. From Bonser’s perspective the critical decision was whether command was to run directly from the MEAO to the CDF or instead first through the COMAST, or the HQAST Component Commands and then to the COMAST, and then on the CDF. In effect, Bonser was attempting to define the role of the COMAST in the

303 B98271, ‘Plan BASTILLE – Command and Control Staff Paper, 10 October 2002.'
prosecution of the Australian war effort. This was an important decision as it was the first opportunity since the raising of HQAST to put into practice Australia’s command and control relationships for the management of a possible war situation. It also had an important role in establishing the credibility of the COMAST and HQAST the ADF’s operational commander. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that Bonser’s preferred option saw the chain of command running from the MEAO through his office and on to the CDF. While Bonser accepted that the operational control over the ADF’s force elements would rest with the US Component Command to which they belonged, subject to the limitations of national command, he reserved to HQAST a central role in the management of the war.³⁰⁴ See Illustration 4.1 for an outline of the COMAST’s preferred option.

Illustration 4.1

COMAST Preferred C2 Option – Op BASTILLE³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Taken from B98559, ‘BASTILLE C2 SOD Version #2,’ 28 November 2002.
However, what Bonser did not fully appreciate was the strength of Cosgrove’s intent to have direct oversight of the operation, as well as the ability to reach forward to MEAO, bypassing the COMAST as he chose. On 7 November 2002 Bonser received an email from Gillespie in which the HSO noted that the CDF would not ‘entertain a responsibility handoff for Bastille and therefore Maurie will have a dual reporting responsibility.’ Gillespie continued that the CDF’s wishes will have to ‘be built into the Directive.’

One of the lessons that Cosgrove took from his running of Operation STABILISE - Australia’s 1999 intervention in East Timor - was the inherently political nature of the application of military force. Cosgrove foresaw tremendous government interest in the running of the war with Iraq, as well

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as the government’s fear of its mismanagement and the potential for it to generate domestic political risks. The CDF also knew that in the political realm even the smallest setback at the tactical level could have a magnified adverse effect at the grand strategic level. Since the interface between the ADF and the Howard Government was the CDF’s remit, Cosgrove wanted a clear understanding to oversee, control and adjust Australia’s involvement in the conflict. The result was a CDF directive, that while built upon Bonser’s recommendations, had the effect of essentially side-lining the COMAST from the prosecution of the war.

On 10 January 2003 Cosgrove issued a directive to Bonser that outlined his determinations for the coming conflict’s command relationships. The CDF focused on four key issues, namely:

1) Advice to government;
2) Theatre Command;
3) National Command; and
4) Operational Command and Operational (including tactical) Control.  

The CDF spelt out his requirements in some detail and it is worth summarising them at length.  

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308 See Ibid.
The CDF decided to retain a direct and immediate relationship with the ASNCOMD-MEAO on issues of strategic and national importance. Cosgrove insisted on this so that he could provide timely and accurate advice to the government on matters such as:

- targeting and other operational issues with national implications;
- developments in Coalition and US planning of importance to Australia’s national interests;
- bilateral relationships with MEAO nations;
- relationships with US and Coalition partners; and
- any issue, no matter how tactical in nature, which may attract significant Parliamentary or media interest.

Of these points the most sweeping in reach was the final one. In effect, the CDF reserved the right to review all decisions relating to operations against Iraq that might have implications for the domestic political environment. To fulfil this mandate Cosgrove informed McNarn that he was to provide him with ‘fused situational awareness … from all deployed force elements on the above issues.’ In order to achieve this, the ASNCOMD-MEAO was to send formal message traffic simultaneously through to the HSO and the COMAST. In addition, Cosgrove instructed his national commander to report urgent matters to him directly by phone or via the HSO – not, he specified, the COMAST. The HSO would forward
urgent messages to the COMAST at a later time. Cosgrove also
instructed the ASNCOMD-MEAO to maintain his existing relationship
with the Australian Head of Mission in Washington, which McNarn
had established when he had taken charge of the Australian
Planning Team - Tampa, from his new location in Qatar thereby
cutting the COMAST out of another link in the war’s management.

At the Theatre Level the COMAST was to retain command over
all deployed force elements. However, the Directive recognised
that these forces would be under the operational or tactical
Control of US Force Commanders and that HQAST’s theatre function
was in reality limited to the provision of mounting and
sustainment support, monitoring of routine operations and
developing of concepts of operations. However, the CDF was to
approve all concepts of operations prior to their promulgation.
The COMAST was also to provide to the CDF - through the HSO -
assessments of the operational situation and recommendations on
changes in force assignments and taskings. The CDF further limited
the relationship of HQAST’s Component Commands with their
respective force elements to administrative and technical matters.
Lastly, Cosgrove instructed the COMAST to note the ASNCOMD-MEAO’s
direct responsibility to the CDF regarding matters of ‘national
and strategic significance’, a term whose interpretation could
cover almost any event.

At the Operational Command Level Cosgrove mandated that the
Forward Command Elements in the MEAO were to exercise Operational
Command over their respective forces, but that these forces would
be attached under Operational Control or Tactical Control of the relevant US Component Commander. The Forward Command Element Commanders were to report simultaneously through the ASNCOMD-MEAO and HQAST, thereby assuring that the CDF received reports on the activities of the task groups through McNarn. Lastly, the Forward Command Element Commanders were to be responsible to their respective HQAST Component Commands for administrative and technical issues.

Cosgrove’s key representative in the MEAO was McNarn as the Australian National Commander. As the CDF’s representative McNarn had two core functions. This included the right to wave the ‘red flag’ if he believed a Coalition operation violated Australian National interests. To facilitate this, the ASNCOMD-MEAO was the ADF’s representative on the Coalition Targeting Coordination Board. McNarn was also to represent the CDF on all senior Coalition meetings and was his representative to the Joint Information Bureau. Lastly, McNarn was instructed to provide the CDF with situational and operational reporting.

Cosgrove’s dictates did have a number of effects. Firstly, it divided command and control into an array of separate lines which did not become coordinated until they reached the level of the CDF. The command and control arrangements for Operation BASTILLE also had the effect of undermining the role of the COMAST and HQAST in managing a serious operation. Since McNarn served as Cosgrove’s personal representative in the MEAO the CDF enjoyed
full visibility of Operation BASTILLE and the course of the war and could take actions that bypassed the COMAST.

A further consequence of the breadth of the CDF’s interests was that Cosgrove had the ability to intervene in matters that could easily have been dealt with by subordinates. However, due to the CDF’s intent to manage issues that had parliamentary or media implications – and almost anything fell within this mandate – Cosgrove effectively became the deployment’s decision-maker for virtually everything. For example, because not all force elements had deployed with their full complement of IPE it became necessary to cross-level these items in theatre pending JLC’s sourcing of additional stores and their arrival in the MEAO. IPE was newsworthy story that was certain to receive political and media attention. To track this issue the CDF directed the COMAST to report to him daily on the availability of IPE equipment in theatre until the problem was fully resolved. Cosgrove asked Bonser to include information on the number of personnel affected, remedial action taken, and estimate the time until the issue was satisfied.\textsuperscript{309} Since personnel numbers in the MEAO were also of considerable governmental concern the CDF took great interest in the Task Groups’ observation of their manpower caps. Visitors – who normally fell outside of the deployment’s overall cap limit – required the CDF’s permission for their deployment. Moreover, if a visitor needed to have their stay in the MEAO extended, approval

\textsuperscript{309} ‘CDF Executo 01/03 – Operation Bastille, AMP 05, 22 0100Z February 03.’
had to come from the CDF. For example, a lieutenant colonel who
had been sent to the ASNHQ-MEAO to provide briefs to Australian
and CENTCOM personnel had initially been allocated only seven days
for the task. His request for a week’s extension went to the CDF
for his consideration. 310

Cosgrove’s command and control preferences also had the
result of encouraging his subordinates to implement work-arounds
to the reporting protocols. Since the CDF had a direct link to the
ASNCOMD-MEAO he became the best informed officer in Australia on
Iraq. At his daily briefing Cosgrove used his information-edge to
advantage over Bonser and the component commanders. Hindmarsh, the
Commander of the SFTG, and his direct superior the Commander
SOCOMD, Major General Duncan Lewis, put into place their own
direct reporting chain that existed in parallel to the official
one. This allowed Lewis to anticipate the CDF’s interests at the
daily briefing and formulate a response in advance. 311

The decision to place the Australian Force Elements under the
operational and tactical control of the US Component Commands also
reduced the need for HQAST to deploy a forward command element to
the MEAO. Factors in determining this arrangement were that:

310 ‘CDF Executo 01/03 – Operation Bastille, AMP 06, 27 0430Z February 03.’
311 Comments by Interview Subject CCC.
• Each Task Group operated in a different widely separated geographic locale which worked against the creation of a joint framework;

• Australia did not plan to deploy a fully functional field force but rather niche capabilities that had been sought by the United States;

• The deployment of a forward headquarters by the COMAST would have added another command layer between US Component Commanders and the Australian Task Groups; and

• The staffing of a forward headquarters would have had to fit within the existing cap or else would have required the CDF to ask the government for an increase in the operation’s manpower.

While such rationalisations were certainly valid they did go against recent organisational and structural advancements within the ADF. The government had authorised the raising of HQAST because of the need to improve the force’s ability to operate at the joint level. Yet, when the first opportunity appeared for the ADF to act in a joint manner the organisation chose to operate along single service lines.

A further rationale for the decision not to create a joint force for Operation BASTILLE is worthy of mention. In fact, what the ADF did was simply to allow its cultural preference to re-exert itself. The traditional pattern for each of the Australian
services was to work directly with the equivalent service of a larger ally. Historically, the RAN, Army and RAAF have had little to do with each other when on active operations. Rather than go against a long-standing cultural foundation the ADF found it more natural to keep to the preferred pattern. Consequently, each Task Group efficiently integrated their actions into those of a senior US partner.312

The Role and Function of the Australian National Headquarters

On 14 November McNarn deployed, from Australia, and took national command of Australian forces serving under Operation SLIPPER, although this term was only used pending the activation of BASTILLE. McNarn was the natural selection for this appointment as he had won the confidence of senior CENTCOM staff. Brigadier Mark Kelly replaced McNarn at CENTCOM in Tampa where he became Director USCENTCOM Combined Planning Group. Gradually other members of the McNarn’s Tampa team where he had relocated his headquarters. This transfer had taken place shortly after McNarn’s arrival in theatre in order to be in close proximity to CENTCOM Deployable Headquarters which had taken up residency at . Based upon the success of having Australian representation in Tampa the ADF knew that with a presence at CENTCOM’s facility Australia would retain a high degree of situational awareness of US intentions and would have

direct access to the CENTCOM commander and his staff. The new organisation’s designation as the Australian National Headquarters-MEAO (ASNHQ-MEAO). The new name better reflected the government’s shift of emphasis from Afghanistan to the wider Persian Gulf. McNarn’s title became Australian National Commander – MEAO (ASNCOMD-MEAO).

On 24 January 2003 Bonser issued to McNarn his Directive for Operation BASTILLE. In it the COMAST confirmed the command relationships that the CDF had outlined in his directive of 10 January. McNarn’s main effort was to safeguard Australian national interests. For example, he was to make sure that ADF force elements did not act in a manner that was ‘contrary to Australian national policy or direction.’ If this was to occur he was to have the Coalition plan’s modified. If this proved impossible McNarn had the authority to play the national ‘red card’ and stand-down the ADF’s participation.

The COMAST Directive also detailed McNarn’s reporting requirements. Bonser specified the types of reports, and their frequency, for example a daily situation report. The COMAST also noted that these reports were to be simultaneously submitted to himself and the CDF and that operational direction would come from the CDF (through the COMAST). In addition, McNarn was to submit

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313 Horner and Rees, Australian Strategic Command in the Iraq War, pp. 45-47; and Email, B97661, ‘Brief for Sec ASNCE Move to Qatar,’ 15 November 2002.


315 Ibid.
reports as situations developed. Bonser identified this as a need for Australia to remain ahead of the ‘CNN Factor’.316

316 Ibid.
Chapter 5
Into Iraq

The Movement to the MEAO

On 13 January 2003 the CDF issued the Alert Order establishing Operation BASTILLE. Within a few weeks the deployment’s force elements would commence their journeys to the MEAO. Table 5.1 outlines the ADF’s arrival in-theatre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>17/18 January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-130 detachment</td>
<td>6 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOC Personnel</td>
<td>9 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS Squadron</td>
<td>11 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/A-18 Package 1</td>
<td>14 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cdo Pl, NCD Tp, CSSG</td>
<td>14 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/A-18 Packages 2-3</td>
<td>15 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/A-18 Package 4</td>
<td>16 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/A-18 Rear</td>
<td>19 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH-47 detachment</td>
<td>20 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMAS Kanimbla (with LCM8 detachment and CDT-3)</td>
<td>20 February</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: HMAS Anzac and HMAS Darwin were already in the Gulf having deployed under Operation SLIPPER.

Table 5.1 captures the point at which a Task Unit’s complement had effectively reached the MEAO. As such it simplifies

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the deployment process which in fact was spread out over a wider period once the arrival of reconnaissance, advance, main and rear parties is taken into account. For example the force flow for the SFTG is more accurately represented as:

11-19 January - Special Operations Planning Team returned to CONUS (5th SFGA) for COMD Conference.

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In addition, individuals continued to arrive right up to the commencement of operations – and even afterwards. As the task units moved to their bases in the MEAO so did the staffs of the Task Group headquarters and the ASNHQ-MEAO. For example the Forward Command Element of the Special Operations Command arrived on 4 February 2003. Illustration 5.1 outlines the ADF’s force planned dispositions in the MEAO.

Illustration 5.1

Australian Forces Intended Disposition

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319 B834169, ‘HQ Task Group 633.3 Operation BASTILLE/FALCONER – Post Operational Report to 13 May 03,’ 2 June 2003; and comments by interview subject T.

Once in-theatre, the Australian task groups rushed to become operationally ready, particularly the SFTG which in the end missed its full operational capability deadline by two weeks. Of the SFTG components only the SAS contingent had sufficient time to reach the desired level of readiness, a benchmark that was easier for these experienced warriors to meet than it was for their non-veteran comrades. Planners accepted that the Commando Platoon and NBCD Troop, for example, would take twice as long as the SAS to complete the work-up training. The last SFTG element to achieve readiness was the CH47 detachment. Not only was it the last component of the SFTG to arrive its personnel also had to rebuild their aircraft while also installing any electronic warfare enhancements that were available.

It was not until the eve of war — 17 March to be precise — that the Government received the CDF’s assurance that all ADF elements in the MEAO were fully operational.  

The SFTG also received other items to install on the SAS’s vehicles. Of these, the most important was Blue Force Tracker, a

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position tracking system that would help prevent friendly fire incidents while also enabling the CDF to follow the SAS movement’s from Canberra. The US Army had only recently rolled out the device to its own units and USSPACECOM (the capability manager) undertook a special effort to source sets for the SAS’s vehicles. To further minimise the risk of blue-on-blue incidents, particularly from Coalition aircraft, the SAS took day and night (infrared) photographs of their vehicles from the air, which it then provided to the COAC. Each new piece of kit required the SAS to expend some of their limited time on familiarisation training. In some instances the ADF flew out subject matter experts as visitors in order to rapidly bring the SAS up to speed. In order for him to conduct training on the SAS’s newly installed High Angle Dual Laser System for the Mark 19. During the work-up the United States also released from its inventory Javelin missiles which the SAS wanted in order to have a stand-off anti-armour capability.\(^\text{322}\)

A further concern for the SFTG was that COs and OCs had little time to familiarise themselves with their troops or their taskings prior to the departure for the MEAO. In the case of the

\(^{322}\) Comments by interview subject J; ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 005 (As at 05 1900Z Sep 02)’; ‘AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 029 (As at 29 1400Z Oct 02); and B254995, ‘Op BASTILLE Visit Request – WO2M McLennan,’ 26 February 2003.
a unified team and the development of an esprit de corps had to occur simultaneously with final preparations for war. In some cases the time available proved insufficient for this to occur, the tense relations that existed between the SAS and the Commandoes being a case in point [see below].\(^{323}\)

The SFTG

As the members of the CJSOTF-W under the command of US Colonel John Mulholland. The designation for the Australian force was TF64, the same task force name that was used for Afghanistan. The Australians discovered a green-field site lacking in expected amenities, including basic facilities such as sleeping quarters. The intent had been to occupy accommodation and work spaces provided by the United States, including accommodation caravans, but none were made available to the SFTG as its members arrived. As the ADF did not have any deployable infrastructure the Australians had to live rough in Second World War era tents until they had constructed their own facilities. They also turned to local contractors to build them their buildings but the first tranche of these had to be condemned when their walls proved to be electrically live. In addition, as many of the troopers deployed without cold weather equipment their first experiences of the was less than pleasant.

\(^{323}\) Comments by interview subjects T and BBB.
How the two Coalition partners approached the development of logistics is illustrative of their differing mentalities towards logistics. To support its planning, an engineering group was among the first elements sent in by the US Army. The engineers built what the combat soldiers required and then withdrew. By contrast, the Australians dispatched the SAS first while its CSSG followed. The Australian rationale was that this provided the SAS with a longer period for acclimatisation and force preparation, but it also meant that these highly skilled warriors were distracted from their primary task of war preparation by the need to construct their own base.\footnote{324 Comments by interview subject T.}

The SFTG order of battle at \footnote{325 B873151, ‘SF Sqn Presentation,’ 4 July 2003.} is shown in Illustration 5.2. Its commander was the then LTCOL Richard Burr. The aviation assets, although shown on this wire diagram, were tasked by the relevant Coalition air headquarters, although used to support the SFTG when possible.

Illustration 5.2

ADF elements at...
Not represented on Illustration 5.2 was Burr’s ‘Plans Troop’.

Six officers served on Mulholland’s staff (five Army and one RAAF). These included LTCOLs Owen Richmond and Reg Crawford, respectively Mulholland’s

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s33(a)(i)

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s33(a)(ii)

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s33(a)(iii)

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deputy commander for support and his senior medical planner. CJSTOF-W also contained a small Australian psyop team as well as

The composition of Hindmarsh’s SOC FCE is shown as Illustration 5.3 which illustrates the entire Australian SF commitment to the war with Iraq.

Illustration 5.3\(^{327}\)
Composition of Hindmarsh’s Command

Simplifying the SFTG insertion was the Howard Government’s decision to preposition SF vehicles, equipment and

Most of the squadron’s materials, however, remained in the MEAO under the care of s. 33(a)(iii).

- Installation of security enhancement kit (plates on vehicle bottom);
- Installation of a Mark 93 post;
- Installation of a Javelin bracket;
- Addition of an intercooler for the engine; and
- Lowering of the ring mount.

The ISB also carried out a full vehicle rehabilitation program.
To maintain operational security the vehicles staged from Holsworthy to RAAF Williamtown, instead of departing from the closer — but more visible — RAAF Richmond. The equipment flew to the MEAO in two Volga-Dnepr AN124s. Two additional Antonov flights originated from RAAF Pearce brought more SF equipment. These movements took place between 3 and 9 January and preceded the deployment of most of the SFTG’s personnel. The early dispatch of these additional vehicles and equipment was necessary due an anticipated shortage in strategic air lift that was expected to occur later in the force flow process.\textsuperscript{329}

As Illustration 5.4 shows the ADF represented a small part of Mulholland’s command.

Illustration 5.4\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{329} Comments by Interview Subject J; B159869, ‘Plan Bastille – Pre-positioning of Additional Special Forces Task Group Vehicles and Equipment,’ 23 December 2002; A E Kilgour, ‘Plan Bastille – Movement Plan for Pre-Positioning of SF TG Vehicles and Equipment to MEAO; ‘Amendment One to Plan Bastilles – Theatre Instruction 001,’ 23 December 2002; and K J Gillespie, ‘Pre-positioning of SF TG vehicles and Equipment to MEAO,’ 20 December 2002. See also, B252099, [redacted].

\textsuperscript{330} ‘ASNHQ-MEAO Sitrep 056 (as at 16 1900Z Dec 02)’.

\textsuperscript{331} B873151, ‘SF Sqn Presentation,’ 4 July 2003.
However, the Australian force was a very capable one, and despite its small size its single SAS Squadron received its own AO, an expanse only somewhat smaller in size to that assigned to its Coalition partners, despite their greater manpower. See Illustration 5.5 for the CJSOTF-W AOs.

Illustration 5.5\textsuperscript{332}

CJSOTF-W AOs

\textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
THE SFTG Mission

As the Australian SFTG was a part of CJSOTF-W its tasking came via Mulholland from Brigadier-General Gary Harrell, the COMD SOCCENT. Burr’s only legitimate ground to refuse a job was if it violated Australian national interests, which would have also brought it to the attention of McNarn as national commander. SOCCENT had identified this mission as early as August 2002, a requirement brought to the attention of Cosgrove by McNarn in his first situation report from Tampa.333

333 'AS Planning Team CENTCOM Sitrep 001 (As at 292100Z, Aug 02).
Illustration 5.6

Iraqi Ballistic Missile Ranges

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Thus it was paramount that the SF in Western Iraq prevent any TBM launch by Iraq.
Although TBMs and WMDs were the motivation for the Special Force’s campaign in western Iraq, Australia was unable to escape the wider US objectives for initiating the war with Iraq. That the Australian’s understood the situation is highlighted by the post-war briefing illustrated the extent to which Australian objectives had become aligned with those of the United States,

335 871-2-s ‘Task Unit 633.3.1 (SFTG) Post Operational Report for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER,’ July 2003, pp. 7-8. See also interview comments by subject I.

The presentation identified CJSOTF-W’s mission as to include...337 Despite government claims to the contrary. The presentation identified CJSOTF-W’s mission as to include... Illustration 5.7 shows the slide as presented to CASAC by the SFTG after its return to Australia.

Illustration 5.7338
The CJSOTF-W Mission

That Saddam had no WMDs and chose to target his limited TBM capacity tactical rather than strategically does not detract from the importance of the SF mission. This was a task that needed to...

be done. Yet it is of some concern that complementing the selection of TBM avoidance as the SF’s primary mission was a near total lack of hard data on the number and location of Iraq’s launchers. The concern over the possibility of a launch was not matched by a timely US intelligence effort to identify probable launch sites or hiding points.

deploying from an urban centre. Therefore, it appears unlikely that the SF could have prevented all launches in a theatre as vast as the Iraqi Western Desert by simply racing to the AO and scouring all sites of interests. Had the SF faced even a marginally competent opponent; one who had as much warning as Saddam of his impending fate and had had the wisdom to take simple precautions such as prepositioning his TBM launchers, the outcome of the campaign in the Western Desert would most likely have ended more dramatically.\textsuperscript{340}

\textit{Over the Berm}

\textsuperscript{340} ‘Task Unit 633.3.1 (SFTG) Post Operational Report for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER,’ July 2003.

\textsuperscript{341} See, \textsuperscript{344(3)}.

\textsuperscript{342} Copies of the CDF and CA orders of the day are provided in this book’s appendices.
the notion that Australian troops ‘went early’. Well before the war began the Government had to address this accusation. On 13 March Defence released a statement which categorically denied media reports that Australian SF personnel were already operating inside Iraq. A further reiteration was required in September when the accusation was again made. Putting aside the semantics of the notion that a war can commence ‘early’ – after all wars commence at the moment of the first hostile act – what is important is that the fact that Australian military personnel did not enter Iraq until after receiving the Government’s authorisation for the commencement of hostilities.

Yet it must be recognised that if CENTCOM had not needed to make last minute changes to the campaign plan to accommodate the Bush ultimatum, the timeliness of the SAS’s crossing of the border may have had an even greater sense of being ‘early’. had put a great deal of effort into studying the pros and cons of a stealthy insertion into Iraq of Coalition SF elements prior to the onset of the war as publically signalled by the commencement of the air campaign. The idea was to be in position two days before the aerial bombardment of Iraq began. The reason for this was to accelerate the SF’s ability to interdict TBM launches – they would already be in position in their AO


instead of being en route. There were some risks to this plan, notably that the Iraqis would discover the lightly armed SF’s presence. As it was the SF crossed into Iraq six hours and 41 minutes prior to the expiration of Bush’s ultimatum. This was done primarily to steal a march on the enemy, but also to be ready to prevent a TBM launch in case Saddam timed such an act with the ultimatum’s expiration.\footnote{346}

It is not entirely clear why in the end the SF’s insertion did not occur prior to A Day, other than as a consequence of the Bush ultimatum. On 14 March 2003 the CDF sent a minute to Hill seeking the Minister’s permission for such an action — the document is inconclusive as to what assent — if any — it received.\footnote{347} In addition, Burr commented in his post operation report that his planners were unable to get guidance from the operational level on whether or not to sneak into Iraq before A Day. Still, even had the SAS had moved into Iraq before the air campaign started, they would not have crossed the border without the Howard Government’s authorisation and, therefore, could never be in the position of having gone ‘early’.\footnote{348} In the end the ultimatum accelerated the SAS’s movement, but everything the SFTG did was done with the Government’s knowledge and assent.

\footnote{346}{Ibid.}

\footnote{347}{B260149, ‘Special Forces Task Group Time Line for Operations,’ 14 March 2003.}

\footnote{348}{871-2-S, ‘Task Unit 633.3.1 (SFTG) Post Operational Report for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER,’ July 2003.}
Over nights of 16 and 17 March the main body of the SAS Squadron moved forward by air. The helicopters of the Australian CH47 detachment provided the lift. The Squadron HQ with B & C Troops then drove up to their Tactical Assembly Area, a few kilometres from the border berm. A Troop remained at H5. Both movements were done at night and are shown on Illustrations 5.8 and 5.9. All that was needed now was for the CDF to receive the Government’s ‘go’ authority.

Illustration 5.8

The Move Forward


Movement to the Tactical Assembly AREA

The SAS’s plan called for the squadron’s insertion by two means. The squadron’s A Troop would move directly to the AO by US SF Chinooks escorted by Blackhawks. The Australian CH47 detachment’s crews did not have the training to carryout such a flight at night over hostile territory, nor did their aircraft have the required electronic countermeasure equipment. The rest of the squadron would drive; breaching the berm through a gap cut by US forces. The insertion would commence at 1800Z on 19 March.

Almost at once two events occurred that demonstrated the enduring nature in war of what Clausewitz termed ‘chance’. Neither

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of the insertions went as smoothly as planners had hoped. One of A
Troop’s helicopters suffered a fuel boom break while attempting to
refuel from a US C130. The troop’s refuelling arrangements again
demonstrating the ADF’s reliance on the Coalition. While the
RAAF’s Hercules had equipment with which to refuel a CH47 its
crews did not practiced the technique. The refuel’s failure
necessitated A Troop’s diversion where a fortuitously
placed British petrol point carried out the task on the ground.
The Australians were soon airborne again and proceeded to their AO
without further incident, if a few hours behind schedule. At 2031Z
A Troop had landed safely in the AO. This was the most high risk
part of the SAS plan and A Troop – and its US transports and
escorts – had pulled it off.

The Squadron HQ and B and C troops also had some exciting
moments of their own soon after they cleared the berm. At 2118Z C
Troop was in contact with Iraqi forces. It had encountered a small
easy column consisting of three vehicles that were heading out of
the war. A brief fire fight ensued. Afterwards the SAS patched up
a couple of wounded Iraqi soldiers and confiscated their weapons.
They then sent the Iraqis on their way. The SAS had no capacity to
hold prisoners and to have done so would have compromised their
mission. The Australian then pressed on to reach their AO by the
next day.
Illustration 5.10\textsuperscript{352}

A Troop

**A Tp Insertion**

- 6 x MH47D - 160th SOAR
- Air to Air refuel

Illustration 5.11\textsuperscript{353}

A Troop Insertion Route

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
The SAS's ability to control the Australian AO must be acknowledged, even if their opponent was not overly skilled. Moreover, the Australians imposed their will over the Western Desert with remarkable speed and, it should be noted, at no cost to them. This feat of arms reflects well on the traditions of the SAS and justifies the determination with which CENTCOM sought their commitment. However, this is not the place for a detailed blow-by-blow account of the campaign - that important story is for a different work. For now a brief overview must suffice.

The SAS Squadron had a number of contacts over the 42 day campaign that lasted until it handed over responsibility for the AO to the US 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. This occurred on 30 April. The number of contacts reported in the official record
varies depending on the author’s interpretation. For example, Burr credits the Squadron with 16 whereas the CDF’s Daily Brief of 21 April highlights 24 (see Illustration 5.14).\textsuperscript{356}

Illustration 5.14\textsuperscript{357}

SAS Contacts in Western Iraq

In his post operation report Burr identified the squadron’s key activities as:

- Sqn DA on IZ retrans facility,
- Tp DA on Wadi Amij Military compound,

\textsuperscript{356} ‘Task Unit 633.3.1 (SFTG) Post Operational Report for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER,’ July 2003.

\textsuperscript{357} B267621, ‘Op FALCONER, CDF Daily Brief,’ 21 April 2003. Note: slide shows expanded boundary of SAS AO.
The squadron’s most consistent area of activity was the zone around KM 160. Near this point the SAS had established an observation position which dominated the road that linked Amman with Iraq’s main population centres. At KM 160 the Iraqi military also maintained a radio relay station. From their position the SAS could either intercept and inspect passing traffic, or call in close air support if needed, and they did both. KM 160 was also the site of the SAS’s most dramatic close air support request. On 27 March two USAF B2 aircraft dropped 23 JDAMs on the radio tower. The resulting cloud towered into the sky and was described as a ‘significant seismic event’. The strike is as shown in Illustration 5.15.


359 ‘Commander TU 633.3.1 (TF 64) Diary Narrative - Op BASTILLE/FALCONER.’
Perhaps the least effective aspect of the Australian concept of operations was the mandated policy for the treatment of prisoners of war. Holding prisoners was always going to be a difficult task for the SF, even temporarily. This was the reason behind C Troop’s release of the Iraqi soldiers it captured at the opening of the campaign. However, as the war progressed the SAS began to intercept vehicles carrying military age males on the

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360 B973151, ‘TU 633.3.1, Operation FALCONER: Presentation to CASAC,’ 4 July 2003. Although the slide claims 24 bombs were used in the strike other reliable documents report just 23.
main road crossing their AO. This reached alarming proportions on 28 March when they stopped seven passenger coaches all of which contained male military age personnel carrying brand new Syrian passports that had all been issued only days before. The Australians had no option but to release them as the ‘Syrians’ claimed to be in route to Baghdad to look for work. On 30 March 2003, as a result of the bus incident, 361

The action for which the SFTG is most remembered is the capture of the Al Asad Air Base (AAAB). A RAAF publication goes so far as to describe the seizure of the base as the SFTG’s ‘famous mission,’ and which Hill called a ‘highlight’ of the SAS’s contribution to the operation. 363 Such hyperbole is unfortunate. While the Australian’s seizure of AAAB was a major operation – the SAS required the assistance of the Commandoes and the NBCD Platoon to investigate it properly – the reality was that they had


362 ‘Op FALCONER, FRAGO 19 to COMAST EXECUTO 02/03,’ 30 March 2003.

captured an undefended and inoperable airbase that contained over 50 advanced but unserviceable aircraft. Admittedly the base’s clearance took time and there was an element of risk from the mountains of stored ordnance it contained, but the reality remains that it was not an event of great significance. The Australians did capture nearly 8 million kilograms of explosives, which not surprisingly, no one on the Iraqi side had thought to employ against the Coalition or in the base’s defence. Illustration 5.16 shows the sheer size of AAAB.

Illustration 5.16

The Al Asad Airbase

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366 ‘SOA 2 Expansion Imagery.’
The capture of the AAAB was only made possible by the Australian Government’s agreement to alter the SFTG’s AO. It is by no means clear which organisation initiated the request for a boundary extension, however. The US CFACC, Lieutenant General T Michael Moseley, did ask through the CJSOTF-W that Australia prepare to adjust its AO boundary eastwards in order to conform to counter-TBM requirements. If approved, this would have made the Euphrates the eastern boundary of the SFTG AO. Harrell was also interested in broadening the Australian SF commitment, but the SOCCENT’s ultimate goal was to move the SFTG into Baghdad and then hopefully on to northern Iraq. It is not known whether Moseley or Harrell knew of the Cosgrove’s reluctance to take on additional
commitments. In the case of Moseley’s proposal Hindmarsh did submit a brief to the COMAST seeking approval for a boundary adjustment.³⁶⁸

There was also a push for a boundary extension from the SAS Squadron itself. The squadron saw a benefit in moving the boundary eastwards, towards the population centres of the Euphrates Valley, as it would have made it easier to detect enemy movements towards their AO. This may have been a rationalisation after the fact as the reality was that in its AO the squadron was running out of things to do. While the squadron was able to make such a tactical argument for the boundary adjustment, it is not clear why aerial observation could not have just as effectively provided a trip-wire for an Iraqi thrust out of the river cities.³⁶⁹

While ADF staff officers worked-up an AO extension plan the CDF remained extremely hostile to the idea of any additional responsibilities. He saw no point in potentially embroiling his elite but lightly armed SAS in a fight with conventional forces in the urban areas that lay along the Euphrates River, for example the city of Ramadi. This was a battle for which the SAS were not suited. There was also a sense that Cosgrove wanted to avoid any opportunities for mission creep, particularly an ADF role in the securing of Baghdad. In the end Cosgrove approved a boundary extension, but one that fell noticeably short of the Euphrates


³⁶⁹ Comments by interview subjects CCC and DDD.
River and its cities. Instead he allowed the boundary to ease forward a bit to the point where it included AAAB. In the campaign’s final days Cosgrove made sure that the SAS spent their time clearing an unoccupied airbase rather than risking a fight that they might not be able to manage. Despite the CDF’s best efforts, however, there is a persistent rumour that a SAS patrol did go to the banks of the Euphrates, if for nothing more than a look.  

Cosgrove’s determination to avoid mission creep was also the rationale behind his refusal to allow the SFTG to take over responsibility for H1. This feature lay in the British Zone to the Australian AO’s north. LTCOL Reg Crawford had been sent there by Mulholland to take command of a logistic facility and hospital, as well as its US National Guard protection company – a force of about 220 US soldiers. Crawford has the unpleasant distinction of being the only Australian officer during the initial combat operations to have to write to the parents of a deceased soldier who was under his command – a Guardsmen died when his vehicle rolled. The SAS Squadron saw in H1 the opportunity to establish a forward rest and repair facility. The proposal had reached the point where the OC of the Commando Platoon arrived to undertake a site assessment. Cosgrove, however, would have none of it and acted quickly to dismiss the idea.  

370 Comments by interview subjects I and DDD.  

371 Comments by interview subjects II, QQ and DDD.
373 Comments by interview subject J; and HQAST 00253/03, ‘Op BASTILLE: TU 633.3.1 [s. 33(a)(iii)]

374 ‘Commander TU 633.3.1 (TF 64) Diary Narrative - Op BASTILLE/FALCONER.’
TF20’s area of operations was the entire Iraqi Western Desert, including the central sector that CJSOTF-W had assigned to the Australian TF64. This meant that the AOs for TFs 20 and 64 overlapped. However, there was neither a command nor operational relationship between these two completely independent organisations. The reality of their relationship was more in the nature of a shared battlespace between allies, and as a result each organisation had its own objectives to pursue.

375 Comments by interview subjects CCC and DDD.
Supporting the SFTG

Overall, the SFTG received excellent support from its CSSG, as well as from Coalition and contractor sources. Most of the shortages that occurred stemmed from the ADF’s lack of a deployable green-field capability, the failure of Australia-based planners to appreciate the conditions and overly optimistic estimates of what would be available from Australia’s Coalition partners, local contractors or the host nation. For example, 1JMOVGP did not authorise the transport of a rough-terrain forklift due to the assumption that one could be sourced locally. This proved false and Australian logistic troops had to rely on the good graces of their US colleagues for mechanical handling equipment. In addition, the Australian SF troops soon tired of the abundant but uninspired cuisine that was

378 Comments by interview subject AA.
found at the US dining facility (DFAC). The CSSG solved this issue with the construction of a barbecue and the contracting for the provision of fresh meat and vegetables from a British Cyprus-based supplier. CSSG purchase officers also obtained other needed items although always wearing civilian clothes and travelling in a hired car.

Once the SAS crossed into Iraq their sustainment was dependent on aerial resupply. The CSSG’s role in this was the preparation of stores for air dropping and air delivery, a task for the organisation’s air dispatchers. The SAS received stores via four airdrops plus an air landing of a C130 at AAAB after its capture. US aircraft undertook the drops. Resupply consisted of rations, clothing, fuel, ammunition — including additional javelins — and spare parts for the vehicles. Illustration 5.17 outlines the SAS Squadron’s tactical resupply.

Illustration 5.17

SAS Squadron Resupply

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The Commandoes

The Commandoes assigned to Operation BASTILLE and FALCONER came largely from B Coy, 4 RAR (Cdo). Its complement was mainly infantry but it included other trades such as mortarmen from elsewhere in the battalion – thus reducing B Coy’s overall contribution. For reasons which remain a mystery – even its OC was unable to explain the rationale – the Commandoes were officially designated a ‘platoon’ on all ADF documents and briefings. As it had a complement of 90 the more appropriate term would have been ‘squadron (-).’

The primary task of the Commando Platoon was to act as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in support of the SAS. The idea was

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381 Comments by interview subject III.
that if the SAS encountered an enemy force that was more than it
could handle, or suffered mass casualties, the QRF would scramble
and fly into Iraq to assist in their colleagues’ extraction. It
must be stressed that the Commandoes were never considered as
reinforcements for the fight – as with the SAS they were too
lightly armed for such a task. Instead, they were to secure the
extraction zone upon which the SAS would fall back. The Commandoes
would secure the perimeter while the SAS loaded up and then the
two teams would or elsewhere depending on the
needs of any casualties.

H5 was the home base for the QRF and they would have reached
the extraction point in two MH-47D aircraft from the US 160th
Special Ops Aviation Regiment (the Australian Chinooks were not
allowed over the border as explained below).

To fulfil the QRF task the OC Commando Platoon divided his
force into four teams which, unfortunately, were also called
platoons. Two teams were based at H5 and formed the QRF, one on 15
and the other on 21 minutes notice to move. One of the other two teams served as the force protection platoon while the forth focused on training. The tasks assigned to each platoon rotated each week. The mortars remained and why they were part of the deployment remains unanswered.

That the Commandoes were designated a QRF requires some explanation, as it is highly doubtful that they could have performed this function. Positioned back at H5 meant that to get to the extraction point would have taken on the order of does not provide much confidence in the quickness of a QRF, even with its members maintaining a high response time and the OC being kept in the loop whenever the SAS had a contact. In light of the CDF’s refusal to allow the Commandoes to move forward into Iraq – to shorten the response time – it does beg the question of whether or not the Commandoes deployed with a serious mission, or if they were to just make up the numbers.

Although the Commandoes never had the opportunity to act as a QRF they did perform a number of other tasks during the campaign. This included the provision of a detachment for:

- escorting a high value Iraqi prisoner of war from H2 to Tallil;
- assisting in Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST (phase 1);
• guarding H1 when it was under consideration as a FOB for the SAS;
• protecting VVIP parties including those of Cosgrove and Hill;
• manning the BSG pending establishment of SECDET;
• helping to investigate AAAB;
• assisting in the cleaning of vehicles and equipment at the ISB in preparation for their return to Australia; and
• securing the Australian compound

For the Commandoes this was their first war. They had served with credit in East Timor but had not faced combat since their designation as a commando battalion in February 1997, unlike the SASR which had had considerable experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Unfortunately, the pairing of a green force with an elite one had a detrimental effect on relations between the two brothers-in-arms.

The Commandoes came to resent both the treatment they received from the SAS on a personal level and also the nature of the tasks they received on a professional one. From the Commandoes perspective they believed they were unfairly treated as the “second eleven”, without realising that that was precisely what they were. More experienced SASR officers did not consider the Commando Platoon as being anywhere near as capable as their own troops. The deficiencies included experience in operating patrol vehicles in a desert environment and rotor-wing air mobile
operations, both essential requirements for the war with Iraq. The Commandoes also did not seem to realise that it was not their prerogative to choose their mission. For the task of seeking Iraqi TBM launchers in the Western Desert of Iraq the SAS were the better suited option by any measure.

Yet, the personality clash that existed between the SASR and 4 RAR (Cdo) cannot be dismissed lightly. Even the CDF admitted that the Commandoes were treated poorly by the SAS. The hostility and jealousy that soured the relationship between the two SF elements could have been mitigated, or even avoided entirely, had the two cultures been given the opportunity to come together prior to deployment. The shortness with which personnel received their notices to move to the MEAO meant that a composite organisation such as the SFTG did not deploy as a collective whole but as discrete parts. The failure to develop a singular culture within the task group serves as a case study in the need for deploying forces to inculcate a singular esprit de corps before heading to their theatre of operations.382

The CH47 Detachment

In support of the SFTG the ADF dispatched three CH47 helicopters from 5 Aviation Regiment to the MEAO. They deployed where they filled third-line support tasks — essentially serving as flying trucks. While the aircraft and their crews

382 Comments by interview subjects J, BBB, CCC, DDD and III. See also ‘Commander TF64 Planning Directive to 8251947 Maj W A Jones Officer Commanding TF64 CDO FE (TE 633.3.1.2), February 2003.
successfully completed their assigned tasks, their operational parameters were so circumscribed and their capabilities so limited that it must be questioned if the Australian CH47 detachment’s presence in the MEAO was worth the considerable expense of its transport.

It is not possible to explain the rationale behind the CH47s allocation to Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER. By any measurement of suitability they were as incapable of service in a war with Iraq as any of the other Army assets that planners considered and found wanting, for example the Leopard Tanks and the cavalry battlegroup. The main limitations on their utility were:

- The Australian CH47 helicopters and crews had no experience operating with Special Forces. They did not have had the skills and training necessary to conduct a SF insertion, unlike their US counterparts. Up to this point in time the Australian rotor-wing craft with which the SASR trained was the Blackhawk.
- The Australian CH47 helicopters did not have any of the EWS equipment that was required for survival in a hostile environment.
- The Australian CH47 helicopters did not have EAPS (engine particle separators) installed.
Oddly, the Blackhawk was culled from the list of possible deployment options due to the fleet having an out of date electronic warfare system. Yet the Chinook deployed with the same issue.

ADF planners had hoped that the CH47s would receive an updated EWS suite and EAPS equipment prior to the commencement of the war from US stocks. To this end a request for the rapid

s34(1)(a)

The ADF had borrowed some s33(a)(iii)

departed for the MEAO. In the end the ADF was unable to secure EAPS sets which meant its aircraft flew in a sandy environment without dust filters over their engines. The results were predictable. Upon their return the CH47s required complete engine replacements with the damaged engines sent to the United States to be repaired by their manufacturer.383

The success of the ADF’s acquisition of EWS kits was mixed.
It was hoped that the missing EWS equipment would be installed in but for the most part this did not happen. There were three requirements that required urgent remediation in order to make the ADF’s Chinooks combat capable. They were:

- AN/APR-39 Radar Warning Receiver;
- M130 Countermeasure Dispensing System (flares); and
- AN/ALQ-156 Missile Warning System.

The Australian CH47s did receive a lesser export version of the AN/APR-39 system in time for the commencement of the conflict. These were used sets that were removed from other aircraft and loaned to the Australians. The M130 system also arrived in time but the equipment provided by the US supply system were so old as to be obsolete, required considerable cleaning and contained unserviceable parts. The expression used to describe their state was ‘very used.’ The AN/ALQ-156 system did not arrive until after the Chinooks had returned to Australia.

Even if all the necessary equipment had arrived and was installed in time the ability of Burr to employ the Australian Chinooks over Iraq would still have been severely constrained. The impediment that could not be overcome for Operation BASTILLE was that air crews lacked experience in the conduct of SF tasks and...
did not have a working relationship with the SAS of any
significance. Significantly, the Australian Chinooks could not
conduct aerial refuelling or night insertion tasks — both of which
were essential for the mission in Iraq.

As a consequence of the absence of essential protective
devices the Australian CH47 aircraft were proscribed from
operation within five nautical miles of the Iraq border. The
Australian Government was not going to risk having one of its
Chinooks shot down by an Iraqi missile, particularly since the ADF
had obtained these aircraft fitted out for, but not with, the
necessary countermeasure devices which Australia now so
desperately sought. As a result the ADF’s CH47s were unable to
assist in the insertion of the SAS into their AO. Instead, the CDF
only authorised their use for transport tasks between

and, quite probably, one or more resupply

The Chinooks
were also allowed to recover downed aircraft, but only in secure
areas. The limits of the utility of the Army’s Chinooks are
suggested perhaps by their maintenance schedule. The Army had
planned to withdraw the first aircraft by mid April in order for
it to undergo deep maintenance. However, as a result of the
Chinooks flying less than the anticipated — the expected increase
in flying hours after the commencement of combat operations did

See ‘COMAST Frago 43, 060641Z Mar 03’.
not occur – it was possible to defer this mandatory withdrawal by a month.\textsuperscript{386}

As the war wound down there was some speculation of sending the Chinooks forward to Baghdad, but this was a fantasy idea that did not receive the go-ahead due to their lack of a more than rudimentary electronic warfare capability. Brigadier David Elder, who served on Operation FALCONER as the commander of the CH47 detachment commented that the Chinooks were ‘not ready for a fight.’ One officer suggested that the Chinooks were sent so as to educate them in the ways of the Special Forces so as to ease their mindset towards being something besides a transport asset, although, ironically, that was precisely the role they played in

\textsuperscript{333(a)(iii)} In the end, the most useful outcome obtained by the Coalition from the CH47 detachment’s presence was that it freed up US and UK helicopters for more critical missions.\textsuperscript{387}

\textit{Psychological Warfare}

It is not possible to connect the Australian psyop detachment’s efforts to any specific SAS Squadron mission in Iraq. This author was also unable to assess the tactical employment or evaluate the mission success of any PSYOP products.\textsuperscript{388} It is


\textsuperscript{387} Comments by interview subjects J, NN, UU and CCC; and ‘CDF Executo 01/03 – Operation BASTILLE – AMP 11,’ 6 March 2003.

\textsuperscript{388} 533(a)(ii)
possible, however, to review the work of the psyop detachment in more general terms, and thereby suggest the importance of their contribution to the Coalition war effort. The full story of the Australian contribution to CJSOTF-W psychological warfare operations during Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER will have to wait.

Of the various capabilities the ADF provided to CJSOTF-W one of the smallest, but also one of the more interesting, was its psychological warfare detachment. Drawn from 1 Intelligence Battalion this small party of psyop specialists consisted of just four soldiers, three of whom were female. The OC was Captain Amanda Dewer. Serving as a part of the Australian SFTG they represented the Coalition’s only psyop asset in the entire CJSOTF-W AO. A fifth psyop specialist served on Mulholland’s staff as an IO coordinator and in doing so provided the link between SF community and US in the United States, the

Australia also had at a junior officer and NCO who happened to have been posted there to attend the US psyop course. Both were absorbed into the war process, assisting US personnel to research and design psyop products for use in the MEAO.

\[\text{Unless otherwise noted information for this section was taken from the following documents: ‘POR: Op FALCONER LO,’ 12 May 2003; and ‘1 Intelligence Battalion Debrief: Op Debrief – S4/7F,’ 22 May 2003. Access to both documents was provided by HQ 1 Int Bu.}\]
The Australian psyop detachment was responsible for local taskings in response to CJSOTF-W requirements. For the most part this took the form of printing leaflets for distribution into Iraq. For this purpose the detachment brought with them two of their printers. Demand for their products was such that a third was hurriedly sent out from Australia. Some of these products the psyop detachment developed itself while others came through the feed from

Table 5.2 outlines the number and type of products the psyop detachment provided to CJSOTF-W.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Product</th>
<th>Produced and Printed</th>
<th>Printed Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets</td>
<td>3,976,000</td>
<td>4,484,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbills</td>
<td>52,750</td>
<td>36,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4 Handbills</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of items printed was 8,556,472. The detachment also produced their products in JPEG and COREL formats for distribution to other psyop elements in the MEAO.

The themes the psyop campaign targeted were across the spectrum of war. For example, the detachment produced leaflets whose intent was to:
• persuade the Iraqi Army to remain neutral;

• persuade Iraqi security forces to malinger, desert or surrender;

• persuade decision makers not to use WMDs or TBMs; and

• influence opposition groups to support the Coalition.

The psyop detachment did develop some Australian specific products. The themes these targeted included inducing Iraqi personnel to favour self-preservation, projecting a favourable image of Australian SAS actions, and establishing control over the target audience in order to gain their support.

The themes expressed by the Coalition’s psyop campaign also changed as the conflict evolved. For example, at the start of the war the intent was to convince Iraqi soldiers to cease resistance, and once having taken this step provide them with instruction on how to surrender. The primary target of these leaflets was Iraq’s Border Guards and the troops manning the observation posts who might warn higher command when the SF troops of CJSOTF-W breached the border berm. As the war progressed the psyop campaign’s themes changed to that of convincing Iraqi military and security personnel that the Coalition was winning and to not believe Saddam’s contradictory message. Post conflict assessment showed that neither of these efforts were terribly successful while Saddam was visible in Baghdad, or while al-Jazerra remained on the air. As the operation’s conclusion neared the psyop campaign’s
efforts changed again. This time the messages the Coalition stressed were to not carry a weapon, to not return to the battlefield, to not become a refugee and to be wary of unexploded ordnance.

While CJSOTF-W force elements entered Iraq with some leaflets on their vehicles, most of the psyop campaign’s materials reached its intended audience by air drop. These drops were undertaken mainly in support of US tasks, but there were 25 mission launched in direct support of the SAS Squadron. The platform used for these airdrops was the US Special Forces variant C130 that was known as a Combat Talon Aircraft.\textsuperscript{390}

The psyop detachment did give some consideration to supplementing their print-based campaign with a mobile loudspeaker effort. However, the idea did not get far due to the limited ADF capability in this area. Moreover, as the detachment was seventy-five percent female, there were issues of force protection.

Ironically, force protection did become an issue, although in an unexpected way. The psyop team spent nearly all of its time at the Coalition’s \textsuperscript{333(a)(iii)}. However, on one occasion they accepted the offer to participate in a leaflet drop over Iraq. After the mission, a photograph taken outwards through the open ramp clearly showed the vapour trail of a

\textsuperscript{390} The Combat Talon Aircraft comes in two types. They are the MC-130E Combat Talon I and MC-130H Combat Talon II. The author was unable to ascertain precisely which variant — if not both — flew the airdrop mission, however, it should be noted that the models are very similar.
surface-to-air missile passing just below the aircraft. This was a near miss that would have resulted in Operation FALCONER’s first combat fatalities.

Other Contingents

The ASNHQ-MEAO

McNarn and his ASNHQ-MEAO successfully fulfilled its three most important tasks for which it was deployed. These were:

• Protect Australian national interests;

• Serve as a conduit for information between the MEAO and the CDF; and

• Enhance engagement between ADF and Coalition partners.

Cosgrove was kept well informed of Australian operations and Coalition developments, even if at the expense of Bonser. In the ADF’s engagement with its Coalition partners — most importantly CENTCOM and other US staff — the ADF had unprecedented access and a degree of influence on the campaign plan that was greater than previously enjoyed, if still on the margins."
Ironically, McNarn was to discover after the war began that the
With the Fleet

A number of Army elements served in Iraq as a part of the Maritime Task Group. These included the RBS-70 teams from 16 Air Defence Regiment, the SAD Kanimbla and the LCM8 detachment. Of these Army elements the one that had the most varied experience was the LCM8 detachment, and in doing so its members would demonstrate the diverseness, flexibility and utility of possessing a brown water capability.

Soon after the Kanimbla arrival in the NAG the two LCM8s it was carrying were put into the water. The primary reason for this was because the Coalition plan for operations in the NAG called for the Kanimbla to act as a mother ship for a flotilla of US and UK RHIBs. The RHIBs required the deck space upon which the LCM8s normally rested. After unloading CDT3’s vehicles and equipment the LCM8s proceeded which would be their home until the onset of the conflict. The LCM8s’ crews would be collocated who took on responsibility for most of the eleven-man team’s administration.  


Although remaining under OPCON of the CTG633.1 then Captain (RAN) P D Jones — the LCM8 detachment acted more as an independent element carrying out jobs for both Australian and Coalition forces as needed, often away from the Kanimbla. Among the tasks the LCM detachment undertook were:

- unloading of CDT-3 equipment and its movement to shore upon arrival in NAG;
- training with British 539 Assault Squadron, RM Commandoes, including serving as range platform;
- assisting in movement of 3 Commando Brigade vehicles, equipment and personnel to forward staging area;
- serving as a dive or hydrographic platform for the clearing of waterways;
- laying of Dan buoys for traffic separation;
- assisting in capture and securing of Iraqi mine layers, and the subsequent transfer of mines;
- transferring of Iraqi prisoners of war;
- moving of Coalition personnel between vessels; and
- acting as forward operation platform and mother ship to Coalition RHIBs;
- serving as picket boat at mouth of the Khawr Abd Allah (KAA);
- acting as riverine patrol craft on the KAA; and
loading of Kanimbla and Manoora with ADF vehicles and stores for return to Australia.\(^{395}\)

The alacrity with which the Kanimbla disembarked the LCM8 detachment does raise the question of their necessity for the operation. The RAN would have known that the Kanimbla was to act as a RHIB mother ship once it arrived in the MEAO. Moreover, many of the tasks that the LCM8 detachment performed could have been undertaken by RHIBs. For the crews who served with the LCM8 detachment their belief was that no one had thought through the role they were to play. Instead, they had to spruik for work to keep themselves busy.

**Exchange Personnel**

Over thirty ADF members served during the war with Iraq attached to the military forces of a coalition partner. The personnel on these third nation deployments had been exchanged to a headquarters or unit of the US or British Army and deployed to the MEAO with that organisation. Such participation, however, was not automatic and required the permission of the CDF to deploy to the MEAO and the Government’s approval to engage in actions against Iraq.\(^{396}\)

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\(^{396}\) Comments by interview subject JJ; and ‘Sensitive Third Country Deployments in Support of Potential Coalition Operations against Iraq,’ 17 February 2003.
One such soldier was WO2 Joe Day. In January 2003 he arrived at the 1st Light Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion (1st LAR Bn) as part of an Australian exchange program with the USMC. He got there just in time. Three days after he reported for duty the unit received notice that it was to move and join Regimental Combat Team Five (RCT-5), a sub-formation of 1st Marine Division.397

In the early hours of 20 March Day’s unit passed through the breach engineers had made in the border berm and moved into Iraq. Day’s battalion was one of the first ground units into Iraq. The 1st LAR Bn’s primary task was to provide a screen for the advance of RCT-5 on Baghdad. His next days were a blur of exhaustion as the Marines fought their way to the Iraqi capital. At times Iraqi resistance was heavy and Day participated in numerous fire-fights and experienced at first hand the devastating effectiveness of USMC combined arms warfare. At other times Iraqi units surrendered en masse, rather than risk extermination. Day participated in the fall of Baghdad, after which his unit was assigned to TF Tripoli and pressed on to Tikrit, which the Marines took after a stiff fight. Day’s unit then transitioned to a stabilisation role before moving back down the highway for repatriation to the United States.

Illustration 5.18 provides a list of all ADF personnel who served with the force’s of a coalition partner during the war with Iraq.

Illustration 5.18

List of exchanged personnel who fought with Coalition Forces during war with Iraq

Conclusion

The ADF had a lucky war in Iraq. It achieved all of its military objectives, without suffering any fatalities. Moreover, the CDF and Australian Government implemented a war plan that succeeded in obtaining the strategic goals that laid behind the

country’s participation in the conflict. This is an achievement of which any nation can and should be proud.

However, it would be best to hedge against drawing too many conclusions from the Coalition’s military success against Iraq. There has rarely been in the annals of war an opponent as hopeless as the Iraqi military and a commander as incompetent as Saddam Hussein. To discern lessons on the nature of future warfighting from the Iraq Case Study would be a non-useful exercise for any incident below that of the strategic level of war. Moreover, from the Australian perspective the ADF did not experience a realistic test of its operational abilities, particularly those found in the domain of logistics. The ADF’s dependence on Coalition allies made for an efficient campaign, but says little about Australia’s ability to manage a conflict on its own or to prosecute a war at the operational level. The ADF’s progress towards jointness, if anything, suffered a setback as the three services reverted to their traditional role as component subordinates to a senior partner. Most significantly of all, no one in the Coalition realised that the war with Saddam was nothing more than a prequel. The real war for Iraq was about to begin.
Overcoming Deficiencies

In the aftermath of serious equipment deficiencies that were revealed during Operation STABILISE, the Australian intervention in East Timor in 1999, the Government recognised the need for a mechanism that streamlined the purchase of essential stores that were not normally held in the Defence inventory. Typically, the ADF’s acquisition of a new capability involved the item’s submission to a lengthy evaluation, testing and acquisition regime, and the identification of total-life requirements. Normally years passed between the identification of the need for a new capability and its fulfilment, no matter how simple or complex the item sought might be. It was in order to expedite this exacting process that the Government authorised what became known as the ‘Rapid Acquisition Program’. In addition to new capabilities Defence could use the Rapid Acquisition Program to purchase additional stocks of an existing item quickly that was not held in the quantities required by a forthcoming operation.  

In 2002 Joint Logistic Command (JLC), under Major General Peter Haddad, was the manager of purchases under the Rapid Acquisition Program. JLC’s early involvement in the BASTILLE

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399 A larger discussion of the conflict’s logistics can be found in, Albert Palazzo, Deploy, Sustain, Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 2008.

400 For a summary of the principles behind the Rapid Acquisition Program see, Department of Defence, Defence Instructions, ‘Rapid Acquisition of Capability, Log 4-1-008,’ 15 February 2008.
compartment – Haddad was Cosgrove’s strategic logistic advisor – allowed its staff to identify gaps in the developing operation’s requirements, and to identify those materials which it needed to source quickly either from within Australia or by accessing the world market. JLC raised two requests for Operation BASTILLE. Rapid Acquisition Request Number Nine covered existing capabilities that the ADF held in quantities that were insufficient for the deployment’s projected requirements. It contained 66 items and had a value of AUS$12.5 million. It included NBC suits, WMD detection equipment, individual protection equipment, sleeping bags, and cold-weather and camouflage clothing.

Rapid Acquisition Request Number Ten sought either improvements in the performance of existing line items or the purchase of entirely new capabilities. It contained 290 items and had a cost of AUS$144.1 million. The materials requested included anthrax and smallpox vaccine, ballistic and electronic warfare protection devices for the CH-47 helicopters, personal location beacons for the SFTG, satellite terminals, communication equipment and weapons and ammunition for the Special Forces. Not all of these acquisitions sought in Rapid Acquisition Requests Nine and Ten were available before the deployment. However, most did reach the MEAO prior to the start of combat operations.

Some pieces of kit that the ADF sought were of such a sensitive nature that their originating government restricted their export. It was only due to its close relationship with the United States that Australia was able to obtain all of the
critical items that the ADF needed if it was to deploy. Further complicating the acquisition process was that the sale or export of some US-sourced items required Congressional approval before the Pentagon could authorise their sale to a foreign military organisation. The US military and manufacturers could only export these items by obtaining a special dispensation from Congress under the Foreign Military Sales Program. Among the items that Australia sought that required this approval were

In order to facilitate the ADF’s access to after its forces deployed to the MEAO, Australia also

It obtained The RAAF returned all serviceable stocks to US depots at the campaign’s conclusion. The final cost of these purchases was approximately AUS$2.5 million.
While the United States was forthcoming in meeting Australian requests the ADF did experience some difficulty in gaining access to a variety of equipment and stores. Australia had to enter the world market at the same that the United States and the United Kingdom were attempting to overcome their force’s own deficiencies. As could be expected, the US and UK defence officials were also trying to manage their own hurried quests for critical items – for example there was a world wide rush on body armour. Thus, Australia’s limited purchasing power, relative to its coalition partners, served to increase the ADF’s dependence on the good graces of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom.

In a few cases there were simply no spare items available for purchase. In order for the Australian Army’s CH-47 helicopters to deploy they required an urgent upgrade to their ballistic and electronic protection kits. Planners judged the Iraqi threat environment as too dangerous for these craft in their then unprotected state. In an example of the high-degree of cooperation that existed between the United States and Australia, the US Army removed the required kits from several of their own aircraft and made them available to the ADF. Without these protection upgrades it is unlikely that the Australian Chinooks would have been ready to support the SFTG, even in the restricted role that they did play. This incident also highlighted the extent that the United States was willing to go to in order to assure the presence of as many nations as possible in the Coalition. The Head of the
Email correspondence with Major General Simon Willis.
Clearly, the reliability of access to scarce equipment is one of the hazards of a dependence on an ally, even one as close to Australia as the United States. That the United States agreed to satisfy as many of the Australian demands as it did owed much to the warm relations that exists between the two countries. In addition, the posting of Australian liaison officers to key US headquarters and the intersession of defence staff from the Australian Embassy in Washington helped to lubricate personal approaches. These officers had already established favourable contacts and working relations with their opposites. Afterwards, Willis commented that the then Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs,
General Peter Pace, had let him know that he would intercede to expedite an Australian demand if needed. Of course, Operation BASTILLE was not the first time Australia had faced this problem, nor made use of personal contacts. During the work-up for Operation SLIPPER, Cosgrove made a direct request to the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General Eric Shinseki, for assistance in the procurement of particular items.

It must be admitted that if the ability of ADF personnel to massage the US system at all levels was a factor in the successful obtainment of stores then the converse was also true. Australian lack of understanding of the nuances of the US logistic system did cause some confusion and delay between the Coalition partners. For example, an interoperability study attributed the slowness with which the ADF obtained better access to US logistic stores to its ‘failure to take early action to request an increase in the force activity designator (FAD) for ADF units deployed.’403 This proved to be a minor issue, however, and by and large the layers of agreements that existed between the two countries removed the potential for a ‘war-stopper’ to prevent the ADF’s participation in the war.

Some items that Australia needed were more critical than others. Anthrax vaccine and access to US strategic lift were, from the Australian perspective, true war stoppers. Without the willingness of the United States to share its own limited capacity

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the ADF could never have deployed, at least in the time frame dictated by the CENTCOM plan. From one perspective the United States was simply supporting its own strategic goals by making sure Australian forces were in position to cross the border alongside US forces when the war with Iraq began. Yet there is also no doubt that the support Australia received in obtaining US equipment was a result of the strong and long-term relationship that existed between the two nations. In summing up the US response to Australian requests Willis noted that ‘we received fantastic support.’

The ADF also received some urgently needed items from other countries who quietly responded to an Australian request for assistance. For example, Other countries were not so forthcoming, however.

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404 Email correspondence with Major General Simon Willis.
That the ADF needed to raise Rapid Acquisitions in the first place does call into question Defence’s inventory policy. After all, many of the items sought were of a fairly mundane nature and already in widespread use by military organisations around the world, for example individual protection equipment or ballistic goggles for eye protection. For many items the Defence Material Organisation’s acquisition policy is to maintain only minimal stocks on hand in the belief that more can be acquired from the world market when necessary and within the needed timeframe. The risk management of significant shortfalls in equipment - and capabilities for that matter (electronic warfare devices for aircraft, for example) - may represent industry best practice, but it does confound the role of the ADF in the country’s defence with the goals of business management while also exposing the nation to forces that are beyond its control to manage. In addition, fleet managers do not appear to have appreciated the difficulty in securing critical items in competition with the world’s largest military organisations whose buying power dwarfed that of Australia. The lack of responsiveness from manufactures in the national support base should also be of considerable concern.

In-theatre Logistics

The only formed logistic force element that the Australian Army provided to Operations BASTILLE and FALCONNER was the CSSG, a
component of the SFTG. Its responsibilities were to provide 1st/2nd/3rd line support to Hindmarsh’s command, maintain the Australian compound and, whenever possible, provide assistance to the US logistic forces of JSOTF-W. Its story was more fully told in Chapter 5. The RAN and the RAAF were responsible for their own 2nd/3rd line in-theatre support. The RAN relied on its Logistic Support Element meet much of its fleet replenishment requirements, while the RAAF attached to each of its air components elements of an Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron (ECSS). These were: 381 ECSS - APC-3; 382 ECCS - F/A-18; and 386 ECSS - C130.

In addition to the CSSG, the This was the Intermediate Support Base (ISB) which the SOCOMD had raised to support the SAS Squadron that deployed to Afghanistan under Operation SLIPPER in 2002. It was also at the ISB that the Special Forces left the vehicles, equipment and stores that they took out of Afghanistan when the Government ordered home the SAS contingent in anticipation of Operation BASTILLE. As mentioned previously the Special Forces established a small repair party at the ISB who serviced, refurbished and refitted the SAS Squadron’s vehicles, weapons and equipment prior to their movement.

Once the war began the ISB played a minimal role in the support of Australian ground operations. The SFTG’s line of communications ran from their AO in the Western Desert of Iraq to Some Australian sourced sustainment equipment
required by the SFTG did transit and the ISB, but the great majority of the SF logistic needs were met from US and UK sources.

That the ISB fell into disuse after the commencement of operations, need not to have been the case. There was another ADF ground unit nearby that the ISB could have supported but for which it had no responsibility. This was the RAN’s Clearance Diving Team - 3 (CDT-3) whose Clearance Divers were not yet a SOCOMD asset and as a naval unit CDT-3’s support requirements fell under the control of the Maritime Component Command. Unfortunately for these sailors the logisticians at Fleet HQ in Sydney found it difficult to accept that the divers were no longer in the Kanimbla and that these men required land based support. CDT-3’s requirements could have easily been met by the ISB – indeed it did so on a couple of occasions on an unofficial basis when the divers’ support became desperate. However, the inflexibility of the ADF chain of command and the multiplicity of logistic lines of communication meant that CDT-3 could not place demands directly with the ISB. The result was a laborious and time-consuming sustainment process that forced the divers to reach back to HQ Maritime Component Command for their support while the Army personnel at the ISB stood ready to assist but were unable to do so due to a lack of authority.

After the ADF transitioned to Operation CATALYST the ISB again came to the fore. It was the exit point for most Army
personnel who were returning to Australia, as well as for some members of the RAN and RAAF including the sailors of CDT-3. It also served as the cleaning, inventorying and packing point for much of the deployment’s land-based vehicles and equipment. The ISB would subsequently transition into the FLLA-K, a role it continued to fulfil into 2010.

The Australian Army was able to maintain such a small logistic presence in the MEAO because the ADF planned to obtain most of the deployment’s support from coalition, contractor and host nation sources. This was a key objective of the CDF who insisted that the component commands had to minimise their in-theatre logistic footprint. Ideally, the only demands that the task groups were to place with the national support base were for Australian-specific items, or for items for which there was no available source from within the MEAO.

This policy had several benefits. It eased the strain on Australia’s 7000-kilometre line of communication, reduced wastage, minimised the number of support staff required in-theatre (thereby allowing greater contribution from the combat elements), and limited the operation’s overall cost by lowering expenditure on aircraft charters or other strategic lift options. Of critical significance, however, was that the ability to access the supply chain of other organisations enabled the ADF to fit the deployment within the government’s inflexible manpower cap. It also simplified the force’s return to Australia since it meant that there would be fewer personnel, vehicles and stores to bring home.
The ADF’s policy on minimising its logistic footprint was in part representative of the force’s institutional culture. In all of the wars in which Australia has participated, its military forces have depended on a senior partner for much, if not the majority, of their logistic support. During the First World War, for example, the British integrated Australian formations into their lines of communication, and met nearly all of the diggers’ transport, rations, fodder, ammunition and engineering stores requirements. In the Second World War, Australian troops again received much of their support from their UK and US allies. This remained the practice in the Iraq War.
In effect, Australian forces in the MEAO bought many of the materials they required from a Coalition partner’s supply chain rather than seeking the same items from the national support base.

To provide further logistic options, JLC negotiated standing contracts with commercial suppliers who had a long-standing presence in the region. For the ADF the key companies were Inchcape Shipping Services, Seven Seas and Superior Foods. In addition, the component commands had authority to access support from local contractors and host-nation channels. They could also hire local people to perform certain services, such as transport or construction tasks.

Apart from basing rights and access to local tradesmen the host-nation support base did not prove particularly useful, however. The relatively small economies of the region were unable to meet the great surge in demand that resulted from the arrival of the Coalition’s forces. In addition, access to contractor support was hampered by the ADF’s relative lack of purchasing power when compared to the scale of the US and UK deployments. From the contractor’s perspective Australia’s Coalition partners were more attractive customers due to the potential for greater profit. In addition, the entry of the United States into the marketplace forced up the price on what
would have been normally available items. For example, CENTCOM acquired 20 foot containers by the thousand which resulted in a four-fold price increase. The ISB’s requirement, by contrast, was for just a handful. The result was that contractors – even those with whom Australia had a standing contract – tended to receive ADF demands with less enthusiasm than those submitted by, for example, US logisticians. Contractor supply was also of less utility to the SFTG due to their distance from major population centres. Therefore, the RAN and RAAF task groups made greater use of contractor support than the SFTG.

Table 6.1 identifies most supply categories and their preferred sources:

Table 6.1
Preferred Supply Sources

<table>
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<th>Supply Type</th>
<th>Australian Sourced</th>
<th>Coalition Sourced</th>
<th>Contractor Sourced</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space: Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space: Living</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Petroleum</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rations</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Level 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Levels 2, 3 &amp; 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

405 Interview Subject S Comments.
406 Palazzo, Deploy, Sustain, Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq, p. 37.
When two or three sources could provide the same support, field commanders were to favour non-Australian sources. The COMAST’s support plan outlined the source priorities. They were, in descending priority, in-theatre commercial, Coalition partners, Coalition-arranged contractor, host-nation, and the Australian national support base. The support arrangements covered the full range of services, not just materials. Component commanders could contract for needs such as base administration, including office cleaning, sanitation removal, and power supply; cooked meals at Coalition messes; medical services; and engineering support such as the hiring of tradespeople. For example, personnel attached to the ASNHQ-MEAO received nearly all of the support they required from the US base from which they operated. The SFTG had full access to the US contractor-managed dining facility.

In actuality, the national support base was the supporter of last resort. Field commanders understood that if an item was obtainable from a Coalition partner or a Gulf contractor, then they should pursue those sources and not request the materials from Australia. In particular, bulky commodity items, especially rations, fuel and common ammunition, were to come from Persian
Gulf sources whenever possible. Ideally, the national support base was to provide Australian-specific items only. This policy also had a fiscal component. Air transport is expensive. If the ADF could reduce its transport requirements it would need to charter fewer aircraft.

The government’s decision to not deploy a Force Support Battalion for Operation BASTILLE did have some unanticipated consequences for the conflict’s support. With the reduction in the Army’s role in the Iraq War to largely a Special Forces contribution, and in light of the ability of the United States and contractors to meet much of the Australian deployment’s support, it was no longer necessary to deploy a 2nd/3rd line support unit. However, once troops arrived in the MEAO it became clear that there were some residual support tasks that could not be performed by Australia’s coalition partners or be mitigated by contractors. Of these, the most important was that of cross-levelling critical stores between the five task groups.

The need to cross-level critical stores came about because not all units deployed with their mandated sets of individual protection equipment and/or NBC suits and counter-measure components. The COMAST’s CONOPS required each deploying member to possess three sets of NBC protection suits as well as accompanying gear. The RAAF had been particularly egregious in deploying its personnel without the correct quantity of such equipment. Also some people had sets of equipment that were not complete, thereby rendering the entire suit useless. Once these individuals reached
their destinations in the MEAO they were surrounded by US troops who took their NBC drills seriously and found themselves in an environment in which WMD equipment had appreciated considerably in value since their departure from Australia.

The reality was that as the task groups completed their hurried preparations for movement to the Middle East there was neither time for all personnel to receive protective clothing in the authorised number, or the items that JLC had sourced had not arrived in sufficient quantities before these units headed overseas. Thus it became necessary for the deployed Australian forces to conduct an in-theatre inventory of task group holdings of what had now become highly desirable equipment, and to reposition stocks so that all personnel had as much individual protection and NBC equipment as possible.

By default the cross-levelling task fell to McNarn’s national headquarters. Since the Task Groups were organised along component lines, and as HQAST had not deployed an advanced HQ in-theatre there was no other joint organisation suitably positioned to undertake the job. Unfortunately for McNarn’s team the deployment had not provided the national headquarters with a support component. Instead, the ADF’s plan was that the ASNHQ-MEAO was to source all of its non-Australian specific requirements from the US base at which it was housed. All McNarn had to call upon was a handful of logistic specialist staff officers. This became an additional duty as planners had made no provision for spare
logistic capacity when they set the establishment of the national headquarters.

By the eve of the war the cross-levelling task was nearly done, but some gaps still existed. For example, the Darwin’s Nerve Agent Pre-treatment Set requirement remained unfilled. However, most troops had received an adequate quantity of protective equipment. What is more puzzling is that as late as 17 March incoming personnel were still arriving in the MEAO without any CBA or Kevlar helmets. On this occasion it was due to the DFSU denying these individuals an issue prior to their departure from Australia. The task of finding and issuing these individuals their IPE then fell on McNarn’s already overtaxed establishment.407

Sustaining the Deployment

To maintain the forces in the MEAO, JLC established a sustainment routine. Deployed units made demands through several types of systems. These were SDSS or LNIDS for the Special Operations, Maritime Patrol, Air Combat, and national headquarters task groups; and by SLIMS, AMPS, or signal for the Maritime Task Group. Each task group made their demands along separate component lines of communications. These meant that demands from the:

- SFTG were submitted to Special Forces Component Command,
• Maritime TG were submitted to the Maritime Component Command, and;

• The two air-based task groups submitted to the Air Component Command.

In effect, each component command managed its own line of communication between their respective task groups and the national support base.

Upon reaching Australia demands were then routed to the appropriate Joint Logistic Unit or RAAF warehouse. For example, demands from the CH-47 detachment went to Joint Logistic Unit North Queensland in Townsville, the warehouse that normally supported this unit. Similarly, Joint Logistic Unit South, in Adelaide, managed demands from the RBS-70 detachments that served with the Maritime Task Group. If the warehouse held the item, the unit entered it into CVS and placed it into the line of communication. Demands for items that were not in stock, or which were not part of the ADF inventory, were sent to fleet managers who located a supplier from which to purchase the item.

When the item was ready for shipping, it travelled to the MEAO by air. Materials sourced in the eastern states went first to RAAF Base Richmond for consolidation. The stores then travelled west by a chartered Boeing 727 to RAAF Base Pearce. The Boeing 727 service operated twice weekly, with one flight stopping in Adelaide to pick up items prepared by Joint Logistic Unit South.
Stores originating from the Joint Logistic Unit North, in Darwin, arrived at RAAF Base Pearce via commercial air service.

Once in Perth, the cargo became the responsibility of a specially formed unit, Mounting Base West, which JLC raised on 18 February 2003. This was a joint unit with a strong Army complexion. It contained personnel drawn from Joint Logistic Unit West, Joint Movement Control Office Perth, 1 Air Terminal Squadron Pearce Detachment, Joint Ammunition Logistic Organisation West and 10 Force Support Battalion which provided augmentation terminal specialists. Mounting Base West oversaw the arrival of cargo and passengers at Pearce, their reconsolidation, the loading of aircraft, and their dispatch to the MEAO. During Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER Mounting Base West supported a twice-weekly departure of two chartered Ilyushin 76 cargo aircraft, for a total of four aircraft per week. Periodically, when a backlog of stores accumulated, 1 JMOVGP increased the sustainment flight’s capacity by hiring the larger Antonov 124 in place of an Ilyushin.

While the sustainment flow that JLC designed generally worked well, some problems did emerge that handicapped the ability of the national support base to provide support to the deployment in a suitably timely manner.
In many instances, even perfect documentation would not prevent a host nation from imposing a mandatory waiting period of several weeks on incoming cargo, particularly shipments that contained ammunition. Moreover each country had different procedures for the clearance of cargo, a technicality that made it extremely difficult to cross-level stores rapidly across international borders.

The need to obtain diplomatic clearance for incoming materials was particularly troubling in the build-up for Operation BASTILLE. Other equipment requirements were shipped out from Australia in time or were obtained from US sources. Had the SAS troopers depended on the timely arrival of the full range of their vehicles and kit from Perth they may have missed the war due to limitations in available strategic lift and as a result of custom clearance issues. Although there were no instances of cargo delay affecting operations the potential for this to occur was real, especially if war fighting occurred at a higher than anticipated tempo which

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409 Email, ‘Plan Bastille-Movement Advice on Supply Chain Management,’ 5 December 2002.

410 Ibid., pp. 83-84.
would have necessitated a more robust response from the national support base.

Another ongoing issue that JLC had to manage was the rigidness of the sustainment pipeline that resulted from an inherent lack of joint logistic awareness. Since each task group submitted its demands along component lines JLC had little scope to manage the sustainment flow across the operation’s multiple lines of communication. The deficiencies in this approach were highlighted by the challenges the Army’s RBS-70 teams that were serving with the Kanimbla faced in securing a replacement missile from Australia. Since the line of communications for these soldiers ran from the ship in the North Arabian Gulf to Maritime Component Command in Sydney the RAN was responsible for acting on their demand. However, as the item sought belonged to the Army, and since there were no protocols to expedite joint support across lines of communication, it took far longer than necessary for the article to reach the air defence gunners. This situation was not helped by the fact that Land Component Command had no representation in the MEAO and that there was no mechanism for joint logistics in theatre. The plight of CDT-3 was an even more dramatic case in point. By far-and-away CDT-3 received the worst support of any Australian unit serving in the MEAO. The sustainment that the divers received through the maritime line of communication was so poor that the divers virtually became wards of nearby coalition units who fortunately came to the assistance of these land-based sailors.
Descent into Anarchy

A convenient date for the fall of Baghdad is 9 April 2003, the day a US armoured recovery vehicle pulled down the massive statue of Saddam from its pedestal in Firdus Square. Fighting in the city continued for several more days, but the United States had succeeded in its desire to sweep away Iraq’s Baathist Regime. Saddam escaped the city and remained at large until his capture in Tikrit on 14 December 2003. His sons, Uday and Qusay, also went into hiding only to be killed in July in a shoot-out with US forces.

The fall of Baghdad would not bring peace to Iraq or allow the US to achieve its political goals, however. When George W Bush spoke from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (the ‘Mission Accomplished’ Speech) and declared an end to major combat operations he was technically right.\textsuperscript{411} The US military had accomplished its military objective – the overthrow of the Saddam Regime. However, the US’s political objective of reshaping the Middle East remained, a task, which according to Thomas Ricks, was only now beginning.\textsuperscript{412} A consensus has emerged among scholars that the Bush Administration was woefully unprepared for this next


\textsuperscript{412} Ricks, Fiasco, p. 135.
phase of its Mideast operation and through a failure of appreciation and planning allowed victory to slip from its grasp.413

Almost simultaneously with the fall of Baghdad its residents commenced a spontaneous and widespread orgy of looting and destruction that lay waste to much of the city’s governmental buildings, cultural centres, and infrastructure assets. Mobs reduced buildings to empty shells, having removed even the wiring and plumbing from the walls while hospitals lost medicines, equipment and beds. No institution was safe as looters raided the National Museum and National Library and ransacked both. Millions of dollars in hard currencies were believed stolen from bank vaults and the Iraqi Central Bank was set on fire. Even Baghdad’s sewerage treatment plants attracted the mob’s attention. By 10 April the CDF’s Daily briefing referred to a looming humanitarian crisis with essential services in Baghdad operating at a minimal level.414 Similar instances of theft occurred across Iraq, but none were as intense as that carried out by the residents of the capital.415 The result was that after years of sanctions, multiple


USAF/RAF strategic bombing campaigns, and neglect by Saddam, Iraq’s tottering infrastructure had had enough and finally collapsed.

Illustration 5.1416

Iraq Central Bank Set on Fire by Looters

The failure of the social order in Baghdad occurred with such speed that the Coalition was unable to react, and quickly lost control of the situation. Even if it had had the capability or desire to intervene, it is unlikely the Coalition could have done so rapidly enough. One of the few Australians to witness Iraq’s

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descent into anarchy was WO2 Joe Day. He had arrived in Baghdad with the Marines of 1st LAR Battalion, the unit that he had joined a few months earlier as part of an exchange program. He recalled that when his LAV section first arrived in Saddam City (now Sadr City) the local people lined the streets and cheered them as liberators. Soon, however, Day noted a change in the mood and within hours the looting began. He remarked:

‘it was hard to believe that just a few hours before, the people were subdued and glad to see us. Now they were rampaging through the streets, stealing everything that wasn’t bolted down and destroying everything that was.’

While mobs ransacked the city US forces stood by and watched; having received no instruction from higher headquarters they allowed the looters the freedom of the city. The only building to receive Coalition protection was the one that housed the Iraqi oil ministry. The retired Marine turned historian, Bing West, witnessed the scene. He described the looters as locusts that ‘danced by in carnival glee,’ while US troops stood to one side. West asked a US colonel what he was going to do to restore order and received the reply, ‘nothing. I have no such orders’. The colonel continued, ‘they deserve whatever they can haul away,

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after what Saddam did to them.419

At a press briefing Rumsfeld dismissed questions about the breakdown of law and order with the remark, ‘stuff happens.’ He then continued, ‘freedom’s untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.’420

The collapse of social order in Iraq had unfortunate consequences for the rebuilding of Iraq. In the short-term the destruction of the buildings that housed Iraq’s Ministries meant that the bureaucrats who ran the state stayed home. In brief, the institutions by which the Iraqis would govern, and through which the United States would create a new nation, no longer existed and would have to be rebuilt from scratch. More seriously for the longer-term, the onset of lawlessness dispelled any sense that the United States was in charge and cost CENTCOM the awe the local people should have had for their liberators. Moreover, according to Toby Dodge, a secure environment is essential for establishing an occupation’s credibility and legitimacy. In not providing the security the city needed the United States created the opportunity

419 Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe*, p. 5.

for an outbreak of criminally motivated violence which served to later smooth the rise of a politically motivated insurgency. 421

The United States and Phase IV

The violence that swept Iraq after the Baghdad’s fall to the United States was not preordained. It was made possible by errors committed by the Bush Administration. 422 In a misreading of the human terrain US planners did not realise that Phase IV operations were always going to be the decisive stage in the reordering of Iraq and the Middle East. The conflict’s conventional war phase was merely the preliminary round. 423


424 Ibid., p. 20.
This planning debacle would have such profound implications for the nature of the conflict in Iraq that its explanation warrants some detail. The Australian Government did receive some advice on the consequences of getting Phase IV wrong. A Defence Strategy Minute to the Minister warned that the Iraqis would not tolerate a ‘straight out foreign occupation for any length of time’, and that Phase IV was ‘where the war would be won or lost.’

Instead, Franks’s focus throughout the lead-up to the war was on getting to Baghdad and removing Saddam. Once Franks finally did order some Phase IV planning in the last days of peace he established it as a separate operation with a separate staff that

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The day after Bush delivered the ‘Mission Accomplished Speech’ Franks left the war and returned to Tampa. Soon afterwards he retired.

In the Pentagon there was no interest in seeing US forces take on a long-term peace-keeping role. Rumsfeld did not believe that the appropriate role for the superbly balanced and hard hitting US military machine was peace-keeping or state-building, a view echoed by much of his senior military and bureaucratic leadership. What happened after the declaration of military victory was not of great importance to those shaping the war in Washington and Rumsfeld, and his “neocon” aides, had no intention of running the Iraqi Government. So great was Pentagon opposition to a lengthy presence in Iraq that one particularly astute commentator, George Packer, chose to describe the absence of a Phase IV plan as a deliberate omission. Instead, in a remarkable disregard for history US officials and planners convinced themselves that the very people who they had tormented for years would rush to welcome them as liberators and that a new Iraqi state, one favourable to the West, would emerge spontaneously from the ruins of the Baathist Regime using the same institutions that had served Saddam. On the eve of hostilities Cheney offered the

428 Comments by interview subject D.


430 Packer, Assassins’ Gate, p. 147.
prediction that ‘things have gotten so bad inside Iraq ... my belief is we will ... be greeted as liberators.’\footnote{Dana Milbank, ‘Upbeat Tone Ended With War,’ \textit{The Washington Post}, 29 March 2003, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A44801-2003Mar28?language=printer (accessed 28 October 2009).} In this vein, Franks made the first dot point in his message of freedom to the Iraqi people the assertion that the Coalition came not as conquerors but as liberators.\footnote{Tommy R Franks, ‘Freedom Message to the Iraqi People,’ nd.} The White House, Rumsfeld and his staff, and Franks and his planners had all failed to appreciate the extent to which Iraq was a broken society held together only by Saddam’s brutality.\footnote{For a discussion of this theme see, Dodge, ‘US Intervention and Possible Iraqi Futures’, pp. 110-112 and Gordon, ‘The Strategy to Secure Iraq did not Foresee a 2\textsuperscript{nd} War.’} That the required institutions would not survive the removal of Saddam had neither been anticipated nor mitigated against. From the perspective of Washington and Tampa the completion of Phase III was seen as the point of victory and the focus purpose of Phase IV was on bringing the troops home.\footnote{Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, pp. 119-120 and 142; Dodge, ‘US Intervention and Possible Iraqi Futures,’ pp. 110-112; Toby Dodge, Inventing Iraq: \textit{The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied}, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, p. 163; and Michael R Gordon, ‘The Strategy to Secure Iraq did not Foresee a 2\textsuperscript{nd} War,’ \textit{The New York Times}, 19 October 2004.}

If the inability to halt the looting was a result of the absence of orders from CENTCOM, the lack of sufficient troops to control the streets of Baghdad was due to Pentagon decisions regarding manning levels. Enamoured by the technology of the Revolution in Military Affairs which he had directed, Rumsfeld no longer saw manpower as the decisive edge in war.\footnote{On this point see, Frederick W Kagan, \textit{Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy}, Encounter Books, New York, 2006, pp. 354-55.} Consequently, he fought against efforts to assign more personnel to the task.
with the result that CENTCOM lacked the troops-on-the-ground mass with which to awe Baghdad’s population. The result was that at the moment of victory the momentum which had carried US forces into Baghdad evaporated and the opposition seized the initiative.436

Not everyone in the Pentagon agreed with Rumsfeld’s judgement on manpower requirements but most kept quiet rather than expose themselves to the Secretary’s wrath. One exception was the Chief of Staff of the Army. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 24 February 2003 General Eric Shinseki expressed his belief that the occupation of Iraq would require ‘something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers.’437 Shinseki’s estimate derived from the analysis of past operations of a similar nature and conformed to the advice offered by a range of think-tanks and government research centres including the Rand Corporation, US Army War College, US Institute of Peace and the National Defence University’s Institute for National Strategic Studies.438

Shinseki’s estimate brought forth stern rebukes from the civilian leadership of the Department of Defence. To the House Budget Committee Wolfowitz dismissed the figures as being ‘widely off the mark’. The Deputy Secretary explained why fewer troops were needed, namely:

436 Gordon, ‘The Strategy to Secure Iraq did not Foresee a 2nd War.’


438 Ricks, Fiasco, p. 113.
• No history of ethnic strife in Iraq;
• Iraqi civilians would welcome the coalition as liberators; and
• Other nations would provide troops for the occupation.439

Rumsfeld followed up Wolfowitz’s attack on the Chief of Staff of the Army by stating that ‘the idea that it would take several hundred thousand U. S. forces I think is far off the mark’.440 Shinseki’s retirement – as scheduled at the end of his term – followed four months later.

The result of this attitude was that soon after Bush’s declaration of victory the Pentagon moved to commence a draw-down of troops in Iraq, as well as to cancel the deployment of scheduled follow-on forces. The assumption in Washington was that it would bring home the first 50,000 troops within 90 days of the war’s end and another 50,000 every 30 days after that until all forces had returned.441 Accordingly, when Franks visited Baghdad for the first time on 16 April he set his staff the task of starting to make plans to leave.442

If there was one area of Phase IV planning that one would have expected to have received attention it was the security of

440 Ibid.
441 Gordon and Trainor, Cobra II, pp. 460-461.
442 Michael R Gordon, ‘The Strategy to Secure Iraq did not Foresee a 2nd War’.
Iraq’s oil infrastructure. Iraqi oil revenue featured heavily in the US concept for post-war reconstruction. The Bush Administration hoped to pay for much of this cost through the increased export of Iraqi oil. If Saddam damaged or destroyed Iraq’s oil fields, as he did Kuwait’s in the 1993 war, the United States would not be able to restart the Iraqi economy quickly nor cheaply. Planners also predicted that the flow-on effect on the world economy of the loss of Iraq’s oil would be considerable.

There were some reports that had anticipated the descent into anarchy, both from United States and Australian sources. The US reports failed to influence Pentagon priorities and policies while those that originated in Australia were too late and never in a position to inform the wider Coalition.


444 ‘ASNHQ-MEAO Sitrep 056 (as at 16 1900Z Dec 02)’; and ‘Brief for HSO – CENTCOM Planning for Securing and Repairing the Iraqi Oil Infrastructure,’ 15 December 2002.
However, these voices went against the accepted wisdom and had no effect in shaping US Phase IV operations.

It is for the reason outlined above that what little Phase IV planning the United States did do focused on short-term humanitarian relief. The agency that was to carry out this task was the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) under the retired Lieutenant General Jay M Garner. Garner, himself, described his organisation as ‘ad hoc’ and admitted to the House International Relations Committee that he never had enough time to formulate a plan.\textsuperscript{447}

Although well-intentioned, Garner could not overcome his appointment’s handicaps, or the ongoing infighting between the Department of Defence and the Department of State over which agency would direct the reconstruction of Iraq, a battle from which Rumsfeld emerged the winner despite his opposition to the US military’s participation in state building.\textsuperscript{448}


In Garner’s defence, however, it must be recognised that the Bush Administration never intended ORHA to take control of a country in which law and order was absent. The failure of the military to prevent Iraq’s collapse into anarchy had the effect of making Garner’s nearly impossible task into one that was even more so.450

So ineffective was Garner’s organisation that it lasted only a few months before Bush appointed L Paul Bremer III as his representative in Baghdad. Renamed the Coalition Provisional Authority, Bremer’s sweeping mandate was similar in scope to that of General Douglas MacArthur during his occupation and remaking of Japan after its defeat in the Second World War. It also was Bremer who took the two fatal decisions that helped to transform the criminal instability then widespread in Baghdad into a political insurgency against the United States and the nascent Iraqi state. On 16 May 2003 Bremer decreed the de-Baathification of the Iraqi Government and put 50,000 bureaucrats, managers and technocrats out of work. A week later, on 23 May, he dissolved the Iraqi Army, Police and Ministry of Interior and thereby put onto the street


700,000 armed, humiliated and unemployed men.\textsuperscript{451} The disbandment of the Iraqi Army has been described as ‘one of the greatest strategic mistakes of the Bush administration.’\textsuperscript{452}

The origins of the insurgency that continues to bedevil Iraq lay in US assumptions on the nature and response of Iraqi society to its conquest. Subsequent events would prove these judgements to be either overly optimistic or unfounded. The uprising was not part of a centrally directed plan that Saddam had set in place in which the nation would adopt guerrilla tactics in the face of conventional military defeat.\textsuperscript{453} Nor would it prove to be merely the work of what Rumsfeld labelled ‘dead-enders.’\textsuperscript{454} The insurgency that the Baathists initiated would also evolve with the arrival of Al-Qaeda in Iraq in early 2004 and the emergence of a civil war between the country’s Sunni and Shiite sects over which stream of the Islamic faith would dominate.\textsuperscript{455} While the situation improved during the tenure of General David Petraeus it is largely US casualty rates that have declined whereas the local population continues to fall victim to the fighting in large numbers.\textsuperscript{456}

\textsuperscript{451} Ricks, \textit{Fiasco}, pp. 159 and 162; Packer, \textit{The Assassins’ Gate}, pp. 191 and 320; and Phillips, \textit{Losing Iraq}, pp. 140-141.

\textsuperscript{452} Corum, \textit{Bad Strategies}, p. 209.


\textsuperscript{455} West, \textit{The Strongest Tribe}, p. 28.

remains hard for the US and remade Iraqi Governments to escape the consequences of the fact that the US spent far more time planning to win the war than it had planning to win the peace.\textsuperscript{457} 

Return to Australia\textsuperscript{458} 

As the United States began its occupation of Iraq the ADF focused on bringing home those troops whose job was now done. On the day after the war commencement – 19 March – HQAST proposed an order of priority for the return home. This was by no means early – no one expected the war to last too long and the lead time for the charter of air and/or sealift was about six weeks.\textsuperscript{459} Moreover, Australia had always intended a rapid withdrawal of its forces. Those elements identified as being high capability war-fighting assets Cosgrove wanted them returned as early as possible so that they could be rested and reconstituted, and then be available for any emerging tasks.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{453}(a)(ii)} 

although the later would be the last to leave due to intra-theatre lift requirements. The ASNHQ-MEAO and 


\textsuperscript{458} For a fuller description of the RTA of Operation FALCONER, particularly the logistic issues, see the author’s \textit{Deploy, Sustain, Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq}, pp. 129-148. 

version of this document — issued two days later — largely confirmed the draft plan. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter not all capabilities would return to Australia, even if the assigned personnel did, and other capabilities would need to deploy as Australia’s mission in Iraq evolved.460

For the RAN and the RAAF the return home was reasonably uncomplicated. The ships sailed for their home ports; the Kanimbla first anchoring offshore to take on stores, while RAAF elements flew home from their airbases; the F/A-18 Squadron receiving USAF tanker support en route. For those capabilities that would continue to serve in the MEAO replacements arrived, for example the HMAS Sydney entered the MEAO on 29 April to take up station in the North Arabian Gulf, serving under Operation SLIPPER.

For the Army most of its vehicles and stores returned home by sea. To assist the Kanimbla with this task, and to reduce as much as possible the need for costly air movements, the HMAS Manoora entered the MEAO on 3 June. She departed on 16 June for Fleet Base West in Australia (the Kanimbla’s destination was Sydney).461 There were some exceptions, however. The most significant being 5 Aviation Regiment’s three CH-47D helicopters which returned to Townsville in chartered Antonov-124 aircraft, and some of the


461 Greg Nash and David Stevens, Australia’s Navy in the Gulf: From Countenance to Catalyst, 1941-2006, Sea Power Centre-Australia, Canberra, 2006, pp. 73-75.
SAS’s patrol vehicles also went home by air. Highly sensitive items and most ordnance returned in RAAF transport aircraft. While this would have necessitated an over-road journey, it was the simplest and most effective option. The Manoora, or if unavailable, the HMAS Tobruk would provide the sealift, supplemented by a charter vessel if required.

The ADF would make heavy use of chartered airlift for the return to Australia. Unlike for the deployment to the MEAO the

return would not utilise USTRANSCOM as the ADF’s strategic air movement coordinator and contractor. It had proven necessary to turn to USTRANSCOM in order to deploy the force to the MEAO for Operation BASTILLE. This was the only way the ADF could meet the operation’s US-driven timeline. But turning to USTRANSCOM had had some consequences. The ADF had to fit into the US force flow and operation plan which limited the ADF’s flexibility; US movers determined the movement of the aircraft. Moreover, 1 JMOVGP staff estimated that using USTRANSCOM had inflated Operation BASTILLE’s deployment costs by approximately 20 per cent. For the extraction 1 JMOVGP was able to assure the CDF that it could obtain sufficient airlift of the necessary types from the world market. Consequently, Cosgrove authorised the movers to engage civil industry themselves rather than again using USTRANSCOM.464

The use of charter aircraft did not go as smoothly as it could have, however. 464 HQ 1JMOVGP 612-3-3, ‘Decision Brief to COMAST: Strategic Lift for RTA Op Falconer,’ 27 March 2003.
JMOVGP ascertained, would have the same problem. More seriously was JMOVGP’s under-engagement of transport planes. Yet to undertake the reverse the JMOVGP engaged just eight AN-124s and six IL-76, and some of the Ilyushin sorties had to double as sustainment flights which meant that their were other priorities for space in their cargo holds. The movers had assumed a higher rate of use from the Australian C-130s, but Coalition requirements saw the RAAF’s planes diverted to other missions. As the time for closing down the Australian presence neared there still remained

on the ground approximately five AN-124 loads of cargo. This triggered a ‘crisis management’ response from HQ 1JMOVGP who hurriedly engaged further contract lift while also obtaining additional Coalition C-130 support.

For returning personnel the most onerous aspect of their repatriation process was the need to adhere to the letter of Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) regulations regarding the entry of vehicles, equipment, ammunition and stores. While this proved an additional burden on already exhausted personnel who were anxious to reunite with their families and loved ones, it was an appropriate imposition since AQIS acts as a vital bulwark in the protection of the Australian economy and environment from the introduction of noxious and/or destructive pests. What is objectionable, however, was that throughout the long lead-up to the conflict the ADF failed to appreciate the detailed and inflexible nature of AQIS requirements. Consequently, the ADF did not plan to meet these requirements, an oversight made even more puzzling by the organisation’s experiences with AQIS protocols during the East Timor Intervention. When confronted with AQIS standards one officer commented that they ‘came as a shock.’

For the personnel in the MEAO the need to pass AQIS inspection became a tiresome frustrating barrier to their return home that involved heavy manual labour and which had to be done

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HQ 1 JMOVGP, ‘POR Captain D J Beaumont,’ n.d.
quickly in order to meet strategic-lift schedules. The result was long hours by a force already tired from the physical rigours and mental strain of war. The Task Groups underwent AQIS inspection at a variety of locations. The protocols followed at the ISB to prepare a vehicle for return highlight the detailed scope of the AQIS mandated cleaning regime. The soldiers first had to wash the vehicle with a high-pressure hose. It was then given a wet inspection at the wash point. It was next moved to a dry stand where it received a dry inspection. Failure at either stage necessitated a vehicle’s rewash. If the vehicle passed inspection it was placed in a shroud and wrapped in plastic in order to keep out the dust. For loading onto either the Kanimbla or Manoora, the vehicle was put onto the back of a truck and driven to the harbour where it received another inspection. It then went by LCM8 to the ships anchored offshore. On the ship’s stern ramp, AQIS staff gave it another blast with a high-pressure hose before allowing it into the vessel.

Washing, however, was the easy part of the cleaning process. Prior to that stage the troops had to remove all materials that could harbour dust and that, because of their nature, could not be cleaned. This included all rubber, foam and wood, which meant that the vehicles lost their windows, seats, cargo trays, engine hoses and tyres. In order to move the vehicles, JLC sent out replacement
tyres and the troops then discarded the used ones and the spares. The troops also had to remove all electrical tape since traces of dust could be found in its adhesive.

The cleaning and inspection process resulted in a considerable worsening of the damage that vehicles and equipment had sustained during combat operations. None of the vehicles that returned to Australia were in a serviceable state. Land Rovers that had incurred 30 hours of repair liability from operations now needed 150 hours of work in order to bring them back into service. The use of high-pressure hoses on the interior of vehicles resulted in water damage to crank cases, necessitating complete engine rebuilds. In addition, many vehicles had to have their entire electrical systems replaced due to water damage.

The cleaners also had to abandon anything made from or containing wood, canvas, or cordage. As a result the RAN left its Zodiac boats behind since they have a wooden frame. The air dispatchers wrote off their parachutes, and all tents remained in-theatre. With the exception of equipment that could be sterilised, all medical stores stayed behind. The CDT-3’s POR of 24 May 2003 included a list of materials it had to abandon. It contained 117 different types of items, including boats, ropes and cordage, medical stretchers, wooden handled tools, hoses, floats, and charges. Some of this equipment might have returned to Australia later, but much of it, due to the nature of its composition, could never be cleaned to AQIS standards. The eventual disposal of these
materials became the responsibility of the Force Level Logistic Asset (FLLA) after its raising and take-over of the ISB’s facilities.

During pre-deployment preparations the Task Groups made widespread use of wooden crates and boxes to ship their gear to the MEAO. Now, because of the AQIS prohibition on the entry of wood, they had to replace all their containers and repack the equipment. They even had to rip out the wooden floors of shipping containers and replace them with other materials. The task was particularly onerous for the Joint Ammunition Logistic Organisation, who was responsible for the return of ammunition. Wood is the traditional packing medium for ordnance. In this case even unopened cases had to be replaced with a metal container. Moreover, if the troops had breached a crate, for example a box of rifle ammunition, they had to wipe down each remaining cartridge individually before repacking them into metal containers. This involved tens of thousands of rounds. The staff of the Joint Ammunition Logistic Organisation (JALO) scoured its facilities in Australia for all available metal containers. In the end they could not find enough, and received a special dispensation from AQIS. The inspectors allowed the ammunition handlers to repack mortar ammunition into wooden boxes. Upon arrival in Darwin they had to repack the rounds into fresh containers and burn the used crates.

The ADF also dispatched several specialist teams to assist units in their preparations for the return home. The main one was
called the Force Extraction Team. It built upon the staff at the ISB. It added specialists such as psychologists, supply clerks, air load teams, weapon fitters, and dangerous goods packers. The members of the Force Extraction Team were advisors, and it was the returning personnel who provided the physical labour needed to clean and pack their equipment. JALO sent out a Joint Inspection Team to inspect and render safe all captured weapons and ordnance and to conduct safety checks on all ordnance prior to loading. 1 JMOVGP sent to the MEAO a JMCC to coordinate the extraction from within theatre. Other specialists arrived to recover electronic systems for return home or to re-deploy them elsewhere in the MEAO. 467

The RAN’s ships also underwent a thorough cleaning routine. AQIS inspected the ships to make sure that they were clean of dust. During the campaign, the ships had acquired a thick red patina from sandstorms that reached well out to sea. The ships also had to replace their air intake filters. The Anzac discovered a particular problem — a serious infestation of mussels in its water intake pipe. Inspection of the Kanimbla and Darwin discovered lesser plagues. The crews had to flush out the mussels before AQIS allowed the ships to re-enter Australian waters.

Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST 468

467 C146496, ‘Op FALCONER Phase II Planning,’ 3 April 2003; and ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03-Op Falconer AMP 70,’ 23 May 2003.

468 The logistic aspects of Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST are fully discussed in Palazzo, Deploy, Sustain, Return: Australian Logistics and the War in Iraq.
One of the consequences of the period of lawlessness that swept Iraq in the days following the Coalition’s capture of Baghdad was the outbreak of a humanitarian crisis in the nation’s hospitals. The looters did not spare Iraq’s medical system with the result that country’s hospitals virtually ceased to function, in part because the lack of food, stores and equipment remaining in the now plundered buildings. Some reports estimated that 39 of Baghdad’s municipal 40 hospitals had been looted, although the city’s much smaller private hospitals were generally left alone.\(^{469}\) While doctors and nurses stood ready to help the ill and injured they did so with virtually no medical supplies or equipment. In this crisis lay the origins of a humanitarian relief mission that the ADF designated Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST.

The Howard Government saw in the failure of Iraq’s hospital system an opportunity to make a direct, readily achievable and recognisable contribution to the betterment of the local people.\(^{470}\) As the operation’s Coordinating Instruction noted, the ‘GOAS is keen to demonstrate a short term and immediate commitment to assisting in the relief of this situation.’\(^{471}\) Emphasising the urgency of the need, as well as the larger picture, Cosgrove’s mission statement called for Australian Force elements to provide not just humanitarian relief but also to support ‘coalition


\(^{470}\) See comments by Interview Subject DDD.

efforts to stabilise Baghdad IOT establish conditions to transition to OP IRAQI FREEDOM PHASE IV.’

While Australia had no intention of becoming involved in long-term Phase IV operations the Government was willing to assist in limited, short-term, high profile efforts.

While humanitarian relief was the official rationale for the ADF’s launching of Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST a secondary objective soon emerged of equal, if not, greater importance. In fact, as the operation developed, its main purpose transformed into an information operation (IO) targeting the Australian public rather than the humanitarian mission as it was first described. Despite the public rhetoric, Iraq was not Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST’s centre of gravity. Rather, the mission’s target was the Australian media and the Australian nation.

Since the mission’s purpose was to influence the Australian domestic audience it is not surprising that the CDF’s EXECUTO contained a section on public affairs requirements in which he instructed the CAF to arrange for media coverage of the loading of supplies onto the transport aircraft in Australia and for the COMDASNHQ-MEAO to coordinate the coverage of its arrival in-theatre. One senior officer described the mission’s intent not in terms of humanitarian relief but as a whole-of-government and CDF effort to gain maximum media attention. Indeed, with some

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473 Ibid.

haste three civilian media representatives were cleared to accompany a Public Affairs Deployable Field Team on the first Australian relief flight into Baghdad which landed in the early hours of 13 April.

The CDF ordered the mounting of Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST at extremely short notice and one official publication correctly observed that the task demonstrated the ‘skill and professionalism of ADF logistic staff.’\textsuperscript{475} Planners divided the operation into two phases, namely:

- Phase I, the transfer of medical stores from the HMAS \textit{Kanimbla} into Iraq; and
- Phase II, the movement of medical stores from Australia to Iraq.

In both cases the destination for these supplies was announced as Baghdad.

Those in theatre received little consultation on the feasibility of the mission. The coordinating authority in the MEAO was to be McNarn’s ASNHQ. Cosgrove awakened his subordinate in the middle of the night to tell him that the operation was about to commence. When McNarn protested that BIAP and the city remained insecure and that there was no distribution capability on the ground, he was told by the CDF to make it happen as the

\textsuperscript{475} The War in Iraq: ADF Operations in the Middle East in 2003, Department of Defence, Canberra, n. d., p. 32.
operation’s announcement was scheduled in thirty minutes.476 Cosgrove attended the media briefing in person and made the announcement himself.477 Burr, another key player, found out about the mission from CNN.478

Phase I commenced with alacrity and was completed by 0105 Zulu on 13 April.479 This was just 17 hours after Cosgrove issued his Executo at 0358 Zulu on the 12th and provides compelling evidence of the ADF’s ability to react with speed to an emerging requirement.480 The RAN transferred medical stores from the Kanimbla via a single lift by its Sea King helicopter assisted by a Sea Hawk from either the Anzac or Darwin. The RAN’s contribution to the operation consisted of operating equipment, surgical clothing, bandages, drugs, and infant and maternity products with an overall weight of a modest 750 kilograms.

Once a USAF ATOC Team cross-loaded the stores onto a RAAF C-130. Additional materials were provided by the and the US medical system which brought the aid’s weight up to 6.8 tonnes, a benefit which to the casual observer enhanced the Australian contribution. Accompanying the flight was a protection detail of 13 soldiers from the SFTG’s Commando


477 PACC 120403/03, Transcript, ‘Media Briefing: Australia’s contribution to global operations,’ 12 April 2003.

478 B1202516, ‘Commander TU 633.3.1 (TF 64) Diary Narrative – Op BASTILLE/FALCONER.’


Platoon who had flown specifically for the purpose. Also aboard was the aforementioned public relations team, three civilian media representatives and a military nurse. The aircraft landed at BIAP at 0030 Zulu on 13 April, where, with rotors turning, the plane was quickly unloaded. The commandos deployed around the aircraft at the ready while flashes could be seen on the horizon. The Hercules took off at 0105 Zulu; taking just 35 minutes for its cargo to be dropped off, and returned to with all passengers.\(^{481}\)

Phase II quickly followed on from Phase I. For this part of the operation the key organisation in Australia was JLC’s Defence National Storage and Distribution Centre – Randwick. This facility was the ADF’s sole warehouse for medical supplies. On the morning of Saturday 12 April Randwick received a warning notice of the operation’s activation. By 10 am it had been upgraded to a 99 per cent chance of going ahead.

The critical question facing the Randwick facility’s staff was what to send. In the sustainment system that JLC had set up for operations against Iraq, the support infrastructure in Australia responded to demands for specific items from the deployed forces. In this instance there was no demand. Staff at Randwick did contact Headquarters JLC in Melbourne for a stores list only to be told that none existed. Instead, Randwick’s commander received the instruction to pick items needed to treat

civilian injuries as shown on television. This was not a useful reply. In addition, JLC could not tell Randwick’s commander how much to draw at this stage. In the end the warehouse staff decided to make the basis of selection the items found in a 250-man medical kit.

At about 7 pm Randwick received word from Melbourne that its staff should select enough stock to fill one C-130. At this point the Randwick commander called in contract employees who worked through the night to prepare forty-five pallets for dispatch. Trucks arrived at 5 am on Sunday to take the stores to Richmond. However, at the last minute 17 pallets had to be left behind because no one had told its staff that a C-130 could only hold 28 pallets. It subsequently became apparent that Randwick’s commander was not privy to the knowledge that the RAAF had allocated two aircraft to the task.

While Randwick personnel worked through the night so did some of the staff at Liverpool Hospital who either stayed on after their day shift or came in to work on their day off to pull and pack stores destined for Iraq. Other organisations that contributed to the operation were Westmead Hospital, New South Wales Health Department, and several corporations including B. Braun, Baxter, and Johnson and Johnson. At the Federal level several government agencies offered their expertise thereby providing Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST with a whole-of-government

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482 ‘A worthwhile operation,’ Liverpool Leader, 23 April 2003, p. 2.
flavour. Participating Commonwealth Departments included the Department of Health and Aging, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and AUSAID.\textsuperscript{483} One of the RAAF’s C130s flew to the MEAO via Perth where JLU-W loaded specialist burns supplies that had been sourced from Western Australia.\textsuperscript{484}

The medical supplies provided for Phase II consisted of:

- ADF stocks – 50 x 250 man medical kits;
- B. Braun – 2 pallets gelofusine IV fluid;
- Baxter – 4 pallets IV fluid and blood bags;
- Johnson and Johnson – 4 pallets bandages, dressing, cleaning aids and surgical gowns;
- Liverpool and Westmead Hospitals – quantity of needles, gloves, collars, splints, and pharmaceuticals and medical and surgical equipment; and
- Western Australia Health – 500 kilograms of specialist burns stores.\textsuperscript{485}

After the operation’s conclusion JLC calculated the value of the Defence medical supplies transferred to Iraq in order for the ADF to recover the cost. The expenses broke down as:


\textsuperscript{485} ‘Operation Falconer, CDF Daily Brief,’ 13 April 2003.
• DNSDC-R: $245,350 (including $5,950 for contract labour);
• JLU-W: $7,699 (including $463 for contract labour); and
• HMAS Kanimbla: $46,152.

The total value was $299,201.486

As a media exercise Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST was a triumph. It attracted considerable and highly favourable attention from the Australian media and achieved the objective of portraying the ADF in a good light. In a war that some had questioned it was a definite ‘feel good’ story. Despite the distance of six years, research was still able to find numerous on-line citations to the operation in publications as diverse as: ABC News, Liverpool Leader, Hobart Mercury, Adelaide Advertiser, The Age, The Australian, Cairns Post, Townsville Bulletin, Sunday Mail, Sunday Herald Sun, Sunday Tasmanian, Daily Telegraph, The West Australian, Gold Coast Bulletin, The Sydney Morning Herald, Australian Associated Press, US Newswire and the Agence France-Presse.487 From Baghdad McNarn reported that the operation’s outcomes included ‘favourable coverage on all major AS TV news channels, ABC Radio and syndication via Australian Associated


There were some negative reports too, however, but these were few and limited in scope.

As a humanitarian mission, however, Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST fell short of its ostensible goal. The stores that had arrived at BIAP never left the airport compound where most rotted away until they were no longer serviceable. On the day the materials arrived in Baghdad ANHQ-MEAO reported to Canberra that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was unable to distribute water and medicines to Baghdad hospitals because of the 'total lack of law and order in the city.' This statement was not a specific reference to the Australian aid, but the ICRC had been one of the organisations that the ADF had hoped would be in a position to serve as a distributor for its donation. Sometime later a US soldier approached Australian personnel and handed over some vials of morphine, apparently all that remained of the consignment.

After the two Phase 2 aircraft reached Doha, ASNHQ-MEAO changed their destination from Baghdad to Tallil. In part, this was a result of CENTCOM CMO advice that there was an urgent need for medical supplies in As Nasariya, although according to McNarn concern over the security situation at BIAP was also a contributing factor. At Tallil Air Base the Australian personnel

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491 Interview Comments GGG.
on the aircraft handed responsibility for the stores to US CFLCC
CMO Staff for forwarding to local hospitals and civilian medical
facilities in As Nasariya. It is believed that these materials
were distributed in As Nasiriyah to the Women’s and Children’s
Hospital, and another hospital that was formally known as Saddam.
Curiously, the same ASNHQ document that reported the handover of
the medical supplies at Tallil offers a highly favourable
assessment of As Nasiriyah’s medical services. It describes two of
the cities three hospitals as fully operational and the third
partially operational but in need of major structural repairs. A
medical NGO, working through UNICEF, had also already replenished
at least one of the city’s hospitals. As well, the city had
between 12 and 15 clinics in operation and that the major issue
facing the city was an outbreak of diarrhoea due to contamination
of the water supply.\[492] It is reasonably certain that much if not
all of these stores did reach medical facilities in As Nasiriyah,
although none made it to Baghdad as initially promised. It is not
possible to assess the urgency with which the city’s medical
services required the Australian aid, however, there is some
indication that its hospitals were working reasonably
effectively.\[493] Oddly, this phase of Op BAGHDAD ASSIST generated
little media coverage, either in Australia or elsewhere – only the
Hobart Mercury mentions it in a larger article. It appears that


\[493]\text{Ibid.; B267224,} ‘Coordinating Instructions – Op BAGHDAD ASSIST Phase 2,’ 17 April 2003; B266056,
‘Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST – Talking Points,’ 13 April 2003; and Comments by Interview Subject OO.
the media had lost interest in the operation, or that the war had simply moved on.

The progress of Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST did raise some issues regarding its management. While the staff in the line-of-communication demonstrated the ability to respond to sudden changes in the operational environment, the ADF’s management of the exercise is open to question. In Australia the operation’s command and control was confusing. The conveyance of basic and time dependent information on what to pack and in what quantity, what actually was en route to the MEAO, and alerting elements in the sustainment chain about what to expect and in what quantity all proved challenging for the sustainment system. Rather, “on-the-fly” was the order of the day, right up to the aircrafts’ departure from Richmond. As Randwick’s staff neared completion of their task its commander received a call from the Strategic Operations Division with a list of requested stores. Since the job was nearly done the late arrival of a list was not appreciated. 1 JMOVGP also kept changing the timings for the C-130’s departure. Lastly, no-one informed Randwick that the mission had a second C-130, which would have allowed them to send the rest of the pallets that they had prepared. Lastly, the issue of distribution within Iraq never received proper attention and would ultimately prove impossible in Baghdad. During the short lead-up to Phase 1 planners nominated a host of reception organisations that included
the US military, US CMO and the International Red Cross.494 When questioned if the level of anarchy in Iraq would prevent the medical supplies from reaching Baghdad hospitals Cosgrove emphatic response was that the ADF would do ‘whatever it takes, it’ll get there,’.495 In a separate interview the Defence Minister assured his questioner that the ADF had taken the problem of distribution into account and ‘we’re sure that the supplies will get through.’496 Yet, what always went unstated was that ASNHQ-MEAO had no capacity for an Australian-borne distribution of these stores. However, since planning focus was always on getting the stores into Iraq where their arrival could be reported to an Australian audience, their ultimate fate was not a critical consideration.

Further affecting the exercise was the need for ASNHQ-MEAO to push the limits of the chain of command. McNarn had no authority to command any of the task groups to allocate the resources needed to fulfil the mission. He could not order the SFTG to provide commandoes for a security detail or the RAAF to designate an aircraft, although both Task Groups complied without hesitation. What McNarn did have was the unstated threat of a follow-up phone call from the CDF to any officer who failed to accede to his request. While this proved an effective device, it would have been

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495 PACC 120403/03, Transcript, ‘Media Briefing: Australia’s contribution to global operations,’ 12 April 2003.

unnecessary had a different command and control arrangement been
in place.

In part, the confusion surrounding Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST
was a result of the short time line allowed for its
implementation. But there is also a deeper explanation. Instead of
what one would have expected to be a tactical-level exercise in
the simple transfer of humanitarian aid the task was really a
strategic-level information operation on whose favourable outcome
the Government and CDF had invested heavily. As a result, from its
commencement Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST was intensively managed from
the highest levels, and driven with a speed that ultimately led to
the failure of its nominal aim, although it did provide the
government with a public relations coup.

Regarding Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST there remains another more
serious matter that also warrants consideration: the acceptability
of Government manipulation of the media in order to influence the
domestic political situation. The saga surrounding the capture and release of Jessica Lynch and the
attempt to portray Pat Tillman’s death as a heroic act of martial
virtue, when he died from friendly-fire, became media gaffs of the
highest order. 497

497 Andrew J. Bacevich discusses these episodes in The Limits of Power, pp. 87-88.
In seeking a media effect on the Australian public Cosgrove and the Howard Government played a dangerous if calculated game, perhaps the most risky act they committed during Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER. The US IO specialist, Brigadier Huba Wass de Czege, has identified one of the critical needs of this type of mission as to, ‘keep the trust and confidence of home and allied populations while gaining the confidence and support of the local one.’\textsuperscript{498} To achieve this IO operations must deliver what they promise, otherwise they can cause major embarrassment and loss of political capital, as was the case with Lynch and Tillman. Australians were repeatedly told that their humanitarian aid was going to go to hospitals in Baghdad – the reality was very different, a fact that was never revealed to the public. Later, to this author, Cosgrove would admit that he might have over-claimed the effect of the mission, although he maintained that saving lives was always its goal.\textsuperscript{499}

McNarn, from his position as ASNCOMD-MEAO, regarded the operation as a complete failure. As he cynically observed, ‘it was a photo opportunity.’\textsuperscript{500} Burr added a bitter comment to his commander’s diary, observing:


\textsuperscript{499} Comments by Interview Subject DDD.

\textsuperscript{500} Comments by Interview Subject OO.
This was unbelievable. We had not been allowed to do anything without getting CDF approval, and only then after painstaking detail and risk assessment etc. next thing we know we are throwing a group into the supposedly the most dangerous location, with no preparation as a team, with no idea, and with no identified C2 structure, and with no advice to me on the risk my blokes will be subjected to (because no-one has thought of that). With regard to our C130, they couldn’t fly anywhere near western Iraq to support us, in what is a known low threat environment now, but out of the blue, they are allowed to fly into Baghdad. Makes a mockery of our approach. Clearly if it is a media stunt or HA-related, the risk is worth it.501

Indeed, it is difficult to reach any other conclusion than the brutal assessments voiced by McNarn and Burr. Yet from the perspective of media manipulation and the influence of domestic politics Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST was a great success for the Howard Government and the ADF. This outcome, however, depended on the incompetency and short attention span of the Australian media. Operation BAGHDAD ASSIST was a calculated gamble, but a “punt” Cosgrove was willing to make as he had an excellent understanding of the Australian media’s capabilities that dated from his time in command of the East Timor intervention. Perhaps that such a

501 B1202516, ‘Commander TU 633.3.1 (TF 64) Diary Narrative – Op BASTILLE/FALCONER.’
calculation was made is not important, after all the ADF did deliver medical supplies to Iraq and perhaps too much had been made of their real fate. But in a democracy, it must be asked if such a calculation is a responsible act of the Government and their military advisors.
Australia’s Phase IV Intentions

Australia expected to withdraw its forces from the MEAO as soon as possible after the defeat of the Iraqi military and the removal of Saddam. George W Bush’s ‘Mission Accomplished Speech’ served as a signal to Australia that the ADF’s mission was over.\(^{502}\) Prior to this point the Australian Government had informed the US Government that it was unlikely it would look favourably upon a request to accept an ongoing peacekeeping role in Iraq.\(^{503}\)

Australia never had any intention of becoming an occupying power.\(^{504}\) At an informal meeting between representatives of the United States, United Kingdom and Australia held in Washington on 22 January 2003 the DFAT and AUSAID representatives attended with instructions that they do or say nothing which could raise the expectation of an ADF contribution to Phase IV operations.\(^{505}\) Similarly, on 19 February 2003 LTCOL Mike Kelly only attended a meeting of the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) in what Defence excessively acknowledged as a private capacity. USIP

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\(^{504}\) Interview with Subject DDD.

extended the invitation to Kelly in order to obtain his insights into the legal aspects of occupation.\textsuperscript{506}

Howard had made it clear to the Bush Administration that he was more comfortable with limiting Australia’s participation in a post-war Iraq to humanitarian relief, including the provision of specialist personnel to UN agencies. The most the Prime Minister foresaw for the ADF was a niche contribution, and a minimal one at that. After all, Australia had already done its part by participating in the conflict’s warfighting phase.\textsuperscript{507} In a 2007 \textit{Meet the Press} interview Howard reaffirmed that ‘the understanding we had with the Americans, when we originally participated, was that after the sharp end was over we weren’t going to have any troop presence.’ The Prime Minister continued that he had made it clear to the US President and the Secretary of Defense that if Australia did commit forces it would be only for the warfighting stage, that is ‘the invasion stage if you like.’\textsuperscript{508} Even after the ADF deployed troops to Iraq under Operation CATALYST the Howard Government insisted that this did not represent an acceptance of a peace-keeping role. Instead, the Government described their


\textsuperscript{507} DEPSEC SP/OUT/2003/41, ‘Iraq: ADF Contribution to a whole-of-government approach to Phase IV (Post Conflict) Issues,’ 3 March 2003; and ‘Brief – SCG – Phase IV Meeting,’ 8 April 2003. See also ‘Letter from Robert Hill to John Howard,’ and Comments by Subject DDD.

deployment in terms of protecting Australian interests, including the soon to reopen Embassy.\(^{509}\)

The Australian Government also deflected US requests for assistance in other theatres. In December 2002, for example, the CENTCOM Deputy Commander in Chief, LTGEN M P DeLong, USMC, approached the VCDF, VADM Russ Shalders, with a request that Australia consider committing personnel to CJTF-HOA which the United States was in the process of raising. At that time Australian personnel were already serving in similar US-led headquarters overseeing the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and CENTCOM sought one or more ADF staff to serve for a six month period in Djibouti commencing at the end of January 2003. The US request was not made at government-to-government level but at the lesser military level, which may have made it easier for the ADF to decline. The COMAST, Bonser, reviewed the request and recommended to the VCDF that due to the current high operational tempo the ADF should not accept the offer. A further rationale was that the Australian Government did not want to contribute embeds to a deployment in which it did not have a troop commitment. DeLong took the rejection well, writing to Shalders thanking him for giving the request his consideration and the Marine general flagged the possibility of Australia’s participation at a later date. Defence also continued to monitor developments in the HOA,

\(^{509}\) ‘Brigadier Mike Hannan says Australian troops will not have peacekeeping role in Iraq,’ The World Today, 2 May 2003, at [http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s845979.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s845979.htm) (accessed 4 September 2009).
and the RAN would eventually undertake maritime interception operations in the waters off Somalia.  

Australia also had a preference for the United Nations to have a large role in the rehabilitation of post-war Iraq. There was even some discussion within the Howard Government to limiting Australia’s contribution to Phase IV to the provision of specialists to key positions in a UN mission for Iraq, particularly in areas which promised to secure Australia’s long-term interests, for example in trade. The United States, however, did not share Australia’s enthusiasm for the United Nations having a significant Phase IV presence. Australian planners were well aware of the Bush Administration’s scepticism towards the international body, but hoped to persuade the Bush Administration to accept a larger UN role,  

The United States, in particular, objected to the possibility of the international organisation having a high profile role in Iraq’s administration. 

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512 B257831, ‘Iraq: ADF Contribution to a Whole of Government Approach to Phase IV (Post Conflict) Issues, 3 March 2003.'
For Australia, however, the issue of balancing its support to the United States and the United Nations would soon become moot. On 19 August 2003 terrorists detonated a dump truck packed with explosives outside of the building housing the UN’s offices in central Baghdad. The massive blast levelled part of the building and, in doing so, mortally wounded the international organisation’s top envoy to Iraq, the Brazilian Sergio Vieira de Mello. In the attack’s aftermath the United Nations withdrew most of its personnel from the country.515

Selecting a Phase IV Force

Although the Howard Government had articulated a preference for a minimal Phase IV footprint in Iraq the ADF did conduct considerable planning in case a larger commitment proved necessary. The three services undertook this work solely on the basis of a contingency requirement in order to have readily at hand solid information on force options and costs if the government revisited its Phase IV commitment policy. One involved planner described this as Defence ‘being a bit proactive,’ and the


515 Ricks, Fiasco, p. 216.
CDF termed it ‘prudent’. The goal was to have proposals in place for the start of the ground campaign, at which time Defence anticipated the government’s interest in post-hostility force options would increase. Defence had undertaken a similar process for the war in Afghanistan when planners identified various force options with which to support ISAF under Operation SLIPPER, although in that instance the Government did not act upon the advice.

On 24 October 2002 Colonel F G Colley provided to the CDF an initial assessment of potential force options. The brief divided the contributions by a number of potential tasks with a proposed force structure for each.

- To assist with security operations in a post-hostility Iraq, the brief provided two options, namely:
  - A Light Infantry Battalion Group with protected mobility and reconnaissance capability; or
  - A Cavalry Battle Group supported by 180 mounted infantry and a limited military police capability of approximately platoon strength.

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516 B163170, ‘Potential Phase IV Plan Bastille Options,’ 18 December 2002; and Comments by Interview Subject DDD.

517 Ibid.
The deployment period for either of these organisations would be for 12 months. The CA’s preferred option was noted in the brief as the Light Infantry Battalion Group.

- For Civil military operations in a post-hostility Iraq the suggested ADF contribution was:
  
  o De-mining training and/or staff assistance to a Mine Action Centre. This task could be provided by either a small group of training specialists or a combat engineer troop; and
  
  o Engineer support up to the squadron level with an attached security element.

The brief also saw potential in the provision of a RAAF ECSS for the management of an airfield and recognised the need for a joint command element, particularly one that included a CIMIC capability.518

On 24 December 2002 the CA sent to the CDF his response to a request from the HSO for possible Army contributions to an Operation Bastille Phase IV. As they had not received any specific guidance on potential tasks the Army’s planners shaped the force options around the following presumed missions:

• security operations centred on urban locations,
• force protection operations;
• humanitarian assistance including CIMIC operations;
• limited infrastructure/utility reconstruction; and
• limited UXO and mine clearance operations.\textsuperscript{519}

The major planning assumptions which shaped the resulting proposal were that an Australian Army force would:

• operate in a coalition environment;
• be largely self-sufficient up to and including 2\textsuperscript{nd} line support and reliant on the coalition for 3\textsuperscript{rd} line support;
• be deployed for 12 months with a force rotation after the sixth month;
• not be concurrent with the Army’s existing contribution to Operation BASTILLE Phases I to III; and
• face an uncertain threat situation requiring a force structured for peace enforcement.\textsuperscript{520}

\textsuperscript{520} Ibid.
Given the conditions outlined above the planners concluded that the best force option was a battalion group, which they called the only supportable and sustainable element available to Army.\(^{521}\)

A slide presentation developed on 13 January 2003 showed the Army’s continuing interest in a field force capability. The presentation contained included two slides that proposed either the deployment of an infantry- or armour-centric capability. The latter even proposed the deployment of the tired Leopard I MBT, which had been declared unsuitable for combat a few months earlier. The infantry and cavalry battle groups are outlined in Illustrations 8.1 and 8.2.

Illustration 8.1\(^{522}\)

Proposed Army Commitment – Phase IV

\(^{521}\) Ibid.

Illustration 8.2

Proposed Army Commitment – Phase IV
The planners' preference for a battalion group as a Phase IV force option may appear odd, given the Howard Government's clear indication that it favoured a small as possible footprint for a post-hostility Iraq and preferable a contribution that focused on humanitarian assistance. Perhaps the proposal's developers had not been privy to this information, as suggested by their statement that they had not received any guidance from the HSO from whom Army Headquarters had received the planning request. However, there have also been some suggestions that Army saw Phase IV as an opportunity to own a part of the conflict. After all, Land Command had been virtually shut-out of Operation BASTILLE, as it had been from Operation SLIPPER. For what was still then the coming war in Iraq the Army had not deployed any field force elements at all and the niche capabilities it had provided operated largely in support
of the requirements of SOCOMD or Maritime Headquarters. This theory of opportunism, however, has been soundly denied by Army Headquarters.524

Although an infantry battle group would remain under consideration, the Army’s focus on force options soon shifted to nation-building. This was more palatable to the CDF who saw a contribution by specialist personnel as being more acceptable than a field force organisation. Moreover, he knew that specialist personnel would be easier to withdraw as they did not have an open-ended operational horizon. They could be brought home at the completion of a project or the attainment of a particular goal, which was readily measured than a more nebulous field force objective of, for example, attaining a secure environment.525 A reconstruction type mission, however, necessitated a much larger engineering allocation than which the Army had previously considered, along with a robust force protection capability. This had also emerged as the CA’s preferred option, who expressed a preference for a ‘Rwandan-type’ commitment in which the Army would provide a specialist reconstruction capability supported by command-control and force protection elements.526

In a MINSUB of 3 March defence proposed a number of options for an Australian contribution to Phase IV. At the lower end of the spectrum was a minimal but high profile contribution to

524 Comments by Interview Subject AAA.

525 Comments by Interview Subject DDD.

526 ‘Minsub – FASSIP –Iraq Phase IV Planning,’ 28 February 2003, from appended power point slide presentation.
rebuilding Iraq which would require the posting of specialist ADF, DFAT and AusAID personnel to UN agencies involved in humanitarian relief. At the higher end was a greater ADF presence in Phase IV with a force package designed to carry out tasks such as:

- Continued involvement in maritime interception, albeit at a reduced level;
- Advice and assistance in the re-establishment and or restructuring of communications infrastructure;
- The provision of Airfield Support Group personnel to facilitate air movements in support of humanitarian efforts; and
- Military engineering support to make safe and restore vital infrastructure, such as the reestablishment of transport systems to facilitate humanitarian relief supplies.\(^{527}\)

In early April Australia received several formal and informal requests from the United States regarding preferred contributions. These were sweeping inquires from the US Departments of State and Defense that had been sent to all of the nations that had indicated their willingness to participate in Phase IV operations. These included:

- Water purification troops;\(^{527}\)

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• Electrical, structural, bridging, railway, quarry, fire fighting and HAZMAT engineers;
• NBC and EOD specialist;
• General ground and air transport elements;
• Medical (including preventive medicine) and environment assessment personnel;
• Communication teams (including linguists); and
• Security forces (infantry, cavalry or military police).

Australia also received requests that were of a more specific nature.

529 B256319, ‘Iraq Phase IV Planning,’ [FASSIP/OUT/2003/61], 11 February 2003; and B262249
It is evident that there was some confusion within the ADF over the Government’s decision to consider a large commitment, in the face of many Howard assertions to the contrary. On 22 March, the COMAST (Bonser) wrote to the HSO (Gillespie) seeking confirmation if there had been a change in policy due to the decision to place Defence, DFAT and AUSAID personnel into US Phase IV planning cells.534

More troubling, was the other points in Bonser’s minute which clearly indicated that the COMAST remained out of the Iraq loop, even as the ADF planned for the operation’s post-hostility phase. Bonser asked Gillespie a series of further questions, namely:

- What is AS national policy for engagement in the MEAO post conflict?

532 Ibid.
What are the strategic imperatives for ADF presence or visits to the MEAO post conflict?

What are the critical HA and reconstruction requirements for Iraq post conflict?

What is the likely extent of other nations, commercial or NGO, support to the US Phase IV in Iraq?  

Bonser, who notionally ran the organisation responsible for managing the ADF’s operations, remained ignorant of the nature and scope of his future responsibilities. In the case of the emerging requirement for Operation CATALYST neither the COMAST nor his headquarters had a key role in the process. The critical decisions regarding force options were made by the service chiefs in response to demands from the CDF and the HSO. Bonser’s lack of centrality in the Iraq operation was further driven home by a request that the directive the CDF would issue to the ADF’s senior representative to OHRA include a requirement to have the COMAST as an information addressee.

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535 Ibid.

536 Ibid.
and focus, and the emerging requirement becoming more targeted on
a humanitarian rather than a security commitment. In part this was
due to growing DFAT desire for re-engagement with Iraq in order to
safeguard Australian trade and interests in the country and
region. In particular there was considerable concern over the
status of Australia’s wheat export to Iraq. The CDF requested that the services prepare specific sets of
options for consideration at the SCG of 8 April, prior to
presentation to the government. The CDF also informed the
service chiefs that they should assume a 12 month deployment. The
force options prepared by the services are outlined in Table 8.1.

537 B256319, ‘Iraq Phase IV Planning,’ [FASSIP/OUT/2003/61], 11 February 2003; and B262249534
Coordination Group,’ 3 April 2003; and B265098, ‘Meeting of the Iraq Coordination Group,’ 4 April 2003
For wheat concerns see B264995, ‘Meeting of the Iraq Coordination Group,’ 3 April 2003; and B265098, ‘Meeting of the Iraq Coordination Group,’ 4 April 2003

Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Element</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Issues/Remarks</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| NAVY One Option | EOD team  
  - Can deploy within another ADF FE or be embedded with US/UK  
  - 30 man unit  
  - Cost  
    - $81,000 for specialist monitoring equipment  
    - 6 months - $1.1 mil  
  TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $2,281,000 |  
  - General EOD capability  
  - Can detect and destroy limited NBC ordinance (not bulk chemicals)  
  - Small cost |  
  - No organic force protection  
  - Needs to be embedded with another FE (admin, communications etc)  
  - No protected mobility (light B vehicles only)  
  - Surface / land capability only (not maritime) |  
  - RA required for special eqpt  
  - WMD support for EOD ops not costed  
  - Need for continuing strategic engagement v. op necessity |
| One Frigate - MIO  
  - Cost: 6 months - $5.5 mil  
  TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $11,000,000 |  
  - Maintain contribution to MIO  
  - Links with US/UK strengthened - strategic relationship with 5th Fleet |  
  - Continuing Op tempo pressure |  
  - LPA rotation planned for mid Jun  
  - LPA not required to support Ph IV?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Element</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Issues/Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ARMY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Six Options</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 1 (preferred option) Engr Bn Gp</td>
<td>Self contained, self sufficient, self/force protection</td>
<td>Size/Large footprint</td>
<td>Cost only includes pers, rations &amp; veh usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Indicative deployment assets required - LPA, LSH, RORO</td>
<td>Deployment, redeployment, sustainment, in theatre support, pers support costs not included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WMD exploitation capability within Engr Sqn/NBC Troop</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Platform enhancement requirements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reconstruction/nation building focus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>970 man unit</td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $106,000,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2 STE – Specialist Team Engrs</td>
<td>Flexible package</td>
<td>No force protection</td>
<td>Need to embed with UK/US unit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>works (11), construction (31), battlefield clearance (6), logistic support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99 man unit</td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $14,600,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 3 STE</td>
<td>works (16), construction (17), battlefield clearance (6)</td>
<td>No force protection</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80 man unit</td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Force Element</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Issues/Remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>STE</td>
<td>• Works (20), battlefield clearance (5) only</td>
<td>• No force protection</td>
<td>• As above</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No logistic elements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $6,260,000</td>
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<td>Option 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inf Bn Gp</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sustainment for 2 x Bn sized deployments for over 12 months (ET &amp; Iraq)</td>
<td>• See remarks for Option 1 above</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tasks - what do we see them doing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• CT/Peacekeeping</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• LoF or area security</td>
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<td>• CMA</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Force protection of other elements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trg new IZ army?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $150,000,000</td>
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<td>Option 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cav Regt Gp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• See remarks for Option 1 and Option 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 x Cav Sqns</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 x Engr Sqn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• CSR Sqn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CSS Coy</td>
<td>TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS</td>
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<td>$214,000,000</td>
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<td>Force Element</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Issues/Remarks</td>
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<td>RAAF Two Options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 1 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron (ECSS)</td>
<td>• Self contained, self sufficient, self/force protection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be broken down further into smaller bricks in theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ATC capability limited - cannot support both ECSS &amp; ATC capability above</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Specialists cannot deploy for 12 months (eg reservist Doctors)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 3 month deployment until civilian contracts in place</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• ATC or base support?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• National or embedded?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 2 EOD teams</td>
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<td>FOR 12 MONTHS:</td>
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<td>$1,200,000</td>
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<td>Force Element</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Issues/Remarks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| ATC Request – PH III into PH IV | • Limited duration – 3 months D15 to D57 after BIAP seized (~6 Apr)  
• BIAP  
• Possibly small cost  
• Full hosting by US | • RAAF cannot support separate ECSS & ATC request  
• Maintenance and support pers could be needed – increases cost | • Offer will be accepted by US/ORHA if made  
• Airfield survey reqd  
• What do we take (equipment?)  
• Maintenance det?  
• AUSTEO comms?  
• Comms det? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Element</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Issues/Remarks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADF</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>National HQ - Iraq</td>
<td>• Continuity • Knowledge of Ops • Optimum C2 • Established Doctrine</td>
<td>• Communication / Logistic support required (organic or US/UK)</td>
<td>• Communication / Logistic support required (organic or US/UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Force protection assumed provided by coalition</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• ADF FE concentrated or dispersed?</td>
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<td>• Require strategic comms reassessment:</td>
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<td>- Bandwidth</td>
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<td>- Satellite</td>
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<td>- Contracts</td>
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<td>• Command arrangements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- CENTCOM, ORHA, DIA, UN, AS Embassy?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Degree of influence required determines rank of commander</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Unique and equal coalition status or subsumed into other nations efforts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Do we want to go back to LO only with CENTCOM?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National HQ - OEF</td>
<td>• Cost &amp; numbers dependent on FE deployed • FALCONER x 61 • Phase IV • Reduce HQ based on deployed FE • Step forward to Iraq</td>
<td>• Force protection assumed provided by coalition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ADF FE concentrated or dispersed?</td>
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<td>• Require strategic comms reassessment:</td>
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<td>• Command arrangements</td>
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<td>• Unique and equal coalition status or subsumed into other nations efforts</td>
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<td>• Do we want to go back to LO only with CENTCOM?</td>
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<td>Force Element</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
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<td>Issues/Remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obligations to ME Host Nations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing commitment?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• S33(a)(iii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORHA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• COL Keith Schollum deployed late Mar 03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(note: AUSAID &amp; DFAT pers also embedded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS Embassy Security Det</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Need to consider Engr Det in intial stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for embassy clearance, set up tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIO - Iraq Survey Group</td>
<td>• Supporting DIA task</td>
<td>• No force protection</td>
<td>• Planning only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Involved in WMD exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• ASNHQ v. Enhanced Embassy Defence Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Transitional Liaison Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>if small FE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• AS Embassy Baghdad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force Element</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Issues/Remarks</td>
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</table>
| Specialist Medical Support | • Forensic  
• Pathology  
• Dental  
• Not costed | | • Small niche capability which enjoys international acclaim |
| Tactical Interrogation Teams | | | |
| Joint EOD Team (3 services) | • Selecting elements from each of previous EOD options  
TOTAL PROVISIONAL COSTING FOR 12 MONTHS: $TBA | | |
Table 8.1 also included the provision of a headquarters and support capability for any ongoing deployment, and recognised that if DFAT was to reopen its embassy in Baghdad it could only do so with the support of an Army security element.

At this stage of the force option development process the Army’s continued inclusion of infantry and cavalry battle groups must be questioned. Presumably they remained in the list in order to provide the Government with a full range of Army capabilities but it would be fanciful to believe that they had any chance of acceptance. The government had already wedded itself to a much lower commitment than the infantry and cavalry battlegroups concepts would allow. These options were manpower heavy and costly and also required the ADF to accept a higher degree of risk to its personnel.

With the elimination of the infantry and cavalry battlegroups from the force option proposal Army planners made the engineering option their primary focus. On 13 April 2003 the CA received a brief on post-hostility options that featured different engineer concepts, ranging from a team of 99 to a battlegroup with an establishment of 970. The latter included an infantry
company and a cavalry squadron for force protection, as well as logistic and other support elements. It was an independent unit whereas the 99 person concept required so much coalition support that it would have probably been embedded into a partner’s organisation. This briefing also included an outline of Baghdad Embassy Security Force, the future SECDET. Illustration 8.3 provides an outline of the 350 person option which was the LCAUST’s preferred option.\(^{540}\)

Illustration 8.3

350 Person Option for Army Phase IV Role

350 OPTION 2 (CAV) - (LCAUST Preferred)

$112.50m

\(^{540}\) 'Army Ph IV Options,' 13 April 2003.
As had been the case with the identification of force options for the conflict’s combat phase the Army’s major proposals would not make the final mix. The consideration given to retaining the Commandos and the Chinooks did not last long and they were returned to Australia at the same time as the rest of the SFTG. Moreover their retention would have violated the Government’s guidelines to not draw upon Phase III personnel for use in Phase IV. Of the various engineering capabilities, while not as expensive or manpower intensive as an infantry or cavalry battlegroup, they were still one of the more costly options. The engineers were also one of the riskier ones from a force protection perspective. However, as had been the case during consideration of force options for Plan BASTILLE there was no strategic imperative to deploy a major field force unit. In addition, the lower scale

engineering constructs would have been bereft of force protection and by necessity would have been absorbed into the organisation of a coalition partner, an undesirable result from the perspective of achieving national recognition for a contribution. The Australian Government had clearly signalled its intent to focus on humanitarian support in the rebuilding of Iraq and had laid the groundwork in Washington for a minimal foot-print in theatre, and would stick to this guidance albeit at a higher level than originally hoped. The fact remained that there was no rational reason for Australia to provide a force larger than what was required to meet its strategic objective. It is for this reason that in Iraq the Army continued to be underrepresented when compared to the tasks assigned to the RAN and RAAF.

What is also striking in the process that guided the development of force options for Phase IV in Iraq was the minimal guidance the planners received from the Government. The Howard Government did not announce any compelling strategic goals in its decision to become a full partner in the US-led Phase IV Coalition other than to assist in the finding of WMDs and the rehabilitation of Iraq. The former would soon be revealed as an impossible task while the later was undoubtedly a noble gesture. As Australia had participated in the war against Iraq and the removal of Saddam a moral case could be made
that it had also incurred an obligation to stabilise the new country. However, what was left unanswered, or even unasked, throughout this entire process was what Australia hoped to get out of its military commitment in Iraq and the MEAO, other than the minimal goal of safeguarding a traditional market for its wheat.
Establishing Operation Catalyst

The Transition to Catalyst

On 7 May 2003 the CDF announced that offensive combat operations in Iraq were complete and that the forces deployed on Operation FALCONER would begin the transition to the successor mission — Operation CATALYST. The two operations would run in parallel for several weeks, and forces would be dual-assigned while Defence defined the terms of the new task’s Nature of Service and Conditions of Service. CATALYST went into effect at 0001Z on 16 July 2003. The Government anticipated that its duration would be for 12 months, or even less for some capabilities, with rotations on a minimum of three to maximum of six month basis. For example, Defence expected the C130 commitment to cease in November 2003 and the Air Traffic Controllers to return home in January 2004. Only the latter contribution did so whereas the C130s remained assigned to CATALYST until the operation’s end. At this time some elements of the FALCONER force were also assigned to Operation SLIPPER, notably the national headquarters and the AP3C detachment. This linkage between Iraq and Afghanistan would continue and these elements would be dual assigned to CATALYST and SLIPPER.

On 22 July 2003 at 0200Z Cosgrove issued a Cease Order
for FALCONER formally bringing the operation to a close.543

Australia’s authority to participate in the occupation of Iraq derived from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 of 22 May 2003. In the Resolution the United Nations called upon member states to assist Iraq in the rebuilding of the country and in meeting its humanitarian needs. Resolution 1483 also stressed the importance of Iraq’s disarmament and the locating and destroying of its weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations conferred occupying power status on the United States and the United Kingdom. The Resolution also allowed other states to enter Iraq (or in Australia’s case to remain) as a part of the occupying force by agreeing to work under the unified command of the two senior coalition partners. It was through this mechanism that Australia gained legitimacy under international law for the presence of its forces in Iraq.544

The CDF identified the purpose of Operation CATALYST as to:

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participate in US-led coalition operations in Iraq to support the Australian Whole-of-Government (W-O-G) effort to assist with the rehabilitation of Iraq and to remove the threat posed to global security by Iraq’s WMD capability.\(^{545}\)

The Government also approved new national strategic and military strategic end-states for the mission. They were:

As the end state measurements show, WMD remained a real concern for the Howard Government and explains its willingness to contribute scarce specialist ADF personnel to a renewed effort to locate these devices. While there is no reason to believe that the ordering of these end-states is of particular significance, it is noticeable that the rehabilitation of Iraq takes second position to that of securing WMD. It is also clear that support of the US alliance remained a significant factor in the determination of Operation CATALYST’s strategic objectives.

The end-states also share several other traits: their low ambition, their lack of precision in definition, and the absence of any mention of possible warfighting. It is true that the insurgency that would soon grip Iraq was at this point in time only barely above the detection threshold. Yet Iraq was certainly not free from violence, despite an optimistic intelligence assessment from the ASNHQ-MEAO.
As the Australian Government authorised Operation CATALYST, it and the ADF — as well as other Coalition members — do not appear to have recognised the explosive situation they were embracing, and seem to have put aside any concerns they may have had over the thoroughness and soundness of the US Phase IV preparations. While a contributing factor in this change of stance may have been due to the difficulty of developing an accurate intelligence forecast in a fluid environment, it also suggests that neither the Australian Government nor the ADF understood the environment and complexity of the country in whose occupation it was about to participate, nor the context and scale of the military operation it was about to begin.

As Australia committed military forces to what was destined be a lengthy stay in the MEAO, it may also be useful to comment on what the end-states did not say. The authors of these statements generally employed language that was vague and open ended. For example, it is not possible to subject phrases such as ‘provided a meaningful contribution’, and ‘provided appropriate support,’ to precise measurement and the determination of their achievement could only be made through subjective prognosis. Although the end-states referred to a whole-
of-government effort there was little consideration or scope for contributions from Australia’s non-Defence agencies. The reality was that Iraq would be largely a Department of Defence responsibility. Ironically, the most precise national strategic end state was the one dealing with the quest for WMD, which of course did not exist.

It is the absence of any sense of warfighting in the end-states that is most telling. Australia was not committing its forces to a combat situation. Once the environment changed and the insurgency grew, Australia would stand by its initial position and continue to refrain from participation in warfighting even when the threat situation turned gravely dangerous. The ADF embarked upon CATALYST as a humanitarian, nation building and WMD eradication mission. The Howard Government would not allow the changing reality of Iraq to modify its original intent.

The steadfastness of the Australian Government in keeping to its original end-states must call into question the ADF’s understanding of strategy and the importance of balancing ends with means. If Australia was in Iraq for nation building and humanitarian reasons than it would be reasonable for the ADF to participate in the struggle against the insurgency as security operations are fundamental to the creation of the stable environment
in which the new Iraq could move towards self-sufficiency. Without security, there can be no sustained nation building. A logical conclusion would be that the true centre of Australian interest was not in Baghdad but in Washington and that the ADF’s participation in the occupation of Iraq was to promote the US alliance. There is no problem with such motivation as it is in the national interest for Australia to cultivate the good opinion of the US government. However as US personnel continued day after day to return home from Iraq in body bags – with Australia not sharing the load – the ability of Canberra to sustain it’s rationale for being in Iraq must be questioned. It would be interesting to know the reaction of US personnel who served in Iraq to Australian timidity.
The most significant change in the organisation of Australia’s contribution to the Coalition in Iraq was the reorganisation of McNarn’s ASNHQ into a JTFHQ. Australia would also shift the location of the headquarters. Illustration 9.1 outlines the revised command and control channels between the MEAO and Australia.

Illustration 9.1

Operation CATALYST Organisation


While the wire diagram illustrates a direct link between the COMAST and the CJTF 633 the simplicity of this arrangement did not quite reflect the reality of the command and control arrangement as it operated in practice. While the CJTF was to report directly to the COMAST he was also to maintain a direct relationship with the CDF for matters of national and strategic significance. Of course, for CATALYST, as it had been the case for BASTILLE and FALCONER, this meant that the CDF remained in position to observe and react to virtually anything that he believed was of significance and of interest. The COMAST’s ability to manage the operation remained at the CDF’s pleasure.
Despite the change in title the CJTF was also still not a field commander. While the CJTF had responsibility to monitor and review operational risk assessment, for example, it could not initiate, coordinate or even demand that a task group undertake a particular task. This was largely left to the Australian force element commanders, most of who worked to Coalition organisations. The only elements assigned to the CJTF were his HQ, SECDET and the TLO. The assignment of the other Australian elements was:

- Maritime patrol aircraft and ships were assigned to Commander 5th Fleet;
- C130 detachment was assigned to Commander Task Force for Air Logistic Support; and
- Embeds and other force elements in Iraq (ATC detachment) were assigned to various Coalition authorities.

Even SECDET was largely outside of his tactical command remit as its commander worked to the requirements of the Australian Ambassador and the mission’s staff. The reality was that as in the case of the ASNHQ-MEAO the JTF 633’s main roles remained safeguarding the Australian national interest, serving as a reporting conduit to Canberra, administering the ADF presence in the MEAO, and
providing a point of integration and intelligence collection into the Coalition effort. The last point was further enhanced by the appointment of LOs to the CPA thereby giving Australia access to both US military and civilian decision-making centres.

The responsibilities of the MCC, LCC and ACC also remained largely unchanged and these commands remained concerned primarily with sustainment, personnel and administrative issues. The control over the conduct of Operation CATALYST operations was located in the MEAO and, moreover, largely in non-Australian organisations. The result was that the command and control of Operation CATALYST bore a strong resemblance to those put into effect for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER. These arrangements did make sense from effectiveness and efficiency perspectives. Working to US taskings allowed Coalition members to make the most practical use of scarce resources, particularly air transport. However, it did serve to obscure Australian accomplishments, but perhaps that is the unavoidable fate of a nation making a relatively small contribution in a much larger effort.

The establishment of CATALYST and the rotation home of some capabilities also saw some modification to the task group organisation. An outline of the new task

groups is provided as Illustration 9.2. The designation 633.3 passed from the SFTG to the newly raised Iraq Group which consisted of a number of small specialist teams whose members worked within larger Coalition organisations.

Illustration 9.2

**JTF633 Task Group Organisation**

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The composition and roles of the five task groups can be outlined as:

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TG 633.0: TG 633.0 will include the JTF Headquarters, the Force Logistics Assets and those FE undertaking national tasks, such as the SECDET and TLO (Transition Liaison Officer).

TG 633.1: The primary role of TG 633.1 will be maritime force protection in the Persian Gulf, supporting C5F operations. Tasking will reflect extant UNSCR (1483) and related MIO directives. CTG 633.1 will assume, or contribute to, Force Warfare Commander duties on a rotational basis. TG 633.1 will consist of the FCE, one MFU, either an FF or LPA, and the RAN LSE.

TG 633.2: TG 633.2 will consist of two P3 aircraft, supporting crews and integral ECSS. The primary role of TG 633.2 will be maritime surveillance and ISR sorties in the OP CATALYST and OP SLIPPER AOs in support of C5F operations for OP CATALYST or OP SLIPPER.

TG 633.3: TG 633.3 will consist of those FE operating in Iraq assigned to coalition command structures or working within the Office of the Coalition Provisional Authority (OCPA).
TG 633.4: TG 633.4 will consist of two C-130 aircraft, CAOC staff, supporting crews, integral ECSS and the CSE (ATC). The primary role of TG 633.4 will be to conduct intra-theatre airlift in support of CFACC tasks and national tasks as authorised by COMAST, and the provision of ATC services at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). The CSE (ATC) will also be assigned to CTG 633.3 for local administration and force protection.  

Illustration 9.3 provides an overview of the location of the Australian force elements.

Illustration 9.3
Australian Force Elements MEAO -
as at 17 July 2003

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Just how small the ADF’s contribution to Phase IV was can be illustrated visually through a comparison with the contingents provided by other nations. As Illustration 9.4 demonstrates the size, location and mission of the Australian contribution did not warrant flag representation on a briefing map. The maximum authorised strength of the Australian deployment was 897 personnel.

Illustration 9.4\textsuperscript{554}

National AOs – Phase IV

Some of the nations featured in Illustration 9.4 had provided troops for the war’s invasion phase, but in such small numbers that they were barely noticeable, even by the standard of the Australian deployment. For example, the Polish Navy dispatched the *Kontradmiral Xavier Czernicki*, a minesweeper support ship, which served for a period in the North Arabian Gulf under Australian Task Unit command (TU55.1.1). Poland had also contributed a detachment of Special Forces soldiers. Most of the new commitments, however, were by nations that had decided not to participate in the war’s combat period but which now piled into Iraq to provide some degree of visible support to the United States. As the United States worked to bring its personnel home, these new arrivals offered
it the means to accelerate its force’s early return and reconstitution. Illustrations 9.5, 9.6a and 9.6b provide a summary of other national contributions to Iraq’s remediation.

Illustration 9.555

Phase IV Contribution Already in Theatre

Illustration 9.6a556

Phase IV Contributions in Route to MEAO

555 ‘CDF Daily Brief, 13 April 2003 – Phase IV Contributors.’

556 Ibid.
Illustration 9.6b\textsuperscript{557}

Phase IV Contributions in Route to MEAO

\textsuperscript{557} Ibid.
The ADF Arrives in Baghdad

The first Australian troops to arrive in Baghdad were a select number of SAS personnel drawn from Burr’s Plans Troop. They highly trained soldiers had not had the opportunity to practice their particular craft during the squadron’s domination of the Australian AO in the Western Desert. Being relatively fresh they were now sent into Baghdad. In support were a handful of commandoes drawn from the Commando Platoon. Together they would become known as the Baghdad Security Group (BSG).[^558] Providing for the BSG’s support was a CSSE of nine soldiers drawn from the SFTG’s CSSG. These soldiers took up residence at

[^558]: Comments by Interview Subjects BBB, CCC, and III.
BIAP. In addition, the BSG CSSE also supported the ASNHQ-Fwd.\textsuperscript{559}

Also moving forward to Baghdad were some of the Australian SF staff embedded in the CJSOTF-W HQ, as well as some of the ADF’s LOs including the SF and ARCENT LO groups.\textsuperscript{560} The US plan to move the entire SFTG forward in order to operate in the country’s north did receive brief consideration in Canberra. To that end a party drawn from the SFTG’s CSSG, including its OC also came forward to Baghdad in order to ascertain the SAS Squadron’s support requirements in case the CDF authorised a redirection of the SF role. The logistician’s task was soon aborted when the Government decided to keep to its original intent and to begin to bring the troops serving on Operation FALCONER back to Australia.\textsuperscript{561}

The task of the BSG was to gather intelligence on the situation in Baghdad, determine the status of the Australian Mission building and investigate the surrounding security environment. These soldiers would serve as the ADF’s direct eyes and ears in Baghdad until a more regular organisation took over. DFAT wanted to


\textsuperscript{561} Comments by interview subject T.
reopen its Mission as quickly as possible and it was critical for the BSG to determine the likelihood of this happening. Fortunately for Downer the BSG discovered that the ambassador’s residence, which also served as the Embassy location, had survived the war in remarkably good shape. In fact, the DFAT’s groundskeeper had continued to maintain the location in the ambassador’s absence since 1991, when it was vacated. The BSG’s presence in Baghdad would be brief and with the arrival of SECDET its members flew back to [redacted]. They returned to Australia at the same time as most of the rest of the SFTG.

The establishment of the BSG in Baghdad did cause a degree of tension between the SFTG and JTF 633. Once the ASNHQ (it had not yet transitioned to HQ JTF 633) came forward to Baghdad it took under its OP COMD the other Australian force elements in the city, including the BSG. This meant that the SAS and Commando soldiers were no longer under a SF command, nor available for SAS taskings. There was also a concern within the SF community that these highly trained soldiers might be used inappropriately.562 Here is not the place to discuss the niceties of such demarcation disputes. However, it may be useful to highlight the risks in maintaining an inflexible policy towards the assignment of assets,

562 B1202616, ‘Commander TU 633.3.1 (TF64) Diary Narrative – Op BASTILLE/FALCONER.’
particularly in a joint operation. As the ADF moves towards greater integration across traditional command lines the necessity of commanders understanding the capabilities of unfamiliar assets must be balanced with a willingness of all parties to focus on the objective, not the ownership. The sustainment plight of CDT-3 during Operation FALCONER is illustrative of this point. Although based ashore from shortly after their arrival in the MEAO, the support of these 32 divers remained a responsibility of Maritime Component Command who treated the unit’s resupply as if it was still afloat. Over the course of Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER Fleet HQ demonstrated a remarkable inability to sustain what was in effect a land based force. Meanwhile, the Special Forces Component Command’s ISB facility had spare capacity with which to meet CDT-3’s needs. Instead, the ISB staff spent their time fending off other forces from making claims on their underutilised warehouse. However, the required shift in administrative chains-of-command proved impossible to implement and the sailors remained mission capable only by becoming wards of nearby Coalition units.563

Illustration 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9 show the location of the Australian Mission in Baghdad and its environs.

563 Interview Comments S. The sustainment plight of CDT-3 is discussed in full in Palazzo, Deploy, Sustain, Return, pp. 109-115.
Adjacent to it was an unfinished commercial/residence tower which would become the SECDET’s home—SECDET Flats. The Carthage Hotel was the accommodation site for the Mission’s staff after they relocated from the better known Al Hamra Hotel.

Illustration 9.7564
SECDET and the Australian Mission

Illustration 9.8565
Australian Mission and Environs

564 ‘Op CATALYST: Overview Brief.’

565 Ibid.
Illustration 9.9

SECDET FLATs

\[ s33(a)(ii) \]

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566 Ibid.
SECDET’s raising was done in extreme haste and it appears no thought had been given to its need in all of the planning undertaken for BASTILLE and FALCONER. Defence had not anticipated DFAT’s desire to re-establish diplomatic relations with the new Iraq immediately, perhaps because Downer had not highlighted the intent earlier in the conflict’s management. Planning began on 22 March 2003 when the CA directed LCAUST to commence preparations for the reopening of the Embassy.\footnote{B731101, ‘WNG ORD – Security Detail for Reopening of AS Embassy Baghdad,’ 22 March 2003.} By the next day the CDF had identified the requirement as a platoon size element of not more than 50 people.\footnote{B731088, ‘FRAGO 01/03 Security Group for Reopening of AUSTEMB Baghdad,’ 23 March 2003.} The number of assigned personnel would fluctuate as planners refined the mission. For example, the CDF Execute Order of 17 April 2003 called for a 35 man security detachment while a minute of 29 April indentified a requirement for 77 persons, including a team of up to 15 SAS.\footnote{B268516, ‘Op FALCONER/Op CATAYLST – Transitional Grouping Arrangements,’ 29 April 2003.} Illustration 9.10 provides an early representation of the SECDET’s organisation, although the SAS requirement was deleted later.
The CDF identified SECDET’s task as the protection of the Australian Embassy and staff and the provision of an escort capability. The deployment was to be for 12 months, with four month rotations. The length of rotation was chosen as a result of considerations of ‘nature of tasks, expected OPTEMPO and inability to support ROCL with a FE of this size.’

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570 B731091, ‘SecDet as at 19 April 03.’


So rushed was SECDET’s raising that a minute by the Commander JTF633 covering the first rotation’s post operation report characterised its preparation and deployment as ‘poorly planned’ and its manning as ‘ad hoc,’ although once on the ground he acknowledged that the detachment ‘performed magnificently.’ However, while the majority of the team had operational experience no one had previously served in the MEAO, nor was a veteran of Iraq made available to assist in pre-deployment training. The team’s members received only a generic MEAO Brief from the DFSU, the OC was given little in the way of a mission brief, and no exchange of information with the BSG was possible until the arrival in Baghdad, with the exception of a single reconnaissance report. The issuing of equipment to SECDET personnel proved a challenge for the logistic chain due to the secrecy that surrounded the deployment; consequently some troops arrived in theatre without weapons and had to scramble to obtain them from RAAF stocks. SECDET received its deployment order on 24 April 2003, specifying that the advance party was to be in Baghdad by 5 May and the unit was to be ready for security tasks by 15 May.

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575 B268170, ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Operation FALCONER, AMP 52,’ 24 April 2003.'
The raising of SECDET also underscored just how outside of the decision loop the COMAST remained. Although notionally in charge of Operation CATALYST Bonser needed to dispatch to Cosgrove, (via Gillespie) a 24 point list of critical information requirements. Much of the information he sought was operational in nature, including details such as location of the SECDET’s accommodation, conditions of service, physical condition of the Australian Mission and level of medical support available. That Bonser had needed to seek this information from the HSO and the CDF illustrates how deeply Cosgrove had intertwined the levels of war in regard to Iraq. As HQAST mounted SECDET the reality was that the tactical and operational levels of war no longer existed in regard to CATALYST. Instead, everything was considered to have strategic importance, and hence to be of direct interest to the CDF. Rather than embracing the era of the ‘strategic corporal’ Cosgrove opted to play the ‘tactical general’ and effectively integrated all levels of war into a single and continuous dynamic.576

SECDET’s initial iteration consisted of 58 personnel, a considerable increase from the earlier manning of 35 and was a result of a more refined

conception of the mission’s requirements. Its commander was Major Michael J Birtles. SECDET consisted of:

- HQ Element
- Infantry Platoon drawn from 5 Pl, B Coy, 2 RAR
- ASLAV Troop drawn from 1 Tp, C Sqn, 2 Cav
- 3 person EOD detachment from 3 CER and 4 CER
- 3 person Military Police Support Team from 1 MP BN
- CIS detachment from 3 CSR

This allocation of personnel soon proved inadequate and the CDF authorised a small increase of an additional ASLAV and six persons, including an intelligence sergeant and a 2IC Captain. The later was particularly important as it gave the SECDET commander the ability to command the force while his 2IC took responsibility coordinating taskings, particularly those involving the ambassador and the mission’s staff.

An ADF preference to minimise the Australian in-theatre foot print meant that the first SECDET rotation deployed without some traditional capabilities, for

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577 B268724, ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Operation FALCONER, AMP 57,’ 30 April 2003.’


example the first rotation did not have any Australian Army Catering Corps personnel. The result was that SECDET was on hard rations for the duration of the deployment, usually consisting of US Meals Ready to Eat. It took the sustainment system two months to provide a weekly barbecue pack of meat and salad vegetables (later raised to two packs per week). SECDET could have obtained fresh food from nearby Coalition contract messes, but this was not possible due to risk concerns, although a local baker was eventually identified as a source of fresh bread. The result of such inadequate catering decisions was that over the four month deployment the average weight loss suffered by SECDET-1 was 6 kilograms per man. The ADF resolved the deployment’s catering shortcomings by providing a cook’s detachment for SECDET-2. Even this solution, however, was less than responsive as it took months for the cook’s bulky equipment to arrive through the sustainment chain.

The replacement in place was progressive with SECDET elements gradually taking over security responsibilities from the BSG at the Australian Representative Office, the future embassy site and the Al Hamra Hotel. SECDET personnel shadowed BSG who gradually thinned out and

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extracted. The SECDET also moved into the Flats. Within a short time SECDET had taken charge of the protection of the Australian Mission, Ambassador and staff. During this brief four month initial rotation SECDET conducted over 60 dismounted patrols, 80 ASLAV patrols and 1,400 ASLAV convoy protection tasks in addition to providing the Australian Representative Office with 24 hour security.\(^{582}\)

SECDET-I was formed with such haste that Land Command examined its raising. Its report noted a number of problems, including:

- Initial force structure and weapon mix that proved inappropriate for its assigned tasks, thereby necessitating the deployment of more personnel and an additional ASLAV;
- Information provided to the unit on likely tasks was limited and did not include the number of sites that it would have to secure;
- The unit’s commander did not have an opportunity to conduct a reconnaissance prior to deployment;
- The speed of the unit’s deployment prevented a conduct of a mission preparation exercise with which

to co-ordinated its infantry and light armour components;

- The unit’s mandated manpower cap denied it the use of appropriate logistic personnel with the result that 1st line support tasks had to be performed from out-of-theatre; and

- An overly restrictive manpower cap also prevented the deployment of any catering staff which meant that personnel had to live on combat rations for the first rotation.\(^{583}\)

SECDET remained at the Flats until 2005 when it relocated to the International Zone (Green Zone) when the Embassy and staff moved into the more secure venue. As of this writing (February 2010) SECDET-XVI continues to fulfil the tasks first outlined in May 2003, although now under the designation of Operation KRUEGER. SECDET manning would also increase, especially as the threat environment escalated. SECDET-II, for example, deployed with an establishment of 66 which subsequently proved inadequate and was augmented to a strength of 82. By SECDET-V’s tenure the organisation’s personnel level had increased to over 120, which was supplemented by a force

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of nearly 70 locally employed civilians who were termed Diplomatic Protection Service guards.\textsuperscript{584}

Joining the SECDET in Baghdad was McNarn and the ASNHQ-MEAO. They moved in order to support the BSG and the other Australian elements that would gather in Baghdad, as well as across Iraq. The headquarters would occupy space in the Presidential Palace North in an area on the eastern side of the BIAP complex that was to become known as Camp Victory. The move was completed by the end of June 2003 and its designation changed to HQ JTF633.\textsuperscript{585}

The mission and tasks of the HQ JTF 633 were similar to those of the ASNHQ-MEAO. Prior to succeeding McNarn, AIRCDE G M Bentley received a directive from Bonser that outlined his responsibilities. The primary mission remained to ‘safeguard Australian national interests in the MEAO.’ The COMAST identified 24 specific tasks for Bentley, the most important dealing with the command of the Australian contingent and the sustainment of the special relationship with coalition partners, namely the United States. Cosgrove was also to retain a direct

\textsuperscript{584} ‘OC SECDET II Post Operation Report,’ 10 January 2004; and ‘Post operation Report (POR) OP CATALYST SECDET V 633.0.2,’ January 2005.

\textsuperscript{585} C2869111, ‘OPORD 06-03 Deployment to Establish ASNHQ-MEAO in Baghdad,’ 12 June 2003.

interest in events occurring in the MEAO. Bonser instructed Bentley that he was to have a direct and immediate relationship with the CDF on matters of strategic or national interest. The COMAST expanded this instruction to include:

- Operational matters with national implications;
- Developments in Coalition and US planning of importance to Australia’s national interests;
- Bilateral relationships with MEAO nations;
- Relationships with US and Coalition partners; and
- Any issue, no matter how tactical in nature, which may attract significant Parliamentary or media interest.587

The perpetuation of the CDF’s direct relationship with the Commander JTF633 meant that Bonser’s role in the operation remained minimal. It also highlighted the extent of the government’s fear of any negative reports, of even the most trivial nature, emanating from the MEAO. This meant that the ADF had to manage all aspects of Iraq

587 Ibid. The directive for Bentley’s successor was virtually identical. See, C417716, ‘Commander Australian Theatre Directive to Commander Joint Task Force Six Three Three,’ 10 November 2003.
from the highest level leaving HQAST with little real responsibility for Australia’s most important operation.

Once the ADF recognised the need to establish SECDET, and decided to move the national headquarters to Baghdad it became necessary to provide these elements with a 2\textsuperscript{nd}/3\textsuperscript{rd} line support organisation. The staff of the ATC was to receive most of its support through RAAF lines, but some administrative support was to come from 633.0, the Iraq Group.

Initially a team drawn from the SFTG’s CSSG fulfilled the requirement of support to the ADF’s Baghdad elements on a temporary ad hoc basis. The CSSG dispatched to BIAP a team of nine personnel (6 logistic and three trade). However, this was only an interim measure, especially since the logisticians drawn from the CSSG were due to return to Australia.\footnote{588 B270490, ‘Decision Brief for CDF, Op FALCONER: Combat Service Support Team Baghdad,’ 16 May 2003.} The ADF, therefore, decided to set the support to JTG 633.0 onto a more solid foundation. This led to the hasty deployment of a new deployed element called the Force Level Logistic Asset (FLLA).

The basis for the FLLA would be the \textsuperscript{s33(a)(iii)} and its commander received orders to take on responsibility for the support of ADF elements in Baghdad. This would give the ISB a new lease on life as
SOCAUST, Major General Duncan Lewis, had announced his intention to close the facility.\(^{589}\) Instead of being a SOCOMD asset it would transform into a joint one. To fulfil its new and larger mission the ISB received an augmentation of personnel, in which its OC played no part in selecting the staff or in identifying the required trades. In fact, he was unable to influence his organisation’s trade mix and did not receive a copy of the personnel list until it had been virtually signed off in Canberra. One deficiency noted was the absence of a pay clerk. HQAST assumed that pay matters could be handled via reach back to Sydney. This, however, proved not to be the case and the Defence’s poor management of deployed personnel pay would result in a series of miscues and embarrassments that would eventually reach the Minister’s Office. In particular, HQAST was unable to shut off allowances quickly enough when personnel left the MEAO either at the end of a deployment or as a result of RSOI. The result was that numerous individuals received pay for which they were not entitled, and which they had to repay. In some cases this reached into the tens-of-thousands of dollars. In its earliest design the Force Level Logistic Asset or FLLA was expected to have

\(^{589}\) C112116, ‘SOC AST Closure of ISB-KU, SOHQ,’ 30 April 2003.
just 24 personnel. But its establishment, like that of the SECDET, was guaranteed to grow.\textsuperscript{590}

The decision to move the FLLA forward to BIAP must be questioned. The ADF had devoted considerable efforts during Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER to mitigate the risk to which it exposed its personnel. However, the CDF now authorised the FLLA’s move forward from the relative safety of the \textsuperscript{533(a)(iii)} to what would soon become one of the most dangerous locations on earth. What is missed in the strangeness of this decision is that it was done so without any consideration of its necessity from a support point of view. In the ISB the ADF had a mature facility with sufficient space to serve as the deployment’s logistic centre-of-gravity. As sustainment stores arrived it would have been far simpler for the FLLA to forward them as required to BIAP on RAAF or Coalition air transport for onward distribution to ADF elements in Baghdad. Such an arrangement would have required only a small distribution presence at BIAP, rather than most of the FLLA’s personnel. Instead, the move forward created a complex and bifurcated command and control system for the FLLA OC and his headquarters as many of its functions were more easily undertaken. This was a complication that

\textsuperscript{590} Comments by interview subjects S and OO.
could have been easily avoided for such a small organisation. The FLLA would subsequently shift from the grounds of the BIAP to Camp Victory. This took place on 24 February 2004.\textsuperscript{591}

It would be simple to dismiss the FLLA’s move to Baghdad as a misinterpretation of the security environment in anticipation of a downgrade in the threat level following the end of hostilities. However, such an excuse, while having the benefit of simplicity, obscures greater problems – the ongoing inability of the ADF to consult in a timely manner its logistic experts and the lack of understanding of support capabilities and concepts by the service’s combat officers. In the case of the FLLA’s relocation the lack of general ADF understanding of support procedures manifested itself in the ADF’s tendency to merge the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} lines of support, both intellectually and physically, rather than to treat them as separate and distinct functions. The reception of sustainment flights was a 3\textsuperscript{rd} line function which was more easily done. Distribution to the ADF elements in Baghdad was a 2\textsuperscript{nd} line function, a task for which a close proximity between the support element and the user was useful. However, the FLLA could have met its 2\textsuperscript{nd} line responsibilities with a minimum of staff and

the rest of the unit could have remained which was the better location from which to manage its 3rd line tasks. Such a solution would have been particularly appropriate since the majority of the FLLA’s labours, namely the meeting of sustainment flights and the conduct of RSO&I, were 3rd line tasks. It is probably for reasons such as these that the FLLA’s main body would eventually move with no visible diminution of support to the ADF elements remaining in Baghdad.

The movement of the FLLA to BIAP should also not disguise another feature of ADF sustainment policy throughout Operation CATALYST. As with Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER the majority of sustainment provided to ADF elements in Iraq would come from largely US sources. Australian policy continued to favour in-theatre Coalition and contractor sustainment rather than the more expensive pushing of support from the Australian home base to the MEAO through the sustainment chain.

As HQ JTF633, SECDET and the FLLA established themselves in Baghdad other ADF teams and individuals were either soon to arrive in Iraq or preparing to deploy. Most of these were small parties of specialist personnel who would make up the task units of TG633.3 – the Iraq Group – and would serve in larger Coalition organisations. One of the first to reach Baghdad was Australia’s representatives to ORHA. Rumsfeld had invited
Australia to contribute personnel to Garner’s ORHA organisation, a request to which Howard agreed. The Strategic and International Policy Branch prepared a minute on the subject for the Minister for Defence. This document noted that DFAT intended to advance MAJGEN Tim Ford (ret) for the job, in part because the United Kingdom had announced that its contribution would be led by a two-star, but also because of his close ties to the United Nations. Ford was a former military adviser to the UN Secretary General. In the end, however, Australia provided only an Army O6 — Colonel Keith Schollum — with an initial appointment of just three months. He joined a DFAT appointee and an AUSAID official who were also posted to ORHA.592

Schollum’s task was two-fold. He was to ‘contribute to the work of the ORHA and protect AS interests in relation to phase IV operations in Iraq.’ The COMAST, in his appointment directive, outlined to Schollum that his role was primarily to ‘provide liaison between Defence and ORHA on all matters relating to ADF participation in ORHA-led planning or operations in order for Australia to meet its international obligations.’ Bonser, also warned Schollum that he was not to commit, or create an expectation of commitment to, Australia to any OHRA
initiative. In essence, Australia undertook to place an officer on Garner’s staff in order to have someone on the inside that could monitor at close hand ORHA’s developing Phase IV plan.  

At the further request of the US Government Australia augmented its presence at ORHA with two additional Army officers for six months at the O5 level, one of whom was the future Member of Parliament LTCOL M Kelly. The new arrivals were to serve as an:

- ORHA Team Leader to work at the provincial level supporting reconstruction efforts and coordination with non-government agencies; and as a
- Legal Officer to provide advice to coalition elements within ORHA.

At the time of these new appointments the Australian Government also extended Schollum’s tenure by a further six months and identified a replacement officer from the RAAF for a further rotation. With the collapse of ORHA these officers transitioned into the Bremer’s CPA organisation. As would be the case with some of the other


594 ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op Falconer AMP 45,’ 17 April 2003.
contributions to Iraq, what had begun as a short-term assignment would evolve into an indefinite commitment.\footnote{CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op Falconer AMP 79,’ 30 June 2003.}

The Strategic and International Policy Branch Minute is an interesting document, largely because it does not provide any suggestion of the unreality that was US Phase IV planning. Rather, it calmly outlines the organisation and tasks—reconstruction, civil administration and humanitarian assistance—of what it calls the newly established Pentagon Iraq Phase IV Planning Cell (the future ORHA). It also notes that the United Kingdom and Australia were the only countries to have received invitations to participate in the Planning Cell. The document also relates that the United States accepts that if Australia appoints an officer to ORHA it is not an indication of intent to participate more broadly in either Phase IV operations or in a peacekeeping deployment. In the face of a clearly signalled lack of desire for Phase IV participation the United States, the Minute noted, still intended to ask Australia to indicate its preferences for a role.\footnote{For the document see B256319, ‘Iraq Phase IV Planning,’ 11 February 2003.}

Another contingent to reach Iraq was the RAAF officers who served as part of the Coalition’s Combined Weapons Effectiveness Assessment Team (CWEAT). Their task
was to help ‘assess the effectiveness of the Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC) directed weapons employed during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).’ The COMAST specific direction to the Australian CWEAT members was that they were to:

- Analyse the effectiveness of Australian F/A-18 delivered weapons;
- Develop an understanding of the effectiveness of weapons which may be considered for future procurement by the Australian Defence Force (ADF);
- Contribute to the United States (US) lead weapons effectiveness evaluation;
- Develop an understanding of the US systems, procedures and processes used in weapon effectiveness evaluation; and
- Develop the competency to conduct weapon effectiveness evaluations.\(^597\)

The Australians took up their appointments on 18 May and completed them on 18 August.\(^598\)

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\(^{598}\) Ibid.
Other small contingents to deploy included:

- 1 JMOVGP dispatched a Joint Movement Planning Team to the national headquarters. It was hoped that a centralised movement cell would ease intra-theatre lift, especially the facilitation of diplomatic clearances.\(^{599}\)

- The Army provided a Transitional Liaison Officer (06) to serve within the Australian Diplomatic Mission.\(^{600}\)

- The RAAF dispatched a 58 person Air Traffic Control Team to manage BIAP.\(^{601}\)

- The ADF contributed a joint 12 person team to the US-led Iraq Survey Group which was responsible for the search for Saddam’s WMDs. This team was largely but included DSTO and Army members.\(^{602}\)

- The ADF offered a six person team to the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT); the US-led organisation was responsible for the training of

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\(^{599}\) ‘Brief for COMAST: OP Bastille – Force Assignment Extension for Movement Control Detachment to the MEAO,’ Feb-Mar 03; and ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op FALCONER AMP27,’ 10 April 2003.

\(^{600}\) ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op FALCONER AMP44,’ 17 April 2003.

\(^{601}\) ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op FALCONER AMP42,’ 16 April 2003.

\(^{602}\) ‘CDF Execute Order 02/03 – Op FALCONER AMP41,’ 16 April 2003; and SEC/OUT/2003/244, ‘Iraq Phase IV: Australian Contribution to Iraq Survey Group,’ 14 April 2003..
the new Iraqi Army. The RAN would also become involved in the training of Iraqi military personnel. On 23 January 2004 a contingent of twelve RAN personnel joined the Coalition’s Iraqi Coastal Defence Force Training Team. Operating from they provided Iraqi sailors with patrol boat and small craft training.

The Australian government also accepted US and UK offers to provide Australian personnel for their headquarters and staffs. For example, the Government authorised the CDF to embed up to 24 personnel in HQ CJTF7. This was the organisation the CENTCOM established to command its remaining effort in Iraq. The United States would approach Australia with further appointment opportunities which the ADF and the Government evaluated on their merits. For example, at the end of August 2003 the acting CDF, VADM C A Ritchie, recommended to the

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606 Ibid.
Minister the appointment of three additional embeds. In addition, the ADF would continue to maintain a number of liaison officers in key positions across the MEAO and in Tampa. Numerous Australian officers would serve in myriad capacities across the US effort in Iraq. The most senior was MAJGEN Jim Molan who acted as General George W Casey’s Operations Officer in HQ MNF-I. Other Australians embeds served with the British headquarters in .

Where ever they served Australian personnel provided the ADF with direct observation of US plans and actions that would not have been obtained so easily through formal government-to-government channels.

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609 Molan recounts this experience in Running the War in Iraq: An Australian general, 300,000 troops, the bloodiest conflict of our time, HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, 2008.

Illustration 9.11 shows the location of the ADF’s elements in Baghdad.

Illustration 9.11

Australian Defence Personnel in Baghdad

AS FORCES BAGHDAD 171500Z JUL01

The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction

With the end of the Saddam Regime the Coalition initiated a search of the country in order to find its stocks of WMDs, and if this proved not possible, compelling evidence of the existence of an Iraqi research and/or manufacturing program. The organisation that the US formed to lead the hunt was known as the Iraq Survey Group (ISG). Although many of its members were military

its director was a civilian, David Kay, who had served in Iraq as a weapons inspector after the First Gulf War. Reflecting the rationale for Australia’s participation in the war the Government had no doubt that the ISG would find these devices. As the land campaign neared its conclusion Howard expressed his confidence that Saddam’s WMDs would be soon found while Hill emphatically stated that ‘I’ve no doubt.’ As the northern summer moved into Autumn the Australian government remained confident that Saddam’s WMDs would soon be found. At the 100 day mark Downer expressed his belief that the UN’s goal of disarming Iraq would soon be achieved.

Australia was not alone in its contribution to the search for WMDs, although, as outlined above, it was one of the more modest. The difference in contribution was that Australia had committed to the war’s combat phase and, while these

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countries brought more substantial NBC resources than that provided by Canberra, they were late-comers to the Coalition. ISG teams would carry out an extensive survey of Iraq of which Illustration 9.12 gives a small indication of the number and types of sites investigated.

Illustration 9.12
Possible WMD Sites – as of 13 April 2003

The story of ISG’s search for Saddam’s WMDs is well known and only the briefest of summaries is required here. After nearly eight months of fruitless searching

\footnote{614 ‘Operation FALCONER, CDF Daily Brief,’ 13 April 2003.}

\footnote{615 Ibid.}
Kay resigned stating that ‘I don’t think they [WMDs] existed.’\(^6\) His successor, Charles Duelfer, began the task with the expectation that the odds of finding any WMDs was ‘close to nil.’\(^7\) He would not be disappointed. In October 2004 the ISG compiled a report that essentially concluded that Iraq had no WMDs, although it conceded that Saddam did have the ambition to redevelop its previously active weapon’s program once the UN sanctions regime came to an end.\(^8\) Shortly after the report’s release the Australian Government conceded that there were no WMDs to be found. Subsequent to this admission CJOPS issued a revised OPINST for Operation CATALYST which coyly noted that Iraq’s WMD program no longer posed a threat to its neighbours or global security. CATALYST’s new mission statement redefined the ADF’s role as ‘to participate in US-led coalition operations in Iraq to support the Australian whole of government effort to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.’\(^9\)

That Iraq had at one time an extensive WMD program is beyond refute; the Iranian and Kurdish casualties of

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\(^7\) Ibid.


Iraqi chemical warfare attack bear tragic testimony to these weapons’ existence. However, what became clear only after the war was that Iraq had quietly disbanded its chemical program in the early 1990s and it biological program in the mid-1990s. Iraq’s nuclear program never got off the ground. Saddam, throughout the entire UN mandated inspection era followed a pattern of denial, obfuscation and intimidation which was aimed at maintaining the illusion of a viable WMD program, possibly as a strategic deterrent against Iran.

The Howard Government had based its rationale for Australia’s participation in the war on the need to safeguard the nation, and the world, from the potential spread of Iraq’s WMD. The threat of WMD employment was also the basis of the SAS mission in the Western Desert of Iraq – the prevention of a TBM launch with a WMD warhead at Israel. Thus, the intelligence failure to detect Iraq’s abandonment of its WMD programs had strategic and operational implications for Australia. In a sense, Australian justification for participating in
the war was founded on wrong information and its ground forces employed in a perhaps less than optimal manner.

Conclusion

If the ADF’s contribution to Operation CATALYST would ultimately be larger than the Howard Government had perhaps hoped, the Army’s role remained quite small, as it had been for BASTILLE and FALCONER. The only Army badged contribution was the embassy security detail known as SECDET. While considerable numbers of Army personnel served in the revamped national headquarters and the FLLA both were joint organisations and neither was a field unit. Elsewhere, soldiers would serve as embeds in Coalition and United Nations positions. The ADF’s presence in Iraq would also prove longer than expected, and resulted in a military presence in the country that continues to the present (early 2010).

While the Army initially missed out on deploying infantry, cavalry or even an engineer-based group it must be remembered that CATALYST was a joint operation. Consequently, the Government determined the make-up of the ADF’s contribution to Iraq’s Phase IV in accordance with the force structure from across the services that were best suited to achieve the nation’s strategic goals. In the case of CATAYLST – at least for the mission’s first two years – there was no strategic requirement for
Australia to deploy a large land force, and hence the Howard Government rightly declined to do so. Perhaps symbolically, McNarn’s replacement as commander at the reorganised national headquarters was a RAAF officer, Air Commodore Graham Bentley who took over in May 2003. Moreover, including Bentley, only one of the next four national commanders was from the Army. A list of the national commanders is provided as Appendix ???
Chapter 10

The Threat Environment

Perceiving the Level of Threat

While it is true that Iraq was and remains a highly dangerous place, it is also important to place the degree of risk that ADF personnel serving on Operation CATALYST faced in perspective. Danger and risk to life was certainly present, for example during SECDET II’s four month rotation Baghdad experienced 164 rocket attacks, 15 car bombings and hundreds of IED strikes. None of these attacks specifically targeted Australians, but that was not always true. Between November 2004 and May 2005 insurgents attacked a later SECDET rotation with rockets and VBIEDs, AATTI came under fire at Tall Afar, and RAAF C130s came under gun and missile fire. Yet, despite such incidents, and others, Australia did not suffer its first battle casualties until a VBIED wounded three SECDET soldiers on 25 October 2004, a year and a half after the commencement of Operation CATALYST. It cannot be overlooked that over the course of Australia’s


participation in the Coalition in Iraq the ADF suffered just two fatalities, neither of which was combat related. These were the deaths of WO2 David Nary (vehicle accident) and Private Jake Kovco (accidental weapon discharge). Several other Australians lost their lives in Iraq but these were either as contractors or as members of a foreign military organisation.

The ADF’s death toll of just two needs to be placed into the context of the Coalition’s considerably longer fatality list. As of 1 June 2010 the overall death toll stood at 4,719, including 114 females. The United States has borne the brunt of this carnage suffering 4,397 fatalities (plus nearly 32,000 wounded). In fact, the ADF’s losses have been so slight that a dozen other Coalition contributing nations — including some surprising ones — had more deaths in Iraq than Australia. These were:

- United Kingdom - 179
- Italy - 33
- Poland - 23
- Ukraine - 18
- Bulgaria - 13
- Spain - 11
- Denmark - 7
• El Salvador – 5
• Georgia – 5
• Slovakia – 4
• Latvia – 3
• Romania – 3

Australia tied with three other countries with 2 fatalities each – Estonia, Thailand and The Netherlands. In addition to this reckoning should be added the loss of 463 contractors; 9,477 Iraqi Security Force personnel and an estimated 50,000 civilians.623

When the Australian Government agreed to increase its commitment to Iraq by the fielding of the AMTG it made sure the province was amongst those with the least degree of risk. Al Muthanna Province had had only 7 fatalities (5 US and 2 Dutch) from the onset of the conflict up to the time of this writing. In fact, there would be no Coalition deaths in al Muthanna from May 2004 to June 2009, a period which coincided with the AMTG’s presence. Significantly, Al Muthanna was the first province that the Coalition handed over to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), a further testament to its tranquillity. After the AMTG transitioned to the OWBG-W role in mid-2006, and relocated to Tallil in Dhi Qar Province, the threat to

the Australians increased but only marginally. Like al
Muthanna, Dhi Qar was a fairly quiet province and most of
the insurgency attacks that occurred were aimed at the US
forces that patrolled or transited MSR Tampa, a key
supply route for which OWBG-W had no responsibility. Over
the course of the conflict the Coalition suffered 98
fatalities in Dhi Qar (as of May 2010), but the vast
majority of these occurred during the conflict’s opening
stage. During the Australian presence in Dhi Qar the
Coalition suffered only 11 fatalities (9 US, 1 Italy and
1 Romania) of which only 5 were the result of hostile
action.\textsuperscript{624}

Why was the ADF so fortunate – just two deaths in a
war that for Australia spanned more than 5 years? The
most telling explanation for this state of affairs is
that the Howard Government did not authorise the ADF’s
participation in the occupation of Iraq in order to fight
an insurgency. COIN was the business of the other members
of the Coalition, particularly the United States and the
United Kingdom, and Australia was alert to requests for a
greater ground presence or role. In his POR the departing
CJTF633, Brigadier P J Hutchinson, made it quite clear
that Australia should ‘not be involved in offensive or

\textsuperscript{624} Ibid.
policing operations.’ Six years later the then CJTF633, Major General John Cantwell, reiterated this point in the context of the Afghanistan mission. He commented that it was not Australia’s mission to ‘defeat the insurgency in Oruzgan.’ CATALYST’s Concept of Operations is quite clear on this point. The operation’s original mission statement was that the ‘ADF is to participate in US-Led coalition operations in Iraq to support the Australian Whole-of-Government (W-O-G) effort to assist with the rehabilitation of Iraq and to remove the threat posed to global security by Iraq’s WMDs.’ Three years later – as the insurgency reached new heights of savagery – the ADF’s mission remained largely unchanged, except for the deletion of a reference to WMDs. ADF force elements were now ‘to participate in US-led Coalition operations in Iraq to support the Australian WoG effort to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.’ The 2003 and 2006 Operational Instructions even contained identical national strategic endstates, namely:

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628 C679412/06, ‘CJOPS Operation Instruction 04/2006: Operation CATALYST, 6 October 2006.'
• The Iraqi WMD program no longer poses a threat to its neighbours or global security. *(Achieved)*;

• Australia has provided appropriate support to the US as an alliance partner and to the UN;

• Australia has provided a meaningful WoG contribution towards the rehabilitation of Iraq;

• Australia has supported its international stance on WMD non-proliferation;

• Australian has met its domestic and regional security responsibilities;

• Australia has protected its economic, trade and security interests in the Middle East;

• Australia’s relationship with its regional neighbours have been maintained; and

• Australian citizens in the MEAO have been protected.629

At no point in these documents was there any mention of the ADF participating in a counterinsurgency.

CATALYST’s endstates also had something in common with those issued for FALCONER. For both operations, the officials who defined the endstates employed subjective, broad-brush language that lacked precision in

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629 Ibid. (Bold in original); and C117976, ‘COMAST Operational Instruction 03/2003 – Operations CATALYST and SLIPPER,’ 15 July 2003.
terminology. The result was that the end states for both operations offered the government plenty of wiggle room in measuring their attainment.

As much of the deployed forces support came from


631 Comments by interview subject W.
in-theatre Coalition, contractor or host nation sources
the operation’s ongoing sustainment from the Australian
national support base was really a question of manpower
management and image projection to a domestic audience.
The insurgence was largely irrelevant, as long as not too
too many ADF personnel were killed or injured. Force
protection, according to one rotation commander, was the
first priority.632 As threat levels increased so did the
HQJTF633’s focus on force protection. For example, the
surge in violence that accompanied the 2005 Iraqi
election resulted in force protection becoming for the
then CJTF633, AIRCDRE Greg Evans, the ‘major focus of the
HQ over the election period.’633 Even more direct was
Hutchinson’s observation as CJTF633 that force
protection, ‘was to be placed ahead of mission
achievement.’634

Writing on the Iraq IED threat Brigadier Andrew
Smith captured the tenor of the ADF’s position in the
Iraq War. He believed that it was Australia’s lack of a
major stake in the conflict that gave its forces the
discretion to mitigate risk, which in turn allowed the
deployed force to manage the chance for fatalities to

632 HQAST 2003/5000200/Pt1, ‘COMAST’s Concept of Operations for Op CATALYST,’ 16 May
2003; and comments by interview subject RR.


634 C572582, ‘Post Operation Report, 318061 Brig P J Hutchinson – Commander Joint Task Force
virtually zero. Smith’s conclusion is also reflected in Hutchinson’s POR. After emphasising the importance of force protection the CJTF633 expressed his determination that Australia was to be seen by its partners as to ‘punch above its weight.’ In his report Hutchinson went on to highlight the importance of relationship management and the need to win maximum kudos from Australia’s Coalition partners. The more astute of the task group commanders came to an understanding of Hutchinson’s intent. They came to the realisation that the centre of gravity of their task was force protection and the support of the US alliance.

In a war there is an obvious tension between the priorities of force protection and alliance support. However, in the case of Iraq Australia appears to have negotiated the inherent conflict between these objectives with a high degree of success, at least in the short term it seems. Yet this tension also reflects a malaise that affects not just Australia but also many other Western military organisations.


636 Comments by interview subject W.
Any belief which places the welfare of the troops before the success of the mission is a worrying one which strikes right at the heart of the purpose and utility of military force. Unchecked such attitudes threaten to unbalance Clausewitz’s trinity of war, the intellectual foundation for the use of military force by the West.

While deployed forces consistently maintained what one rotation commander termed a ‘robust profile to deter attack,’ the ADF further reduced the risk to its troops by actively managing the types of operations undertaking by its forces and the tactics employed. The ADF was well aware that opportunities existed to increase the scope of the deployed force’s allowed activities, but it also knew that to do so would also increase the level of

637 s. 33(a)(iii)


The oversight of tactical operations was one of the prime responsibilities of the CJTF633. He had the right to deny permission for any proposed actions, even administrative ones, that he believed had a higher than acceptable degree of risk. This oversight responsibility came from the COMAST who placed it near the top of the CJTF633’s duties. Specifically, the COMAST instructed the CJTF633 to:

- monitor and review risk assessments for the conduct of operations and contribute to the development of the theatre command risk management policy.
- monitor the threat to ADF FE in the MEAO, setting appropriate Force protection levels and validating force protection measures implemented by the Task Groups and Units.

These taskings consistently represented points three and four on a list that by 2006 ran to 33 items. The first and second priorities concerned national interests and the necessity for the CJTF633 to maintain a direct relationship with the CDF.

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642 C679412/06, ‘CIOPS Operation Instruction 04/2006: Operation CATALYST, 6 October 2006.'
The setting-up of the AMTG in early 2005 was a further reflection of the government’s decision to avoid the insurgency. Al Muthanna was one of Iraq’s sleepiest provinces. The Dutch Government had decided to withdraw its forces, but the province still required a covering force for the Japanese engineering group that was engaged in reconstruction.

Howard assigned AMTG two tasks, neither which required a confrontation with any insurgents who might operate in the province. This was:

1) provide a secure environment for the Japanese engineering and support forces that operated in Al Muthanna Province; and

2) provide training to Iraqi security forces.644

In announcing the raising of AMTG Howard pointed out that in addition to confirming Australia’s commitment to the

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644 Ibid.
rebuilding of Iraq it also acknowledge the importance of Japan as a close regional ally in the Pacific. In the Prime Minister’s words, working alongside the Japanese was ‘very important indeed.’

Given the government’s decision not to participate in a counterinsurgency, CATALYST’s ROE, and the CJTF responsibility to oversee risk minimisation it is perhaps not surprising that the ADF was able to limit its fatality toll to just two non-combat deaths. In doing so, the ADF succeeded in meeting the government’s desire to avoid allowing Iraq to become a larger domestic concern than it could otherwise have been.

Given the Australian Government’s extreme reluctance for its deployed forces to join battle with Iraqi insurgents it is puzzling that there was a minority of ADF personnel in Iraq who did just that. This came about as a result of contradictions inherent to the Government’s political goals by which it justified the country’s participation in the Coalition in Iraq. The tension between stated objectives and methods could not be resolved easily and led to the placing of some personnel into positions that involved them in joining the fight against the insurgents. The heart of this

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645 Ibid.
conflict between ends and means was the Government’s need to support the US alliance while also controlling the exposure of personnel to risks that might cost the it the support of its domestic audience.

The ADF member most directly involved in fighting the insurgents was probably Major General Jim Molan. In 2004 and 2005 he served as General George W Casey Operations Officer at HQ MNF-I. This period included the November 2004 Battle for Fallujah in whose planning and waging Molan played a central role, and throughout his time in Iraq Molan lived and moved with a SAS security detail. As he makes clear in his memoir of this eventful period, Molan had no doubt that he was in Iraq to defeat an insurgency.646 Such was his position within the US hierarchy that former Democrat Senator Lyn Allison suggested that Molan might end up being tried as a war criminal.647

Most Australian personnel that worked as an embed in a US of UK HQ or unit were participants in a COIN campaign, even if serving under an Australian ROE. There experiences were entirely different from that of ADF personnel who deployed on CATALYST with the air or maritime task groups or even served in SECDET, AATTI or

646 See, Jim Molan, *Running the War in Iraq: An Australian General, 00,000 troops, the bloodiest conflict of our time*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2008.

647 Lyn Allison and Tim Wright, ‘Victims of war suffer long after the troops go home,’ *The Age*, I June 2009.
AMTG/OWB-W. For example, the Australians who joined at the MNF-I COIN Centre of Excellence that Casey established at Taji were COIN instructors. Several rotations of Australian officers and senior NCOs taught COIN theory and practice to US personnel who upon graduation took up the battle against the insurgency. They were the only non-US personnel to be accepted at Taji. To conduct research and to validate their judgments the also Australians went outside the wire as part of COIN Survey Teams. This involved a short attachment to a US unit, the analysis of its current TTPs and the participation in patrols and other missions. In such an appointment confronting the insurgency was unavoidable.

Another group of Australians at the coal-face of the insurgency were the members of the Australian Defence Force Medical Detachment. This mainly Army but tri-service organisation served attached to the USAF hospital at Balad, north of Baghdad. The detachment had three rotations covering 1 September 2004 to 3 May 2005 and 29 September 2005 to 31 December 2005. Balad was a major reception centre for US, Coalition and Iraqi wounded and the detachment’s personnel witnessed a steady stream of the injured, the dismembered, and the dead. Balad was also a frequent target for IDF attack for which it was

648 Comments by interview subject L.
colloquially known as ‘Mortarville’. When the siren sounded — which was often — those on duty donned their helmets and flak jackets, stayed by their patients, and hoped the rounds missed the hospital. Even the CDF admitted that there were a lot of attacks at Balad.\textsuperscript{649} In an assessment of their work the CJTF633 described the medics as a ‘superb success story,’ and recognised them as an important factor in improving Australia’s relationship with its Coalition partners.\textsuperscript{650}

For the Australian Government it was a tricky manoeuvre to balance its support for the US alliance while also avoiding becoming ensnared in an insurgency. It was necessary for the ADF to juggle two competing agendas at which, at least at the time of this writing, the Government and the ADF largely appear to have succeeded. What made this possible was the recognition from the Australian perspective that the centres of gravity for Operation CATALYST were in Washington and Canberra, not Baghdad, as had been the case for Operations BASTILLE and FALCONER. It was only by keeping this reality in mind that Australia was able to negotiate two competing strategic endstates.


\textsuperscript{650} C646124, ‘CJTF633 POR — AIRCDRE Evans, 16 Nov 04 – 18 May 05: JOC Comments.’
The Australian skill in managing this strategic dilemma should not be exaggerated, however. Australian belief in their adeptness as strategic manipulators must be offset by the view from Washington, and take into account the low expectations of the US political community. As one of the few countries to participate in the conventional warfighting phase of the conflict Australia had already established its credentials with the United States. Moreover, the US leaders were aware that it was their forces that had to do the heavy lifting. After all, the United States was responsible for breaking Iraq in its desire to remove Saddam which created an implied obligation to re-establish a stable state. Australia had cautiously avoided incurring a similar responsibility by persistently disseminating a rationale for joining the Coalition in 2002 that did not include regime change, although whether or not there remained an implied moral responsibility is yet to be determined.  

The Randomness of Death

Even though the ADF went to great lengths to minimise the potential for causalities amongst those
serving on Operation CATALYST, it must be admitted that sometimes death and injury is beyond the scope of any force’s control. A more complete understanding of the ADF’s success in limiting casualties requires the consideration of one’s own tactics, techniques and procedures, against the posture, actions and ambitions of one’s opponent. Yet in doing so, there still remains another factor in explaining the ADF’s good fortune – the influence of luck.

Australians in Iraq did have numerous close calls that could have easily turned out differently. That they did not result in mass causalities can be seen more as a matter of good luck than of skill. Some examples should suffice to highlight the reality of this point.

- On 28 October 2003 eight to ten 68 and 85 millimetre rockets struck the Al-Rashid Hotel killing an US colonel and wounding 17 others. Paul Wolfowitz was in-residence when the attack took place, but emerged unscathed. The Al-Rashid was a popular hotel from which the Australian diplomatic mission had only recently departed to a different hotel nearer to the mission’s location.651

• On 27 June 2004 a RAAF C-130 departing BIAP came under ground fire. The aircraft was hit, took a casualty, and returned to Baghdad to off-load the injured person so that he could receive medical attention. The wounded person, a US Department of Defence civilian contractor, subsequently died from his wounds. The fire could just as easily have struck an ADF member as there was only five crew and three passengers on board.652

• On 7 August 2004 the Al Kasik Military Base, the residence of AATTI-I, was hit by two VBIEDs as well as indirect fire that resulted in seven KIA and 30 WIA, none Australian however. During its tenure at Al Kasik the Australian trainers witnessed eight IDF and IED attacks that caused widespread destruction and injury across the camp. The Australian casualty toll was a single soldier knocked down by a concussion wave.653

• On 14 August 2006 insurgents launched three rockets into the Green Zone. Two fell into the Tigris but the third detonated next to SECDET-


9’s accommodation block at the COVE. The 220mm rocket breached the reinforced concrete perimeter T-Wall, penetrated the buildings masonry shell and wrecked a bunk room. The SECDET’s fleet of SUVs also suffered heavy damage – six being write-offs. Casualties, however, were slight – four wounded (one priority two and three priority three).  

Illustration 10.1

Two Diggers survey the damage to SECDET-9’s Compound

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655 B843356, ‘Rocket Attack – 14 August 2006’.
Appendix G provides a list of most of the incidents affected ADF personnel serving on Operation CATALYST, including those actions initiated by Australians.

Similar incidents as described above were replicated across Iraq on a daily basis, but with more tragic results for the Coalition. One such event occurred at Tallil when the OWB(W) was present. A moving vehicle was struck by a direct hit from a rocket, a miracle shot that killed its three US occupants.\textsuperscript{656} For those serving in the International Zone, Camp Victory, Balad, and traversing Route Irish or MSR Tampa casualties from random SAF, IDF and IED attacks were a routine part of life in Iraq, but seemingly not for the Australians who also served in these hazardous locales.

While Clausewitz identified ‘chance’ as one of the enduring traits of war it would be wrong to over credit the role of luck in minimising Australian casualties. Other factors were at work that allowed the force to make its own luck. While training and equipment helped the key factor in the force’s preservation of good fortune was judicious mission selection. It was an unstated policy objective of Operation CATALYST that ‘no mission was worth dying for’.\textsuperscript{657} Risk management was the deployment’s

\textsuperscript{656} Comments by interview subject V.

\textsuperscript{657} Comments by interview subject EE.
mantra and the guiding principal was to reduce risk to a negligible level. If a task group commander believed that a proposed missions had an uncomfortable level of risk he had to seek the permission of higher authority, generally CJTF633. Tasks groups could and did cancel missions in response to changes in the threat environment. For example, SECDET scrubbed the Ambassador’s visit to the Ministry of Oil after an attack took place nearby.658

While risk minimalisation underpinned every task, the deployed force did follow sensible tactics. One of the more obvious rules was never to return by the same route. Movement, whenever possible, was done by air as that mode of travel was less risky than by road. Once the technology became available a Scan Eagle UAV accompanied convoys in order to search for newly laid IEDs. The Scaneagle maintained a position 5 kilometres in front of the convoy. Further out was a PC3. If the aircraft found something suspicious the UAV took a closer look. If needed the patrol could launch a Skylark for an even closer look. All this data streamed to the patrol from the UAVs via a downlink.659 When called upon to transport the Ambassador or mission staff the SECDET planning cycle was so detailed that it typically took three to four days


659 Comments by interview subject V.
to complete and generated a variety of courses of action. SECDET’s plans were extremely detailed, in part to identify ways by which to reduce risk. Across the deployment the practice was that if a task looked too dangerous it was to be put on hold until the situation changed, and missions could and would be scrubbed at the last minute.\textsuperscript{660}

Rotation commanders knew that force protection was the most important consideration of their mission. The more astute officer realised that at the strategic level Australia could not afford any fatalities.\textsuperscript{661} Those officers that did not get the message soon did as a result of CJTF633 oversight. It must be emphasised that the Australians were not being cowardly. Instead, they were matching actions with strategic requirements. Such an institutional attitude could lead to peculiar tactical decisions. SECDET V, for example, suspended its use of vehicle check points due to the threat posed by VBIEDs. Instead of taking an active hand in challenging the VBIED menace the Australians withdrew from the battlespace. Similarly, when outside the wire patrols would rather avoid confrontation than seek it out. Most peculiar of all was that the AMTG/OBG battlegroups deployed with two

\textsuperscript{660} Comments by interview subjects EE and GG.

\textsuperscript{661} Comments by interview subject TT.
AN/TPQ-36 Weapon Locating Radars from 20 STA Regiment which they used to detect an IDF launch and to identify the point-of-origin.\footnote{Post Operation Report (POR) Op CATALYST V CTU 633.0.2, 17 Sep 04 – 13 Jan 05, January 2005; and 20 STA Regiment, ‘OBG(W)-3 ISTAR Post-Operation Report,’ 7 December 2007. See also comments by interview subject V.}

Fire missions did occur but as the insurgents launched their rockets off timers there was never any chance of hitting the enemy in the act. Making the presence of the radar even more odd was its failure to serve as an early warning system, one of the key reasons for its deployment. The radar was not capable of transmitting an alarm to the base in time before the rockets impacted. The gap in capability was a means to connect to the base’s alarm system, a seemingly simple problem which was never solved.\footnote{Post Operation Report (POR) Op CATALYST V CTU 633.0.2, 17 Sep 04 – 13 Jan 05, January 2005; and 20 STA Regiment, ‘OBG(W)-3 ISTAR Post-Operation Report,’ 7 December 2007. See also comments by interview subject V.}

It was within the remit of CJTF633 to declare certain areas off limits, which was done largely because of the perception that entering such zones carried a higher risk. When OBG(W) took over over-watch responsibility for Dhi Qar province it was at first not allowed north of the Euphrates or into An Nasariyah. As
the areas main population centres were on the north side of the river it isolated the Australians from not just the people but, more importantly, from the insurgents who hid amongst the people. To the river’s south the terrain opened into a vast, largely unpopulated desert, which was less complicated and safer to patrol. An Nasiriyah was off-limits, unless the Australians were invited to enter by the provincial governor and CJOPS approved such action.\textsuperscript{663}

The extent to which the ADF strove to mitigate the effects of casualties on the success of the operation could reach troubling levels. Reflecting the Government’s intent not to allow Iraq to become a domestic issue, the ADF reached new heights in its desire to manage the media’s presentation of information to the Australian audience. Representative of this mentality was the reaction of JTF633 to a minor vehicle accident that took place in Baghdad on 30 July 2004. It involved a civilian manufacture Land Cruiser in a single vehicle accident. The vehicle was travelling within the Camp Victory compound when its driver – the vehicle’s sole occupant – pulled onto the embankment of a canal in order to allow a semi-trailer to pass him on a narrow stretch or road. The Land Cruiser became bogged and the driver sought recovery

\textsuperscript{663} Comments by interview subjects FF and XX. See also, JTF633, ‘OPINST 01/07 Operation Catalyst and Operation Slipper,’ 7 March 2007.
assistance. In the course of the recovery attempt the slipped down the bank, rolled into the canal and came to a rest partially submerged in water. The car’s driver emerged from the SUV unscathed and no other Australians were hurt in the accident. Despite the absence of anything of note the Public Affairs cell of JTF633 still believed it necessary to issue a precautionary and detailed guidance in case the event attracted the media’s attention. The document highlighted the potential negative effects the accident might have on the image of the ADF and the management of the Australian presence in Iraq. These concerns were:

- Non-battle related incidents could be portrayed as lax safety/operating procedures by JTF633 elements.
- Vehicle accidents have accounted for several coalition lives since operations in Iraq began and Australia’s ‘luck’ may soon run out.

The JTF633 public affairs team proposed a number of steps with which to contain this potential crisis, recommending a number of talking points for spokespeople to employ either in Baghdad or Canberra. The talking points were:
• An Australian soldier is unhurt following a single-vehicle accident inside Camp Victory, Baghdad.

• The vehicle rolled during recovery efforts after becoming stuck on a steep canal bank.

• There was single occupant inside the vehicle when it rolled into the canal.

• An investigation into the accident is now underway.

• Australian forces deployed in the Middle East will continue to routinely review safety and other operating procedures to ensure risks to ADF personnel are reduced.\textsuperscript{664}

It must be admitted that the media are in part to blame for promoting the ADF’s belief that it cannot be seen to allow its personnel to be damaged in a war. After the RAAF C130 incident outlined above in which a US contractor lost his life Brigadier Mike Hannan held a media briefing in Canberra. The questions posed by the gathered press corps focused on whether or not BIAP was now too dangerous for the RAAF to operate from and if Defence was reviewing its plans to use the airport. Hannan’s reply illustrated Operation CATALYST’s focus. He noted that the ADF would investigate the incident and

\textsuperscript{664} C523629, ‘Vehicle Accident - 30 July 04.’
then make a decision about how to best ameliorate the risk.665

In a conflict in which thousands of Coalition personnel would return home in body bags, and in which the Iraqi population would experience the ‘hard hand of war’ for years, the crisis that threatened JTF633 in the case of the ‘vehicle-in-the-canal’ accident bordered on the absurd. It suggests that senior officers and government leaders view the waging of contemporary conflict – at least the Iraq conflict – as an OHS issue in which risk management takes precedence over mission objective. Yet, that senior officers believed such a response was necessary raises an interesting point regarding the necessity for and extent of risk management within the ADF. The theme of casualty aversion has a large and growing literature, in which a general conclusion is that in becoming risk averse governments lose the ability to use force as an instrument of policy. In turn this deprives the military of its utility to the state, a condition under which no army can prosper.666

The IED Menace


666 For a recent survey of this topic in the Australian context see the author’s ‘No Casualties Please, We’re Soldiers,’ Australian Army Journal, Vol. V, No. 3, Summer 2008, pp. 65-78.
The greatest threat to the lives of Australian and Coalition personnel serving in Iraq was the Improvised Explosive Device (IED). LTCOL Russell Maddalena described it as the insurgent’s weapon of choice and attributed to it seventy percent of Coalition casualties.\(^{667}\) However, it should be noted that there was nothing new in the annals of war in the enemy’s resort to IEDs. Except for their ‘home-made’ nature IED’s are little different than the explosive mine and bobby-trap, both of which have been in service for centuries. What was new was the unpreparedness of Western military organisations and the ability of a simple tactical weapon system to reverberate at the strategic level of war.

This work is not the place for an in depth discussion of the IED menace. The topic is too complex, technical and evolving to be properly considered in just the few pages that this work can allow. Thus, this work will limit itself to several broad themes.

IED’s come in numerous types and insurgents equip them with a variety of firing mechanisms including command, pressure plate, passive infra red beam and suicide. They truly are an ‘improvised device’ and can be effectively constructed from recycled ordnance, home made explosives or a combination of the two, and detonated by

something as ubiquitously available as a mobile phone or garage door opener. Large IEDs are capable of destroying a main battle tank while even small ones can reduce an unarmoured vehicle to a smouldering wreck. The advent of explosive formed projectiles (EFP) only served to make the IED even more formidable. In sum, IEDs are cheap to make, easy to setup and highly effective when activated. In Iraq the insurgents have used them in their thousands. Illustration 10.2 shows a typical device while 10.3 illustrates the result of the 23 April 2007 strike on OBG(W). Table 10.1 summarises the IED attacks against Australian personnel in Iraq.

Illustration 10.2

Typical IED

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668 B729585, 'Op Catalyst Overview Brief.'
**Improvised Explosive Devices**

Table 10.1

**IED Attacks on Australian Forces**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
<th>Damage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 Oct 04</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>VBIED attack on SECDET</td>
<td>3 WIA</td>
<td>1 ASLAV damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Jan 05</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>Large VBIED (Truck) attack on SECDET</td>
<td>2 WIA</td>
<td>Damage to SECDET Flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jan 05</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>VBIED Attack on SECDET</td>
<td>4 WIA</td>
<td>1 ASLAV damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 May 06</td>
<td>Al Muthanna</td>
<td>IED attack on AMTG</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1 ASLAV damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jun 06</td>
<td>Al Muthanna</td>
<td>IED attack on AMTG</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Apr 07</td>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>Multiple IED attack (EFP) on OBG-W</td>
<td>3 WIA</td>
<td>1 ASLAV destroyed and 2 damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May 07</td>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>IED Attack (EFP) on OBG-W Patrol</td>
<td>2 WIA</td>
<td>1 Bushmaster damaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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669 Data provided by CIED-TF.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Oct 07</td>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>IED Attack (EFP) on OBG-W Patrol</td>
<td>1 WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Bushmaster destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May 08</td>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>IED Attack (EFP) on OBG-W Patrol</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASLAV damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 08</td>
<td>Dhi Qar</td>
<td>IED Attack (EFP) on OBG-W Patrol</td>
<td>1 WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Bushmaster damaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustration 10.3

IED Strike, 23 April 2007

The emergence of an IED ‘problem’ has lead to a cycle of invention and response in which the US-led

Coalition has struggled to keep up with the insurgent’s rate of weapon evolution. To date, the insurgents have proved able to improve their devices at a rate faster than which the Coalition can develop and deploy countermeasures. In effect, the Coalition has been losing the IED adaptation cycle in Iraq. Coalition weapon development practices and timelines, doctrinal revision and dissemination policies, and a preference for technological over other solutions has assured that its forces cannot match the pace of change imposed by the insurgents in developing the next version of IEDs. That is not to say that the Coalition has not made considerable progress. Rather, the Coalition has implemented great changes in how it equips and operates. The advancements made include the revision of doctrine and tactics, purchase of improved individual protection equipment, deployment of mine resistant vehicles, acquisition of armour enhancements for existing vehicles, utilisation of platforms in novel ways, and the mobilisation of science to help develop countermeasures.

Significantly, in addition to winning the adaptation cycle, the insurgents’ have also won the cost cycle. IEDs are low-cost and low-tech and as such are the perfect weapon for an insurgent. For the counterinsurgent the cost of countering the IED threat has been expensive and complex, and the cost continues to mount. Insurgent
simplicity has been met by counterinsurgent complexity and budget bulging expenditure with the result that the cost of defense has greatly exceeded the cost of offense. It is not yet clear what the great cost differential in the IED campaign means for the art of war, however, it would be in the interest of Coalition societies they find the means to close this gap.

The ADF did not ignore the threat IED’s posed to its forces in Iraq. Ordinary civilian SUVs and military trucks were replaced with protected mobility vehicles, ASLAVs now have enhanced armour and spall liners, UAVs fly ahead of convoys scanning the ground and relaying data back to its controller, and the RAAF’s PC-3s act in a largely land rather than maritime surveillance role.

When SECDET-I arrived in Baghdad its mobility was provided by either hired civilian vehicles and supply runs to Camp Victory were done in an ordinary Unimog. As the threat grew the civilian vehicles and the Unimog became up-armoured until replaced by improved ASLAVs or Bushmasters.

In February 2006, in order to place Australia’s IED response onto more systematic basis, the ADF established the IED Taskforce under the command of Brigadier Phil Winter. Its mission was to ‘coordinate all Counter IED (CIED) efforts to ensure that Australian service personnel and other officials deployed on operations are trained, equipped and operate with appropriate doctrine to counter the IED threat and to ensure that the ADO is fully prepared to support domestic security if required by the Government of Australia.’ \(^{673}\) In achieving this

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\(^{672}\) ‘Australian Security Detachment Baghdad – Brief, September-October 2004.’

Winter’s team works closely with Australia’s partners. This includes the posting of ADO personnel to the US-led TF Troy, the CIED organisation in Iraq. Care must be taken not to overstate Australia’s role within TF Troy, however. After all in February 2008 only eight of its 1100 staff were Australian, although the British dispatched even fewer people. There is no doubt that Australia’s participation in TF Troy provided the ADF with a useful conduit for information on the development of IEDs and their countermeasures.

Perhaps even more importantly, Australia’s close links to the United States has also proven fruitful in gaining early access to emerging defensive devices. These include detection and premature detonation systems, whose worth has been repeatedly demonstrated in Iraq and elsewhere. One rotation commander described them as ‘mission critical devices,’ and if they were not available then his vehicles did not leave the gate. If a vehicle was already outside the wire and its device broke its crew stopped and waited for a properly equipped vehicle to arrive to escort it back to base.674

In Iraq, the evidence is clear that the IED threat began to decline in late 2007. In February 2007 there

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674 Information provided by staff of CIED-TF; and B873372, ‘CJTF Troy Overview,’ 13 February 2008. See also comments by interview subject LL.
were 2919 IED incidents in Iraq. By January of 2008 the number had halved and continued its downward trajectory ever since. Data provided by the CSIS in Illustration 10.4 shows that at least in number terms the IED was no longer the threat it once was in Iraq.

Illustration 10.4
Decline in IED incidents

Surely these figures bode well for the future of Iraq. However, what is less clear is the reason behind this success. The discovery of the underlying cause for the containment of the IED menace in Iraq should be a high priority, in part for its obvious applicability to the worsening situation in Afghanistan.

675 B873372, ‘CJTF Troy Overview,’ 13 February 2008
Introduction

In a mission as long and complex as the Coalition’s effort to bring security to Iraq there are numerous topics worthy of detailed observation. Unfortunately, books are finite in length and authors must make judgements on what to include and what to leave to others. In this instance this work will consider five themes that the author considers to be of particular relevance to his audience. This is by no means a reflection on those topics not represented here; a different author would have made different choices. The themes addressed in this chapter are: mission command, jointness, manning, sustainment, and withdrawal.

Operational Command

One of the greatest handicaps that task group commanders faced in Iraq was the inability of the Australian Government and the ADF to articulate a clear and unambiguous mission for the forces it committed to Operation CATALYST. This is not to say that Australian troops, as well as sailors and airmen, were not extremely busy in the MEAO, for they were. However, working hard at tasks is not the same as working effectively to meet a
strategic objective. This distinction illustrates one of the key deficiencies in the ADF’s conduct of Operation CATALYST, and highlights troubling concerns in the organisation’s understanding of the operational art and the role of JOC. The lack of clear overall mission guidance was one of the most common complaints of rotation commanders as they struggled to identify the goal to which they were meant to work.

After Australia’s commitment to Phase IV operations in Iraq the CDF issued a new Operational Instruction which contained a mission statement for Operation CATALYST. As discussed in Chapter 10 the strategic guidance for the forces assigned to this operation was:

[to] participate in US-led coalition operations in Iraq to support the Australian Whole-of-Government (W-O-G) effort to assist with the rehabilitation of Iraq and to remove the threat posed to global security by Iraq’s WMD capability.\(^676\)

As Australia’s relationship with the emerging Iraqi state changed, coupled with the failure of Coalition investigators to discover any WMDs, the strategic guidance evolved. By 2007 it had become, ‘to participate

in coalition operations in the MEAO in order to support AS WOG efforts to assist with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of IZ.’

It would be easy to point to such ‘mission statements’ as proof of the existence of an ADF mission for Iraq. Such a step would be a mistake, however. First, both statements presented above contain vague language that would defy precise definition or even challenge the determination of when the sought achievement actually eventuated. Second, from the perspective of obtaining a strategic goal both mission statements beg the question of a national goal – what does Australia intend to achieve by its participation in the occupation of Iraq. Had the Government and the ADF issued a mission statement that, for example, identified the national strategic goal as the enhancement of the US Alliance that would have provided task group commanders with an objective they could understand and with which they could work. It would have linked the tasks they planned with the outcomes that they hoped to achieve. Instead, opacity and vagueness in setting the goal proved the organisation’s preferred option.

In reaching this assumption they were wrong, but it is easy to understand the origins of their error. In Iraq they found a nation at war with itself as they served in close proximity to Coalition partners whose troops engaged in close combat with the insurgents on a seemingly daily basis. Even Infantry got it wrong. One of the articles featured in the magazine’s April 2008 issue was on the COIN fight in Iraq. In it the article’s author described the actions of his combat team as encompassing the ‘full range of unglamorous but very necessary activities that characterise counter-insurgency operations’. Moreover, those Australians serving in Coalition positions were clearly involved in the struggle against the insurgents. Yet, according to the Government, this was not their fight. In addition, some rotation commanders ran CIMIC programs, a hallmark activity of counter-insurgency campaigns. Australian CIMIC projects varied widely, lacked consistent direction and were most known for the paucity of allocated funds. What the ultimate goal of this work was never clear, particularly in light of a missing campaign plan. One rotation commander attempted to resolve the inherent conflict in

undertaking CIMIC projects in a non-COIN mission by only accepting security focused projects for his program. Another rationalised his CIMIC efforts by classifying them under the banner of ‘leadership engagement.’ These were torturous distinction that would not have been necessary if rotation commanders had received clear direction.679 Unfortunately, it seems that the Government and the ADF’s difficulty in expressing clear mission goals continue. The CJTF633, Cantwell, recently admitted that some of his troops in Afghanistan did not ‘fully appreciate their mission’. He went on to explain that it was not the ADF’s mission to fight the insurgency in Oruzgan, although it is not clear that the Taliban share his belief.680

It is a maxim of war that strategy at its essence is the coordination of the employment of military force with the political objective sought. In brief, strategy is the linking of ends with means. For Australia, the deployed forces assigned to Operation CATALYST were the means that the Government had allocated to the attainment of its political goal.681

679 A list of some Australian sponsored CIMIC projects is provided as appendix H.

680 Hartcher, ‘Don’t lose courage now.’
Even if those who wrote or approved the mission statements outlined above believed them to be sufficient, it is still necessary to recognise the disagreement on this point held by those that the ADF assigned to waging the campaign. Numerous rotation commanders – those who directed the ADF’s means at the coalface of Australia’s participation in the conflict – were convinced of the failure of the organisation to inform them of what they were supposed to achieve in Iraq.

At this point it would be useful to highlight some of the conclusions reached by rotation commanders on the value and extent of the mission direction that they received, particularly from HQJOC. The commentary proved quite direct and in varying terms condemned JOC’s contribution to Operation CATALYST. One rotation commander went so far as to voice that he received nothing from JOC, an assertion not overly dissimilar to the words of other officers who commanded force elements in Iraq. Another rotation commander noted that at no
point had he received a mission statement or tasking instruction from JOC. Recognising the need for some form of intellectual direction around which to shape his command’s service in Iraq, he wrote one himself. Unfortunately, he was not alone in providing for his own mission statement, as other rotation commanders also reached the same necessity in their relationship with JOC. Other commanders simply used their predecessor’s guidance, as if nothing had changed, sometimes discovering the realities of their mission during a reconnaissance brief. One rotation commander concluded that the ‘hierarchy doesn’t know what it wants out of Iraq other than to say we were there and get out without mass casualties.’ For commanders there was always the default of working towards the US agenda. To do so may have been useful, especially in a Coalition operation, but it should be recognised that working towards a US objective, in the absence of national guidance, is not the same as working towards an Australian goal.

Some commanders did show considerable initiative in trying to get a mission statement. This included repeated correspondence with JOC staff or going so far as to stalk the HQ’s corridors trying to find someone able to offer official guidance. Another CO decided to try his luck at Military Strategic Commitments Branch assuming that this organisation would have some idea of Australia’s overall
objective. He too left unenlightened after receiving the advice that he should not do anything in Iraq that would upset the VCDF. However, no one was able to tell him what in particular the VCDF liked or did not like.

The result of these efforts was usually failure, which one rotation commander described as ‘enormously frustrating.’ Soon to depart rotation commanders sought out anyone who could help them to understand their mission. One FLLA commander who had not received a mission statement focused on what his predecessor had done. He then sought out his predecessor’s predecessor in Australia thus gaining insight over two generations of rotations. Lastly, he invited himself to JOC and with his key staff sought out the advice of the DG Support. By the time he deployed this officer believed he had a good idea of what he needed to do. However, his efforts had only illuminated the tactical aspects of his duty — the tasks the organisation expected him to perform. CATALYST’s national strategic objectives remained to him as opaque as they were for other rotation commanders. He admitted to being far from comfortable with the operation’s objective guidance and thought that national goals were not particularly well articulated. In the end he concluded that the mission in its essence was ‘flag waving’ and because of this he feared that Australia’s
Coalition allies would conclude that the ADF was a ‘pack of posers.’

Of the various force elements assigned to Operation CATALYST FLLA COs had the easiest time in discerning the mission. The provision of support is the logistician’s task. But understanding one’s task and one’s mission is not quite the same thing. The obvious follow-up question for a deploying logistician — provides support to what end? — was the one that was never addressed by JOC or JTF633. That sustainment commanders did their job, and did it well, is in no doubt, but they did so in an objective free environment equal to that of the rest of the Australian contingent. Maybe JOC and CJTF633 can be excused for not providing FLLA commanders with a clear overview of the ADF’s mission since the logisticians job was an obvious one. But surely the provision of support in a war require something more informative than the succinct direction that one FLLA commander received, that was to, ‘make log shit better.’

At best, for some, the most mission direction they were to receive was a directive from the CJTF633 after they arrived in theatre, which for all concerned was a bit too late. Even in this situation at least one rotation commander, who reached the MEAO without one, wrote his own after he arrived in theatre. He then submitted his self-written directive to CJTF633 for his
superior’s approval, which he received. All too often the role of the CJTF633 was to tell the COs what they could not do, not what they could do. One CO remembered being pulled up by his CJTF633 for what his superior termed ‘mission creep.’ He found this a particularly galling accusation. Since no one had told him what his mission was he found it impossible to gauge where its boundary lay.

Reinforcing that point that rotation commanders operated in a guidance free zone was the fact that many Post Activity Reports prepared by rotation commanders failed to make any reference to any overall national mission statement. If such reports did include a mission statement it invariably identified the tasks the rotation performed, not the goal to which it had worked. From this perspective rotation commanders were tremendously successful in their jobs, particularly those who wrote their own mission statements. What is missing was the lack of any coordination with a greater scheme that covered all forces serving on Operation CATALYST and spanned the duration of the mission.681

The guidance generation process that AATTI-8 underwent underscores this point. The rotation’s Post Activity Report notes that:

Throughout initial planning AATTI-8 received little in the way of formal guidance with regards to specified tasks. The mission analysis conducted centred on the need to generate a training effect throughout supported IA units sufficient enough to contribute to IA self reliance. As per ref A the AATTI-8 mission statement was as follows:

AATTI-8 is to train and mentor Iraqi Army personnel in order to support the Iraqi Army’s transition towards self reliance.682

What occurred in this instance was that prior to deployment the rotation commander undertook a mission analysis and determined what he believed to be his job. Once in theatre he shaped his force’s operations to achieve this end. After the rotation’s return to Australia the Post Activity Report proclaimed the mission’s attainment. It observed that:

The AATTI-8’s mission has been a success with the team training in excess of 10,000 trainees. The increased size of the training team has translated directly into a substantial increase in training output. The Iraqi’s trained have also benefited from vastly improved course packages that will no doubt endure well beyond the cessation of AATTI operations. The cumulative effect is that AATTI-8 has achieved its endstate and has tangibly progressed the IA towards self reliance.683

The heart of the ADF’s problem in identifying the mission appears to lie within HQJOC and confusion in its role within the ADF. At face value, it is the responsibility of HQJOC, under CJOPS, to wage the nation’s military campaigns. However, at an early stage in the planning for the war in Iraq the COMAST (CJOPS’s predecessor) was cut out of much of the mission’s shaping by the CDF. As had happened in Operation WARDEN the CDF extended his remit across the operational and even the tactical levels of war. There was good reason for Cosgrove to do this; however, it was a change in command and control policy from which HQAST/HQJOC never recovered.

683 Ibid.
Yet the failure of anyone to generate for Operation CATLYST a useful mission statement was not solely a result of the CDF’s shift in command responsibilities. In fact, the problem lies deeper, and is probably more intractable, at least in the short term. Within the ADF there is little evidence to suggest that the organisation understands the operational level of war. This should be core business for JOC but it was a space in which it was singularly ineffective. Underscoring this point is that JOC never managed to develop a campaign plan for Australia operations in Iraq. But there was nothing unusual in this. JOC had also not written campaign plans neither for the operations in Afghanistan nor for the Solomons.\(^6\) It never seemed to occur to senior officers at JOC that it was their responsibility to provide rotation commanders with some idea of their mission. In one disheartening exchange, a soon to deploy rotation commander who had designed his own mission objectives was asked by a JOC brigadier what his instructions were. He replied to the brigadier, ‘you should have given them, sir.’

In fact, the battlespace in which JOC chose to operate was the tactical, not the operational. Instead of

running the campaign in Iraq it administered it, restricting its focus to management tasks that included manning, reception, basing and national command of forces. The result was that no detail was too small for JOC. In response to this interference in what they considered their domain, some task group commanders went to great length not to refer a matter up the chain of command.685

Perhaps JOC should not be judged too harshly, after all CJOPS had to work in an environment in which the ADF hierarchy perceived the strategic domain as extending into all aspects of the campaign. In addition, most of the deployed force elements for tasking purposes worked to a Coalition headquarters, thereby reducing JOC’s scope to shape the campaign. Yet the observation remains that the troops in the MEAO had little insight into why they were in Iraq and what they needed to do. This guidance was well within JOC’s remit and there is no escaping that this is something it failed to do.686

Jointness

Operation CATALST was not a joint operation, despite the existence of a joint headquarters – JTF633. It is not

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685 Trent Scott makes a similar point in Lost Operational Art.

686 Comments by interview subjects W, LL, RR, SS, XX, EEE, FFF, HHH, KKK, JJJ and LLL.
too strong to state that jointness as preformed by the ADF in the MEAO under CATALYST was more of an illusion than a reality. It is true that the ADF did succeed in forging what BRIG P J Hutchinson, the CJTF in 2004, termed ‘Team Australia’. However, while improved teamwork was undeniably a positive development it is not the same as having the assigned force elements operating jointly towards a common goal.

On the surface JTF633 does have the appearance of being a joint headquarters, after all the ADF draws its staff from across the three services. However the operational reality leads to another conclusion. As the CJTF633 had little operational command over force elements assigned to Operation CATALYST the main scope of the headquarters was administration and national oversight. Typically it had direct control over only SECDET, FLLA and the various embeds in Baghdad or small numbers of Australian personnel working within a Coalition-led organisation, such as the team associated with the Iraq Survey Group. The remainder of the ADF’s force elements worked for a Coalition component headquarters from whom they took their operational direction. Therefore, for example, JTF633 had little say over the actions of the C-130 task group – provided the

Coalition utilised its aircraft in accordance with CATALYST ROEs and within national interest guidelines. While the CJTF633 could prevent a task group from performing a mission he could not initiate nor coordinate one across ADF force element lines. The exception to this relationship was SECDET and the other ADF elements that were under the CJTF633’s direct operational command.

In placing most of its force elements under Coalition command the ADF gained benefits at the tactical level that outweighed the liabilities of forsaking the opportunity to create a true joint force. As a member of the Coalition the ADF could draw upon assets that it did not, or could not, field. For example, the AMTG/OBG(W) battlegroups received immense ISTAR support from US surveillance assets. In return, the United States used the ADF’s P-3C aircraft in support of non-Australian taskings. To facilitate in-theatre movement Australian personnel had ready access to the US’s vast rotary and fixed wing transport fleet. In return the RAAF’s C130 aircraft worked to a US commander and moved US cargo and passengers as ordered. When a RAAF plane transported Australian personnel it was often coincidence rather than design. Similarly the commanders of the OBG-W worked to the wishes of commander MND-SE.

An argument can be made that the conduct of the ADF’s operations during CATALYST were joint because the
force elements practiced jointness within the US-led Coalition. There is a degree of truth to this assertion. The war machine of the United States is indeed a joint organisation and its services have made great strides in integrating themselves at all levels. Thus, Australian personnel working in Coalition headquarters would have gained tremendous experience in acting in a joint environment.

However, the degree of exposure to the joint world that ADF personnel had does not mean that the Operation CATALYST elements operated jointly with each other. Perhaps this is the fate of a junior partner. The ADF did not own the war in Iraq — indeed the Australian Government resisted such an association and worked hard to minimise the mission, goals and risks its forces faced. Without ownership Australia had to cede the tasking of its force elements to those agencies that did own the operation, namely Coalition headquarters. One conclusion is that if the ADF is to ever act as a truly joint organisation it will have to take ownership of the mission. If that was to occur there would then be a need to deploy a joint task force headquarters that was empowered to act in a joint manner.

If the ADF did not practice jointness at the operational level the most egregious violation of the concept occurred in the supply chain. Under Operations
BASTILLE and FALCONER each of the services maintained support chains into the MEAO of their own. With the raising of CATALYST the same arrangement would hold true again. Even though the ADF raised an in-theatre third line logistic organisation (the FLLA) its customer base was largely limited to the deployment’s ground-based force elements and the RAN and RAAF continued to maintain their own supply organisations.688

The ADF’s reengagement into Afghanistan initially made the force’s jointness at the support level worse rather than better. The SF, Chinook and Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) detachments maintained their own lines of communication back to Australia, bypassing the FLLA in the Gulf. Thus in running Operations CATALYST and SLIPPER the ADF maintained at lease six separate administrative lines from the MEAO back to Australia. They were the FLLA, RAN, RAAF, SF, RTF and Chinook sustainment pipelines. The ADF corrected this inefficient state of affairs – and still only in part – after the reorganisation or the FLLA (see below), but it is worth asking why the organisation allowed the situation to develop in the first place.

The worst example of the service’s refusal to act jointly at the support level was the RAAF’s management of its Air Load Team(s) (ALT). The RAAF maintained these

688 Comments by interview subject H.
small support elements at airfields across the MEAO. For

The task of the ALT was to unload and back-fill sustainment aircraft. The ALT would meet an incoming aircraft, remove cargo from the hold, load it onto a FLLA vehicle, or place it onto the tarmac for its removal by FLLA personnel. When loading an aircraft for the return of stores to Australia the process worked in reverse. The ALT was also supervised for the loading of passengers. Once the sustainment aircraft and been emptied or loaded the ALT’s work was done until the next plane arrived.

Although the ALT was a third line support element, and despite its co-location with the FLLA, the RAAF refused to place their personnel under the Army commanded FLLA. The RAAF maintained this independence even though the FLLA was responsible for providing the ALT personnel with vehicles for transport, accommodation, workspace, rationing and meeting other administrative requirements. This RAAF’s refusal to place its ALT under the FLLA’s command represented an inefficient use of scarce terminal

689 Comments by interview subjects UU and FFF.
capacity. The FLLA, whose workload did not allow for long-periods of downtown, could have made ready use of the ALT personnel when a sustainment plane was not on the ground. At times this did occur, but the FLLA access to ALT staff was a personality rather than a command driven outcome, and sometime the relationship between the two organisations became prickly or difficult. For example, on FLLA commander complained of being plagued by personal differences regarding taskings and responsibilities with the ALT. Some ALT detachments were more than willing to help the FLLA when needed, others steadfastly refused to cede their independence standing behind their different chains-of-command.690

A further consequence of the RAAF’s policy was that the FLLA did not own all the in-theatre support levers. However, FLLA commanders owned all the blame if something went wrong in the sustainment chain, even when it was a link they did not control. FLLA commanders did point out the efficiencies to be gained by placing the ALT under their command, but the RAAF and JOC refused to take this step. At best, the FLLA used its responsibility for the ALTs’ administration as a means to obtain a degree of leverage, and the two organisations worked side-by-side

690 ‘FLLA 202/05, ‘Post Operation Report,’ 3 July 2005; and comments by interview subjects MM, WW, UU, FFF and JJJ.
guided by what one commander termed ‘an active spirit of co-operation.’

The SF personnel were responsible for the storage and maintenance of SF equipment, and the ROSI of transiting SF individuals and rotations. If a large party of SF were to SOCOMD augmented the standing team with a Force Integration Team or Force Extraction Team, depending on the direction of the movement. While the SF team were collocated with the FLLA, used FLLA facilities, and accepted FLLA administrative support, its staff kept to themselves and were not part of the FLLA establishment.

In fact, the only time the SF community integrated itself into the FLLA was when the SFTG departed the MEAO after the conclusion of Operation FALCONER. At that time the SF abandoned a small mountain of unwanted equipment in hired 20 foot containers at the ISB for the FLLA to deal with at a later point. In a further instance of jointness the RAN’s CDT-3 did the same thing, leaving it to the FLLA to sort out and write off the equipment that

691 Comments by interview subject FFF, JJJ, and KKK.
692 Comments by interview subject FFF.
was unable to return to Australia. Much of this gear proved unusable — and the FLLA arranged for its destruction. The major exception was the outboard engines which for AQIS reasons had to be left behind by the divers. FLLA staff arranged for contractors to clean the engines after which they were returned to Australia. It took the first two rotations of the FLLA to complete the processing of the abandoned SF and CDT-3 equipment.693

**Manning**

With experience, the ADF developed a mounting framework that shaped a task group’s raising. Each task group’s establishment was defined by an Operational Manning Document (OMD) that JOC developed for a particular task. The process followed in general terms, to use an Army example, was:

- Unit identified to serve as the mounting unit and acts as the source for many of the task group’s personnel;
- If mounting unit was unable to provide for all personnel requirements the task group’s staffing was opened to other units in the respective brigade;

693 Comments by interview subjects P and R.
• If brigade was unable to provide for the task group’s remaining personnel requirements the search was extended to all components of 1 Division.

• If gaps still remained in the task group’s personnel the resources of Land and Training Commands (later Forces Command) and the reserve ranks were tapped.

There was at least one example when the above process was not followed. One AATTI was raised in such haste and confusion that there was no real mounting unit and its personnel came from across Army.694

Where necessary, the mounting process for the ground based battle groups also incorporated personnel from the other services. Over time the incorporation of RAN and RAAF personnel into what were essentially land-based units became a standard procedure. In part this was done to provide the other services with experience that they would not normally receive, as well as to advance the practice of jointness within the ADF. However, operational sustainment was also an issue and the navy and air force personnel helped to relieve the pressure on Army manning. With its commitment to Operations SLIPPER and ASTUTE the Army was under a degree of strain in sustaining CATALYST and maintaining the readiness of the force.

694 Comments by interview subject SS.
The OMD was the critical document in the mounting of a task group (at the beginning of CATALYST the term used was the Single Entitlement Document or SED). The OMD specified the number of personnel assigned to the task group, their rank, and trades. Usually the OMD was a result of JOC judgement, although on occasion the required trade mix came about from the Government’s agreement to fulfil an unmet Coalition requirement. For example, in one instance MNF-I wanted to improve the professionalism of Iraqi logistic personnel and sought Australian assistance in setting up the Iraqi Army Service Support Institute at Taji. In this instance JOC determined the OMD’s trade mix in consultation with MNF-I and agreed to provide those trade instructors that the United States could not.  

The task group’s commanding officer usually had no, or at best little, input into the organisation he would command. The OMD also had to fit within the operation’s existing manpower cap, which worked against making any changes to the specified trade mix or personnel level. Many of the rotation commanders noted the lack of their input into the manning of the organisations they would lead. One commented that he had ‘zero insight’ into the selection of personnel that came from outside his unit,

695 Comments by interview subject TT.
696 Comments by interview subjects R, SS and LLL.
the mounting unit. One task group commander described the filling out of his unit as a ‘bit of a lucky dip.’ Troops arrived at a task group’s mounting base already assigned to the team and the commander had little choice other than to accept them. Land Command and HQ 1 Division discouraged attempts by enterprising task group commanders to source personnel on their own, even when the system was slow to fill requirements. In the opinion of one task group commander, the mounting of his unit occurred despite the system.

Yet, in the face of their lack of a role in choosing their team most rotation commanders were content with the mix of personnel they received. There were exceptions, of course, and some soldiers (and sailors and airmen) had to be sent home, but this situation did not happen too often. The rotation commander noted above who had had ‘zero insight’ into the troops he received also commented that he had needed to replace only one member of his team.

Before deploying, rotations usually received only limited time — often only weeks — in which to forge a coherent unit. This was a particularly troublesome problem when rotations were drawn from multiple units, or

697 Comments by interview subject MM.
698 Comments by interview subject KK.
699 Comments by interview subject SS.
700 Comments by interview subject TT.
701 Comments by interview subject MM.
702 Comments by interview subject FFF.
even across services. One negative effect was that deploying personnel arrived in a piecemeal fashion. In fact, in some cases not all assigned personnel could make it to the mounting base prior to departure and it was not uncommon for a task group commander to meet some of his personnel for the first time in Iraq. In addition, the percentage of personnel coming from outside the mounting unit could be astounding. For example, the mounting unit for FLLA-2 was 1 CSSB. Yet, to fill an OMD of 142 personnel, with just 139 deploying, it required contributions from nearly 30 units. What makes these figures even more shocking is that the RAN and RAAF filled 24 of FLLA-2’s 139 deployed positions. Thus, the Army drew upon nearly 30 units to fill 115 slots.\footnote{Comments by interview subjects XX, TT and FFF.}

Complicating the process of forging a coherent unit for the early SECDET and FLLA OCs was the problem that these task groups did not initially rotate as formed bodies, which allowed for a degree of acclimation in Australia prior to deployment. Instead, the practice was for personnel to arrive in waves, often at several months intervals, at which point existing staff would leave for home.

Despite the best efforts of rotation commanders the creation of a coherent unit was not achievable beyond that of a superficial level. For many personnel the
deployed element with which they served was nothing more than a temporary association. Commanders would discover that the team spirit that they had worked so hard to instil could not endure. One commander observed that his battle group disintegrated over the Indian Ocean on the way home.⁷⁰⁴

While the attachment of personnel from the other services was welcome by the Army the resort to the RAN and RAAF was not without burden, which it was up to the task group commander to mitigate. One reoccurring problem was that the three services had different procedures for what was notionally the same trade. For example, RAN supply clerks were well trained at their jobs but completely unfamiliar with SDSS, the sustainment system used by Army. In this case the CO gained the personnel he needed but they came with a training liability which he had to correct.⁷⁰⁵

If all rotation commanders were men, as well as all CJTF633, that did not hold true for the next level of command. Female personnel on CATALYST served in numerous capacities across the operation, many in positions of great responsibility. For example, at times the OCs at FLLA outposts in Baghdad and Kandahar were female.⁷⁰⁶ So commonplace has the role of women become within the Army

⁷⁰⁴ Comments by interview subject LL.
⁷⁰⁵ Comments by interview subject MM.
⁷⁰⁶ Comments by interview subjects FFF and JJJ.
that for rotation commanders their deployment to Iraq was not cause for any thought – rather their presence was expected. Females were particularly well represented across the make-up of task groups for the trades in which the ADF allows them to serve, especially logistic and combat support roles such as intelligence and signals. FLLA-2 had 40 women out of an OMD of 142, which was 28 per cent of the contingent. By contrast OWB-(3) had just 15 females out of an establishment of 515, a reflection of the task group’s combat arms focus. Perhaps the only sense in which women were treated differently was the practice that a vehicle’s crew could not be solely female. This limit was put in place out of concern for MEAO cultural sensitivities and because of the risk of involvement in a traffic accident whose resolution would be more complicated if a male soldier was not present.707

Sustaining the Force

The raising of the FLLA after the transition to CATALYST provided the ADF with a third line logistic organisation for the MEAO. This meant, in theory, that the ADF could maintain a single sustainment pipeline from the Australian National Support Base to the task groups, thereby bringing all the in-theatre logistic assets under a single command. The reality was quite different,
however. The early FLLA commanders were clear in their understanding that they had no support requirement for the C-130, P-3C and MFU task groups. In fact, all they supported were SECDET, JTF633, and the other Australian personnel serving in Baghdad, a minority of the operation’s total establishment.

For the RAN retaining the previous sustainment policy made a degree of sense. Due to the nature of fleet logistics Australian ships operating in the Gulf continued to rely on replenishment at sea or the LSE for their sustainment. There were exceptions, however. For example, in 2004 the RAN dispatched a team of trainers to Umm Qasr to help establish the new Iraqi Coastal Defence Force (later renamed Iraqi Navy). The Iraqi Coastal Defence Force Training Team had an establishment of 13 (12 RAN and one Army) and was supported by FLLA. Every few weeks the FLLA ran a supply convoy up the highway to Umm Qasr. It should be noted, however, that the FLLA was not set up for this task, and, as it lacked protected mobility vehicles, its staff had to hire four up-armoured Land Cruisers whenever it undertook the run into Iraq. On occasion, the FLLA also provided some support to the LSE, but this was the exception rather than the rule.708

708 Comments by interview subject P. See also, Nash and Stevens, Australia’s Navy in the Gulf, pp. 80-81.
In the case of the RAAF the policy of maintaining its own administrative chain of command meant that it managed its own sustainment pipeline into the MEAO parallel to the FLLA’s. The RAAF refused to permit the FLLA to manage its sustainment infrastructure, a decision that resulted in a duplication of effort and waste of resources, an outcome most evident in the underutilisation of the air force’s Air Load Teams. Even after the consolidation of the ADF’s theatre-level logistics and C-130 task group, the RAAF remained reluctant to make use of the FLLA.\textsuperscript{709} Illustration 11.1 outlines the sustainment chain in the MEAO and the support responsibilities of the FLLA.

\textbf{Illustration 11.1}\textsuperscript{710}

\textit{MEAO Sustainment Chain}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{709} Comments by interview subjects P, R, QQ, FFF, JJJ and KKK.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{710} ‘TAPG Op CATALYST, Logistic Manning,’ 16 September 2004.
\end{flushleft}
The change from FALCONER to CATALYST and the raising of the FLLA also had little effect on the sourcing of the majority of the ADF’s MEAO support. In the same manner as the previous operation force elements serving on CATALYST were expected to draw their support from Coalition, contractor and/or host nation sources in the first instance.\(^{711}\) The Australian National Support Base was the provider of last resort, and then only for support that could not be met from within the theatre. This reiteration of existing policy did have benefits. Principally, it meant that the ADF could sustain its forces at a great distance from the National Support Base with a smaller logistic footprint than it would have

needed if it had to bear the full burden of the deployed force’s support on its own.

The shifting of logistic requirements to Coalition sources had the effect of reducing the operation’s overhead. Those support trades that did deploy did so only if there was sufficient workload to justify the expense of transporting and maintaining them in the MEAO. For example, the ADF did not commit a field medical capability because it would have been underutilised by Australian personnel. Instead, the deployed force relied on the Coalition’s medical infrastructure. Logistic policy, therefore, served as a brake on mission creep. In addition, by minimising the number of people on the ground the ADF also reduced the possibility of casualties through the random acts of insurgency violence.

The ADF’s reliance on Coalition partners and contractors for many fundamental support functions was not without complication or hardship, however. For example, when the SECDET rolled an ASLAV rendering it undriveable it was necessary to summon a US recovery vehicle as Australia had not deployed this capability. A Hercules can tow an ASLAV with ease but in doing so caused so much additional damage that by the time the vehicle reached Camp Victory it had acquired a considerable additional repair cost. While the ADF’s reluctance to deploy cooks help to minimise the
operation’s manpower requirement it also forced many Australian personnel to dine at US-contractor DFACs. Arranging for its troops to consume poorly prepared, badly tasting and fat-laden food that was made from non-fresh ingredients in limitless quantities may have simplified the Australian supply chain, but there was a downside. As one rotation commander pointed out, food is a morale issue and the DFAC offered peculiar tasting sustenance of a lower quality than which his troops expected. Another rotation commander complained of the high fat content and low nutritional value on offer at the DFAC. If a DFAC was not nearby troops had to survive for long periods on ration packs in lieu of freshly prepared meals by their own cook. The situation in Iraq was not unlike that of Afghanistan where diggers only received cooks after they complained of too much ‘herring’ in their Dutch supplied meals. Deploying catering staff did occur but only after the ADF again learnt the lesson of the importance of good food in building and maintaining soldier health and morale.712

Transport was another area for which the ADF sought to economise. In general, Australian personnel who had to travel by road often found themselves at the mercy of

Coalition transport services. For example, for much of the training team’s presence at Al Kasik it did not have a protected mobility capability. Whenever the CO had to attend the periodic conference with the nearby US battalion commander he had to request to be picked-up and returned. Similarly, his troops proceeding on or returning from ROCL had to synchronise their movement with the US battalion’s transport availability. Stories of Australian personnel being stranded or unable to travel for days while awaiting a transport slot were not uncommon.

The Army also remained surprisingly dependent on the Rapid Acquisition to kit out a deployment when the Government called for an increase in commitment. In mounting the 550 person AMTG-1 the Army had to resort to Rapid Acquisition protocols for numerous items that were not available in sufficient numbers from DMO stockholdings. This included 550 sets of CBA, IPE and cold weather gear; upgrades to ASLAV protection suites; 40 mm ammunition; and a host of lesser items. The raising of AMTG-2 saw similar unmet needs.713

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713 Op Catalyst Rapid Acquisition Spread Sheet.
For part of Operation CATALYST the FLLA also controlled the JMCC, although responsibility for the movers shifted to HQ JTF633 during the tenure of FLLA-3. The FLLA also managed theatre-level signals but this tasking came to an end with the raising of the Force Communications Unit.

714 Correspondence with Major General Willis.
The FLLA was also responsible for a number of other lesser tasks including providing extraction support to ADF personnel and formed units and supporting the visit or transit of VVIPs.

The FLLA was not meant to be a warehouse organisation, which was why it had a limited storage capability. Its key function was to forward the supplies and equipment that arrived on sustainment flights to the appropriate force elements. The only warehouse function it performed was those items — IPE in particular — that it collected from departing personnel for reissue to incoming personnel, whether they were individuals or contingents.

The most significant development in ADF sustainment policy for the MEAO came about as a result of the Australian Government’s decision to redeploy ground forces to Afghanistan. As discussed earlier, the Howard government had withdrawn the SAS contingent from Afghanistan in late 2002 in preparation for the ADF’s commitment to combat in Iraq under Operation FALCONER. In 2005 Australia recommitted ground forces to Afghanistan under Operation SLIPPER. However, at that time the return to Afghanistan did not result in any modification of the ADF’s sustainment pipeline to the MEAO. The FLLA remained focused on the provision of support to force elements.
serving in Iraq while the detachments in Afghanistan managed their own support.

During the tenure of what would become known as FLLA-1 this practice would change.\textsuperscript{715} There is no precise reason why the reorganisation took place at this time, instead of sooner. The best explanation is that the J1/J4 JOC, then Colonel Barry McManus, sensed an opportunity to place support to the MEAO on a more rationale footing. To this point the ADF treated CATALYST 3\textsuperscript{rd} line support organisation as a temporary entity and as a result it had evolved in an ad hoc manner. The FLLA had only recently become a formed unit. This was now the next step in the improvement of the ADF’s MEAO support capability. At this time McManus also succeeded in augmenting the FLLA with additional personnel whose need had been obvious for some time, but for which there had been no will within the ADF to seek an increase in manning. The additional personnel were not numerous but the arrival of extra cooks, drivers and maintenance personnel triggered an out-of-proportion improvement of support across the MEAO. Not insignificantly, McManus was also able to increase the seniority of the FLLA’s commander from a major to a

\textsuperscript{715} The nomenclature of the FLLA is not clear. FLLA-1 was actually the eighth FLLA rotation, but it was the first where the commander was a CO rather than an OC. The numbering of the FLLA did not commence until the arrival of an O5 commander.
lieutenant colonel, the same rank held by the AATTI and OWB(W) task group commanders.

The FLLA’s new O5 arrived in September 2006. He did not replace the O4 FLLA commander. Instead, the O4 found himself supplanted by a superior officer and the organisation was redesignated as FLLA-1. The incoming lieutenant colonel’s most important task was to establish a third-line organisation in Afghanistan. Most of this work lies outside the scope of this book; it rightly belongs in a history of Operation SLIPPER. What does need to be highlighted, however, was that the commanders of the detachments in Afghanistan were reluctant to surrender some of their authority to the upgraded support organisation. Instead, they preferred to keep their separate pipelines under their own control even though the FLLA, with its logistic expertise, would be able to maintain the sustainment flow more efficiently. It is not clear why JOC allowed this situation to develop in the first place but it took two FLLA rotations to succeed against the push-back of Afghanistan-based detachments. The result was the establishment of a FLLA presence at Kandahar with a forward element at Tarin Kowt. The FLLA organisation would later also place a detachment
in order to manage the increasing flow of personnel and materials into Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{716}

Another logistic rationalisation was the ADF’s 2005 decision to change its strategic air charter carrier. Since the development of Plan BASTILLE in 2002 the ADF had relied on aircrew and aircraft of what\textsuperscript{716} The new arrangement saw the ADF enter into an agreement with Air Luxor (Portugal) for the charter of A330 aircraft to carry passengers and cargo between Australia and the MEAO. Initially signed as a six month contract the principals have renewed the arrangement ever since.\textsuperscript{717}

After the conclusion of the fifth FLLA rotation JOC redesignated it as the Force Support Unit (FSU). The change in designation was one of name only as the FSU remained the MEAO’s third line support organisation. One of the responsibilities of the FSU was to continue the process of consolidating\textsuperscript{716} The FLLA had commenced this task as a part of the MEAO Rebasing Project. By mid 2010 there had been three rotations of the FSU.\textsuperscript{718}

\textsuperscript{716} Comments by interview subjects H, MM and KKK.
\textsuperscript{717} C640958/04, ‘Information Brief – Chartered Strategic Air Support to Op CATALYST,’ May 2005.
\textsuperscript{718} ‘Post Operational Report (POR) — FLLA-5,’ 13 February 2009.
Although the ADF generally was the recipient of sustainment assistance in the MEAO, on a few times it became the provider. The most prominent occasion occurred in 2005 when the ADF supported the ground forces of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF). In that year Fiji deployed a company size group to serve as a security element for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). The Government of Fiji entered into a Logistic Support Arrangement with Australia to provide its troops with basic weapons and equipment.

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720 ‘Implementing Arrangement No. 02/05 between the Australian Defence Force and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces for Loan of Equipment for UNAMI Operations, 29 April 2005.'
Withdrawal

On 2 June 2008 the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, informed the House that Australian combat troops ‘have lowered the flag at the conclusion of their mission in southern Iraq.’

Hours earlier, on 1 June, the Commanding Officer of OBG(W)-4, LTCOL Chris Websdane, had handed responsibility for overwatch duty in the Dhi Qar

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721 Ibid.

and Al Muthanna Provinces to the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.723 In doing so, the personnel of Australia’s overwatch contingent could now look forward to the long flight home and the recognition of a job well done. At the same time, the mission of AATTI-9 also came to an end.724

However, the extraction of OBG(W)-4 and AATTI-9 did not bring Operation CATALYST to an end. ADF forces remaining in the MEAO on Operation CATALYST consisted of:

- Australian Joint Task Force Headquarters
- Australian Security Detachment
- Force Level Logistic Asset
- RAAF C-130 Detachment
- RAAF AP-3C Detachment
- HMAS Stuart
- Various personnel embedded in Coalition organisations725

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In his address the Prime Minister also signalled that Australia will remain a ‘friend to the Iraqi people’ and that the Commonwealth will continue to play a role in the reconstruction of Iraq.\textsuperscript{726}

To assist with the withdrawal of the overwatch group and the training team the ADF deployed a Force Extraction Team (FET). This was not a novel decision. The ADF had dispatched FETs previously to assist contingents returning home at the end of their rotation. However, those efforts were limited and made up of small numbers of specialist augmentation personnel or skill sets which the ADF did not maintain permanently in the MEAO, for example psychologists.

The FET had an establishment of 107. It was raised from within 17 (CSS) Brigade with 10 FSB serving as the mounting unit. The advance party deployed on 5 April 2008 and commenced operations. The rest of the organisation followed soon after.


\textsuperscript{727} Comments by interview subject O and DD.
1) Extract all vehicles, stores and equipment from Iraq and prepare them for return to Australia; and

2) Support the cross-levelling of some vehicles, stores and equipment for service in Afghanistan with either the Special Operations Task Group or the soon to be raised Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force.\(^{728}\)

The FET’s work flow was to extract OBG(W) and AATTI vehicles, stores and equipment. To get the FET arranged transport through Task Force Gator, the US long-haul trucking organisation for Iraq. It was based and the FLLA had used it before for other in-theatre moves.\(^{729}\) Gator did not operate convoys. Instead, it was a road movements organisation that allocated space on US-convoys. Thus TF Gator staff advised the FET when a convoy with spare capacity was passing Tallil. The FET then had the requisite number of vehicles or containers ready for loading for the progressive move south. The use of the TF Gator had another advantage. It meant that the FET did not have to take responsibility for convoy security and expose Australian soldiers to the hazard of


ground movement on MSR Tampa. The FET inventoried, examined, cleaned, and packed those items destined for return to Australia or transfer to Afghanistan. Items that could not be returned, were no longer wanted, or were too damaged to be cost effective to repair were disposed of. With the exception of highly sensitive items, most of the returning equipment went by sea on the chartered MV Panthera. Highly sensitive items left Tallil on RAAF transport aircraft. Townsville was the arrival port in Australia. At Townsville the cargo had to pass AQIS inspection before being allowed into the country. Then, depending on its Joint Logistic Unit destination the Army returned the equipment to either Brisbane, Moorebank, Randwick or Bandiana in a road-haul operation conducted by 9 FSB. To assist with the return process the ADF contracted with Patrick Defence Logistics - Toll to provide cleaning and other services and Townsville. Illustration 11.2 and 11.3 illustrates the FET’s work flow.

Illustration 11.2

FET Work Flow in MEAO

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Illustration 11.3\textsuperscript{731}

FET Work Flow in Australia

\textsuperscript{731} Ibid.
In general, the FET’s work was a great success. Unlike after Operation FALCONER, the returning troops did not have to worry about their equipment. Instead they departed Tallil by air and were swiftly home. The FET experience, however, did generate a few oddities. The unit’s commander was a major who was given the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel for the duration of the extraction task. This meant that when he was in Tallil there were three lieutenant colonels in residence, each of equal status and none of whom were technically in charge. When the decision was made to stand up a FET there was already a robust logistic organisation in the MEAO, namely the FLLA. Instead of augmenting the FLLA with the personnel to conduct the extraction task the ADF
chose to create an entirely new but temporary organisation. By contrast, when the time came to close down operations in Baghdad the ADF deployed another FET. Admittedly, this was a much smaller task than the withdrawal from Tallil, and it required only an OC at the O3 level. Yet, in this case the OC FET-B was under the command of the FLLA.\textsuperscript{732}

There is no clear rationale for the raising of a separate FET for Tallil nor why the FLLA could not have undertaken the task with its resident O5. The FET’s existence was also finite. When it departed most, but not all, of the residual stores and equipment had been processed. It fell to the FLLA to deal with what the FET had been unable to finish, a task that would have been less troublesome if there had been a single logistic organisation in place from the start.\textsuperscript{733}

As the date for Australia’s withdrawal from Iraq neared, the Government decided that it would offer sanctuary to those Iraqi nationals – and their families – who had been in the ADF’s employ. Accordingly, on 8 April 2008 the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, announced a special Humanitarian Visa category specifically intended for what were referred to as ‘Locally Engaged Employees’ or LEEs. Evans

\textsuperscript{733} Comments by interview subjects DD and MM.
expected his department would issue up to 600 of these visas. Australia allocated $42 million over four years to the resettlement of these individuals. 301 Iraqis would take up this scheme.734

Many of these Iraqis had served as interpreters and had provided what often proved to be essential translation services to the Australian forces. Coalition interpreters were a prime target of anti-Iraqi elements and many – and their families – had met a grisly fate. One AATTI commander had received a CD documenting the execution of translators with whom he had worked. The filming of such executions was a common tactic by anti-Iraqi elements and was used to intimidate others from taking up employment with the Coalition.735 Other Australian LEEs had worked as guards at the Australian Embassy. According to the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, insurgents had deliberately targeted Australian LEEs and their dependents and he accepted that the country had a ‘moral obligation’ to resettle them.736


As a condition of their visa ADF LEEs were subject to health, character and security checks. To this end the ADF deployed a 29 member Supplementary Team to Tallil. The mounting unit was 1 HSB although personnel came from a total of 9 Army units plus civilians and the RAAF. This represented a particularly high ratio of units to number of personnel and may be a reflection of the specialist skill sets required for the mission. The team also contained representatives from the ADF’s IP Division and DIAC thus making it a joint and whole-of-government effort. The DIAC team subsequently relocated to Athens from where they produced the required travel documents. The code name for the task was Operation FURSAH and the OC was an Army 04. The team was actually in place prior to the Government’s announcement of the scheme and work was able to commence quickly – the Supplementary Team conducted its first interviews on 12 April.

At Tallil the prospective migrants received a complete medical assessment (TB was of concern, although no cases were detected) and were interviewed by DIAC. Some LEEs chose not to take up the offer but were given 12 months in which to change their minds. Once the Supplementary Team had completed the entire Tallil

contingent’s processing, a RAAF C-130 flew them to a third country where the ADF handed over responsibility for their care to DFAT and the International Organisation for Migration.

Upon completion of the work in Tallil the Supplementary Team moved to Baghdad to process the LEEs from the capital and the northern regions. The ADF reinforced the Bagdad effort with additional RAAF personnel bringing the establishment to 37 personnel. The team was jointly staffed and consisted of:

- 13 RAFF (mainly ADG)
- 1 RAN
- 21 Army
- 2 IP Division civilians

The OC for the Baghdad effort was a RAAF Squadron leader. However, the contingent did contain a higher ranked officer. The ADF Surgeon General, RADM Graeme Shirtley, deployed to Baghdad in his capacity as a radiologist.737

While the extraction of Australia’s LEEs and dependents was a whole-of-government operation the ADF’s role ceased once the Iraqis arrived in the third party country. At that point the LEEs became the responsibility

737 Comments by interview subjects VV & YY.
of the DIAC. Whole-of-government, therefore, is somewhat misleading as a description of Operation FURSAH’s nature — consecutive is more accurate. There is some evidence

The result was a sense of disillusion and abandonment, and a growing feeling of resentment that the Iraqis unfortunately directed at the ADF. As an exercise in whole-of-government best practice there is sufficient evidence that Operation FURSAH actually fell short of the mark.738

With the withdrawal of Australian combat troops from Iraq the end of CATALYST was in sight. In December 2008 FLLA-B closed and the ADF gradually reduced its other commitments in Iraq.739 On 31 July 2009 the last eleven ADF members working in US-led coalition headquarters


withdrew.\textsuperscript{740} There are still ADF personnel in Baghdad but these belong to CATALYST’s successor operations, either KRUGER or RIVERBANK. Under Operation KRUGER, SECDET’s mission remains largely unchanged, namely: ‘ADF support to Australian Government relations with Iraq through the delivery of tailored security support to the diplomatic mission.’\textsuperscript{741} RIVERBANK is the ADF contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).\textsuperscript{742} As of 21 June 2010 the ADF had 80 personnel allocated to KRUGER and two to RIVERBANK.\textsuperscript{743}

SECDET XVIII would be the final rotation of the Army-based Australian Embassy protection detachment. By late 2008 plans were underway to switch to a DFAT-controlled, contractor-provided model for the security of the Baghdad Embassy and its staff. The transition to a private security regime began in mid-2009 with a gradual draw-down of military personnel and their progressive replacement by contract security personnel.\textsuperscript{744}

On 9 August


\textsuperscript{744} F91578, ‘Meeting Brief for DCJOPS: Office Call by Australia’s Ambassador to Iraq, Mr Robert J Tyson,’ 13 August 2009; and F130313, ‘Decision Brief for CJOPS (through CA) on the revised Operation KRUGER Force Structure – Feb 10,’ 31 July 2009. See also, B1318071, ‘CJOPS Operation
2011 the Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, announced that on 6 August the final 17 members of SECDET XVIII had left Iraq, thereby bringing that task to an end. As of this writing (August 2011) Operation RIVERBANK’s two personnel are the only Australian troops remaining in Bagdad whose tasks relate to the Iraq War.

The logistic, command, maritime and air elements that had been based in Iraq, or had supported operations in Iraq from elsewhere in the MEAO also remained in theatre, but now solely in support of the war in Afghanistan under Operation SLIPPER. This completed a shift in the ADF’s axis of operations that had been underway for some time. The ADF’s base area for the MEAO also shifted with now filling that role rather than . The consolidation of Australian base elements

Order 01/08 – Operation KRUGER (ADF’s contribution to the provision of security for the diplomatic mission to Iraq), 18 December 2008.

Australia has managed to pay a relatively small price for its participation in the Coalition in Iraq. There were only two fatalities – WO2 Dave Nary and Private Jake Kovco – and the ADF classified both as non-battle deaths. A further 27 ADF personnel were wounded.747 Yet, as in all wars, there is little doubt that these figures minimise cost of Australia’s participation in the conflict, especially at the personal level. As of August 2008 the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) had received 849 applications for a disability pension from veterans of Iraq.748 Of these 676 have been granted, and the amount of the award ranges from 10 per cent up to Totally and Permanently Incapacitated. DVA did not accept 102 applications and the remainder are pending.

The awarded claims by service were:

- RAN  341
- Army  163
- RAAF  81
- Civilian  1
- Unknown  90749

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748 The figures are valid as at 29 August 2008. Data was provided by the Research, Rehabilitation & Development Group, Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

749 DVA claim assessors do not always record service affiliation.
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has attracted particular concern from the ADF as well as considerable attention in the media, although the majority of disability awards to date are not due to that condition. PTSD disability awards by service are:

- RAN  74
- Army  48
- RAAF  21
- Unknown  23

Since only a relatively brief period have passed since the Iraq War’s commencement disability claims to DVA appear certain to rise.

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Conclusion: Assessing the War in Iraq

Introduction

It is too early to assess the US-led war with Iraq in its totality; after all at the time of this writing the conflict is ongoing, if much reduced. Such an effort is further complicated by the need to take into account the different objectives pursued by the US and Australian governments. The two countries had different goals and a full understanding of the US assessment awaits the mission’s resolution. Yet, sufficient evidence already exists to reach guarded conclusions on the success of the United States and Australia in achieving their political objectives for going to war.

US Assessment

At the point that Australia withdrew its forces from southern Iraq in June 2008 the security situation in much of the country had greatly improved. According to reports by mid-July 2008 there has been a significant reduction in the intensity of the Iraqi threat environment and incidents of insurgent attack had gone down across all categories to levels not seen since March 2004. Even

the incidence of IED attack had declined dramatically and the commander of the US Army’s 10th Mountain Division, MAJGEN Michael Oates, commented that, ‘the security situation is probably the best we’ve ever seen it’. Reinforcing this positive trend was the observation by the commander of the Multi National Security Transition Command - Iraq, LTGEN James Dubik, who expected Iraqi ground forces to become ‘fully proficient by mid-2009’. According to one senior Australian officer the Government had gotten the timing of the withdrawal pretty much right.

The turn about in Iraq had come quickly, and its cause remains controversial and it requires considerable further research and analysis, but it was a result of this development that President Barack Obama was able to announce an end to the US combat mission on 31 August 2011.

07-12 iraq attacks us casualties at 4year low.html (accessed 17 July 2008).


754 Comments by interview subject AAA.
The reality was that the US had already begun to withdraw the bulk of its forces and at the time of Obama’s address there were less than 50,000 US troops remaining in Iraq. Their mission was no longer to defeat the insurgents but to assist and advise the Iraqi Army and police forces who had taken over responsibility for the security of their country.

The change in Iraq’s internal security situation is welcome, but it would be a great mistake to see this event as an indicator of Coalition success in the war, no matter the temptation to do so. The weighing up of a war takes place at strategic level not the operational or tactical. To do otherwise confuses the winning of battles and campaigns with the securing of the policy goals for

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which a nation embarked on war in the first place. There has been much criticism of the US military of late that accuses its leaders of mistakenly pursing battlefield success at the expense of achieving national political goals. In fact, this was the fallacy that Franks and his CENTCOM planners committed when they focused on winning the campaign but not the war. By not recognising Phase IV as the critical part of the war these individuals lost the opportunity to achieve the strategic goals that Bush had defined. It must not be forgotten that while the prioritising of battlefield competency before strategic objective may placate the less astute practitioner of war, in the end it is only the degree to which a nation achieves its strategic goals that truly matters when assessing a war.757

Possible success against the insurgency cannot disguise the reality that the United States went to war in 2003 to depose Saddam Hussein and to remake Iraq into a democratic beacon of American values and influence in the region. This was always going to be a tough policy objective, and even though its attainment has been largely forgotten in the effort to contain the insurgency that the invasion spawned, it remains the only standard

757 There is a growing literature on this point. For an example see, Antulio J Echevarria, II, Toward an American War of War, Carlisle, Strategic Studies Institute, 2004.
by which US policy achievement can be measured. However, this has proven not to be the case. Instead, US officials, military leaders, and much of the commentariat have shifted the conflict’s metric of success to the defeat of the insurgency. Of course, this is to commit the same error that Antulio J Echevarria II and others have observed – placing battlefield success ahead of attaining policy objectives. Moreover, while Iraq today may be a less dangerous place in which to live and work than was the case a few years ago it is by no means free of insurgent-initiated violence. For example, on the eve of Obama’s address a coordinated car bomb attack of more than a dozen strikes killed 53 people and wounded 250.\textsuperscript{758} Even worse attacks occurred in November which highlighted the inability of security forces to prevent such incidents.\textsuperscript{759} A year on, the Iraqi people continued to feel the insurgency’s presence with the toll for July standing at 159 civilians, 56 police and 44 army personnel killed.\textsuperscript{760} The insurgency is wounded but by no


\textsuperscript{759} ‘Iraq’s insurgency: Another Spasm,’ The Economist, 6 November 2010, pp. 54-55.

means is it destroyed. At the internal political level, the future of the US-imposed experiment in Iraqi democracy continues to look problematic with corruption, nepotism and tribalism endemic. A break-up along religious or ethnic lines remains a possibility.\textsuperscript{761}

It is against the Bush Administration’s original policy goals for going to war that its outcome must be assessed. From such a perspective there is little reason for joy in Washington. Rather, the opposite is the case and for the United States this war can only be seen as a frustrating and expensive folly. While the end-game still lies in the future it is already reasonably safe to conclude that the war’s only strategic winners are Iran and China. Clearly, this was not Bush’s intent when he chose the path to war with Saddam shortly after the attacks of September 11\textsuperscript{th}.

Australian Assessment

Australia will be unable to escape fully the taint of US defeat in Iraq; such is the fate of a junior partner in coalition operation. However, in the

achievement of their own policy goals, Australia’s political and military leaders have been much more successful than their US counterparts. Throughout the course of the lead-up to war, the conduct of the invasion, and the long period of Phase IV operations, the Howard and Rudd Governments, as well as their ADF advisors, kept the scale and nature of the nation’s commitment tightly focused on the attainment of the nation’s political goals. Unlike their US counterparts, Australian leaders seemed to understand the essence of strategy; the balance between ends and means in the achievement of policy goals, and, by and large, they got it right.

Such skill as strategic navigators is a relatively new development for Australia. In fact, this is the first time in the nation’s military history that the Australian Government defined a strategic direction for its participation in a war, and then had the wherewithal to see it through to a successful conclusion. Traditionally, Australia wages war as a junior partner in a coalition, one that was led by either the United States or the United Kingdom. In doing so, Australia contributed manpower, equipment and resources but had little influence in the strategic direction of the conflict in which its soldiers, sailors and airmen fought. While Australia again had little influence on overall Coalition
(that is US) strategy for the war in Iraq, the Government did define a policy goal of its own, and it focused its resources towards its achievement. If one dismisses the mandatory rhetoric emanated by the Howard and Rudd Governments regarding the need to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolutions, to guard against the spread of WMD and the threat of global terrorism, and to help rebuild the Iraqi nation, Australia’s true strategic intent is revealed. Australia joined the Coalition against Iraq in order to improve its relations with the United States, the banner nation of the west and the world’s sole hegemon, and – most importantly – the current guarantor of this country’s ultimate security. For Australia, the conflict’s centre of gravity was the opinion of policy makers in Washington. favourably influencing this opinion was Australia’s principle policy goal.

Shortly after taking office in 1996 the Howard Government set out as a long-term defence objective the desire to reinvigorate Australia’s bilateral relationship with the United States.762 Australia’s participation in the Coalition in Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, was a

part of the process to achieve this goal. Given the current high standing with which the Australian relationship is held in the United States, it appears this long-term national security goal has been met. In doing so it also reveals that for Australia the Iraq War has been a victory, albeit a tainted one. One need not look further than the warmness of the friendship that grew between Howard and Bush and gratitude expressed by senior US officials to the Gillard Government during the 2010 AUSMIN talks.

In a 2011 press conference the Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, spoke of the close relationship the two countries shared and concluded that the Alliance had reached new heights of cooperation. In a similar use of military force to achieve a diplomatic goal Howard saw the deployment of the AMTG in support of the Japanese engineers as paving the way for the 2007 signing of the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Australia and Japan.

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763 See, ‘Australia and US face past, present and future together,’ Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 2010, p. 11; and ‘AUSMIN summit a timely regional strategic boost,’ The Australian, 8 November 2010, p. 15. See also, Greg Sheridan, ‘Clinton Resolute on the Alliance,’ The Weekend Australian, 13-14 November 2010, p. 23.


765 Howard, Lazarus Rising, p. 458.
Government achieved this happy state of affairs at virtually no cost in lives and with a minimal expenditure in capital. Seen from this perspective Senator Nick Minchin’s recent employment of the word ‘debacle’ to describe the war with Iraq proves limited to the US experience, not the Australian.\(^{766}\) For Australia the Iraq War was a tremendous and noteworthy achievement in statecraft and strategic policy making.

It must be recognised, however, that there are limits on the scope of a junior partner to seek an independent strategic objective. Such independence does have a degree of self-delusion, especially when dealing with friends as powerful as the United States. The defence analyst, Michael O’Connor, observed that:

> Australia’s underlying defence strategy ... is to support American and British military commitments with token contingents and much flowery political rhetoric and mutual backslapping. This is designed to guarantee allied support in case of a significant threat to Australia.

\(^{766}\) Mark Dodd, ‘Minchin’s regret at Iraq war “debacle”’, \textit{The Australian}, 27 October 2010.
O’Connor went on to note that while such a policy made a good deal of sense from a domestic perspective it requires ‘an acceptance by those allies that Australia’s contribution will be largely rhetorical.’

O’Connor is correct. In the end, the achievement of the Australian strategic goal by Australia was always conditional on US acquiescence. The reality is that even when a junior partner attempts to set its own national goal it is conditional on the senior partner’s willingness to be accommodating; in the case of Iraq, for example, to not ask for greater effort. It was sufficient for the United States that an Australian commitment was present in Iraq. What this commitment did, how it was organised, what capabilities it possessed and how large it was were all secondary to the vital requirement of it just being there. At the military level, US commanders may have wanted a more active and robust Australian force, but at the more important political level the needs of President Bush and his civilian advisors were satisfied simply by Australian representation in the Coalition. Howard and Cosgrove understood the nuances of the US political/military interface and in this case were able to achieve an important political goal that was far in excess of the resource they were required to expend.

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However, Australian leaders, both political and military, should understand that in a different conflict US leaders may or may not be so accommodating. It would be risky to overstate Australian cleverness.

Throughout the Iraq War the ADF’s prowess at the operational and tactical levels were far less encouraging than at the strategic. A primary issue of concern should be the inability of HQJOC to fulfil its purpose. Instead of commanding the Australian campaign, JOC sought to administer it; an important distinction highlighted by its failure to provide deploying force element commanders with the slightest idea of their missions. Those in command in the field waged war within a policy-free zone and only discovered the limits of their remit when they attracted the ire of CJTF633 – CJOPS’s representative in the MEAO. Admittedly, JOC was not helped by the CDF’s extension of the strategic level across all the domains of war, nor that most of the deployed forces worked to the wishes of a Coalition component commander. Yet, one cannot escape the conclusion that an operational headquarters that does not produce a campaign plan over the course of a conflict lasting more than five years is one that has lost its way.

There is no doubt that Australian soldiers acting at the ‘sharp end’ displayed the professionalism and character that was representative of the best traditions
of the force. This is not necessarily a good indicator of military effectiveness, however. During its time in Iraq the Australian Army was never tested in battle, primarily because the national rules under which its personnel served did not permit such an eventuality from occurring. It would be misleading to draw too serious a conclusion from even the actions of the SASR during Operation BASTILLE. The SASR did fight a number of potentially dangerous skirmishes but these were all against low-level rear-area personnel who were members of a force that was already on the verge of collapse. Iraq, therefore, cannot serve as a testimony to the Army’s skill at combined arms warfare.

Those who served in Iraq must have wondered about why they were there. For some rotation commanders the morale of the men and women under their command became an issue and they had to work hard to convince their troops that the mission had purpose. The terms ‘Operation Token Effort’ or ‘Operation Show the Flag’ that have been used to describe the Australian presence in Afghanistan could have applied equally to Iraq.\(^{768}\) Certainly, most rotation commanders considered their tour a success, but this was often against a metric of their own making. One rotation commander’s assessment of his time is Iraq could sum up

\(^{768}\) Philip Dorling, ‘Gillard needs a reality check,’ The Canberra Times, 20 November 2010, p. 27.
the mission for everyone: ‘we did some shit for awhile and things didn’t get any worse.’

The Iraq war is now winding down to a likely indecisive end. The United States is the only foreign military presence in the country and the number of its troops is at a reduced level and declining. The conflict in Afghanistan is the war that dominates the attention of political leaders and military commanders, as well as the headlines of the media. In fact, Iraq is at risk of becoming a forgotten conflict; certainly interest in Australia is not high. This is a shame. There will not be too many useful lessons of this conflict at the operational or tactical levels because the imbalance in the combatants was so extreme. Any claims of military prowess by the forces of the United States, United Kingdom or Australia for the ease with which they defeated Saddam’s Army are hollow indeed. Yet at the strategic level the Iraq War is ripe with problems and solutions and lessons and is indeed worthy of further study and consideration. This work has only hinted at the full range of questions that should be examined. But what should be clear to all is the eternal dominance of the strategic level of war. It was at this level that Iraq was lost by the United States and won by Australia. How Australia managed this feat should be made known to all of the nation’s political, policy and military leaders as
one day they may be again called upon to repeat the achievement.
GLOSSARY

AASB  Al Asad Air Base
ADHQ  Australian Defence Headquarters
ADMININST Administrative Instruction
AFPO  Australian Forces Post Office
AFV  Armoured Fighting Vehicle
AHU  Army History Unit
AIF  Armed Insurgent Forces
ALT  Air Load Team
ALERTO Alert Order
AME  aeromedical evacuation
AMTG  Al Muthanna Task Group
AN  Antonov
ANR  Australian National Representative
ANSTO Australian Nuclear Technology Organisation
AO  Area of Operations
APOD  Air Point of Disembarkation
APOE  Air Point of Embarkation
ARCENT Army Central Command
AQUIS Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
AS  Australia
ASCS  Australian Command and Staff College
ASIS Australian Secret Intelligence Service
ASNCOMD-MEAO  Australian National Commander - MEAO
ASNHQ-MEAO Australian National Headquarters - MEAO
ASNO  Australian Nuclear Technology Organisation
AST  Australian Theatre
ATC  Air Traffic Control
AUSMIN Australian-United States Ministerial
BAS  Basrah Air Station
BDA  Battle Damage Assessment
BIAP  Baghdad International Airport
Bn  Battalion
BSG  Baghdad Security Group
BSU  Base Support Unit
CA  Chief of Army
CAF  Chief of Air Force
CAOC  Combined Air Operations Centre
CBA  Combat Body Armour
CDF  Chief of the Defence Force
CDT  Clearance Diving Team
CENTCOM Central Command
CF  Coalition Forces
CFSOCC Combined Forward Special Operations Component Command
CIED-TF Counter IED Task Force
CJLOG Commander Joint Logistics
CJOPS   Chief Joint Operations
CJTF    Commander/Combined Joint Task Force
CMATT   Coalition Military Assistance Training Team
CMST    Compact Multiband Satellite Terminal
COIN-CFE Counter Insurgency Center of Excellence
COMAST  Commander Australian Theatre
CONUS   Continental United States
CREW    Counter Radio Controlled IED Electronic Warfare
CSG     Cryptological Services Group
CSSB    Combat Service Support Battalion
CSSE    Combat Service Support Element
CSSG    Combat Service Support Group
CSST    Combat Service Support Team
CWEAT   Coalition Weapons Effectiveness Assessment Teams
DA      Direct Action
DBE     Department of Border Enforcement
DCN     Defence Communications Network
DF      Direct Fire
DFAC    Dining Facility
DFAT    Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DGDHS   Director General Defence Health Services
DIAC    Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIO     Defence Intelligence Organisation
DMO     Defence Material Organisation
DPDS    Deployment Planning Data Sheet
DSTO    Defence Science and Technology Organisation
DVA     Department of Veterans Affairs
EAPS    Engine Particle Separators
ECSS    Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron
EFP     Explosive Formed Projectile
EW      Electronic Warfare
EXECUTO Execute Order
FAD     Force Activity Designator
FCE     Forward Command Element
FCN     Force Contribution Nations
FCU     Force Communications Unit
FE      Force Elements
FET     Force Extraction Team
FF      Foreign Fighters
FHT     Field HUMINT Team
FIEG    Force Extraction and Insertion Team
FLLA    Force Level Logistics Asset
FMB     Forward Mounting Base
FRAGO   Fragmentary Order
FSB     Force Support Battalion
FSU     Force Support Unit
GOAS    Government of Australia
HA      Humanitarian Assistance
HADS(W) Head Australian Defence Staff – Washington
HAZMAT  Hazardous Materials
HE  High Explosive
HNS  Host Nation Support
HOA  Horn of Africa
HSO  Head Strategic Operations
HQAST  Headquarters Australian Theatre
HVT  High Value Target
HVTL  High Value Target List
IA  Iraqi Army
IAEA  International Atomic Energy Agency
IAW  In Accordance With
ICRC  International Committee of the Red Cross
ICW  In Conjunction With
IDF  Indirect Fire
IED  Improvised Explosive Device
IIP  Iraqi Islamic Party
IL  Ilyushin
IPE  Individual Protective Equipment
IRR  Incident Response Regiment
ISB  Intermediate Support Base
ISF  Iraqi Security Forces
ISTAR  Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition
and Reconnaissance
ITC  Interim Tented Camp
IZ  Iraq/Iraqi
JALO  Joint Ammunition Logistic Organisation
JAM  Jaish Al Mahdi (AKA Mahdi Militia –
paramilitary wing of OMS)
JIRSG  Japanese Iraq Reconstruction and Support Group
JLC  Joint Logistic Command
JMCC  Joint Movement Control Centre
JOC  Joint Operations Command
JSOAD-W  Joint Special Operations Air Detachment - West
JTF  Joint Task Force
KAA  Khawr Abd Allah
LAR  Light Armoured Reconnaissance
LAV  Light Armoured Vehicle
LCASUT  Land Commander
LCC  Land Component Commander
LEE  Locally Engaged Employee
LNIDS  Lotus Notes Interim Demand System
LO  Liaison Officer
LRPV  Long Range Patrol Vehicle
LSE  Logistic Support Element
m  metre
MBT  Main Battle Tank
MEAO  Middle East Area of Operations
MFU  Major Fleet Unit
mm  millimetre
MINDEF  Minister of Defence
MiTT  Military Training Team
MLCOA  Most Likely Course of Action
MLSA Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement
MNC-I Multi National Corps - Iraq
MNF-I Multi National Force - Iraq
MNSTC-I Multi National Security Transition Command - Iraq
MOU Memorandum of Understanding
MRE Mission Readiness Exercise
MSR Main Supply Route
NAG North Arabian Gulf
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBC Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
NSC National Security Committee
NSE National Support Element
OBG-W Overwatch Battle Group - West
OG Own Government
OHS Occupational Health and Safety
OMD Operational Manning Document
OMS Office of the Martyr Sadr
OPCON Operational Control
ORHA Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
PACOM Pacific Command
PC Provincial Council
PCO Project Contract Office
PDT Project Delivery Team
PCV Protected Commercial Vehicle
PIC Public Information Centre
PIC Provincial Iraqi Control
PIR Proximity Infra Red
PJOC Provincial Joint Operations Centre
POI Point of Impact
POO Point of Origin
POR Post Operational Report
POTUS President of the United State
PPCT Provincial Program Coordination Team
PRDC Provincial Reconstruction and Development Clinic
PSB Personnel Support Battalion
PTSD Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
QRF Quick Reaction Force
RADM Rear Admiral
RAF Royal Air Force
RAAF Royal Australian Air Force
RAN Royal Australian Navy
RCIED Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device
RCT Regimental Combat Team
RFMF Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RHIB Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat
RIP Relief in Place
RM Royal Marines
ROC Relief Out of Country
ROCL  Relief Out of Country Leave
ROE  Rules of Engagement
RSDL  Reactive Skin Decontamination Lotion
RSO&I  Reception, Staging, Onward Movement & Integration
RTA  Return to Australia
RTB  Return to Base
RTC  Regional Training Centre
RTF  Reconstruction Task Force
RW  Rotary Wing
SAD  Ship Army Detachment
SAF  Small Arms Fire
SASR  Special Air Service Regiment
SASO  Security and Stabilisation Operations
SCG  Senior Command Group
SDSS  Standard Defence Supply System
SE  South East
SECDEF  Secretary of Defence
SECDET  Security Detachment
SED  Single Entitlement Document
SF  Special Forces
SFTG  Special Forces Task Group
SITREP  Situation Report
SOD  Strategic Operations Division
SOCCENT  Special Operations Component Central Command
SOCFCE  Special Operations Component Forward Command Element
SOFA  Status of Forces Agreement
SOPT  Special Operations Planning Team
SOR  Statement of Requirement
SPOD  Sea Point of Disembarkation
SPOE  Sea Point of Embarkation
SSE  Sensitive Site Exploitation
STA  Surveillance Targeting Acquisition
STTT  Short Term Training Team
SVEST  Suicide Vest
TAA  Tactical Assembly Area
TBM  Tactical Ballistic Missile
TCD  Third Country Deployment
TF  Task Force
TUB  Theatre Update Brief
UAE  United Arab Emirates
UAV  Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UFN  Until Further Notice
UKM  Unknown Male
UN  United Nations
UNAMI  United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
UNMOVIC  United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
UNSCOM  United Nations Special Commission
US  United States
UASF  United States Air Force
USMC  United States Marine Corps
USN  United States Navy
USSPACECOM  United States Space Command
USTRANSCOM  United States Transportation Command
UXO  Unexploded Ordnance
VADM  Vice Admiral
VBIED  Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
VCDF  Vice Chief of the Defence Force
VIG  Vaccinia Immune Globulin
VOIED  Victim Operated Improvised Explosive Device
WG  Working Group
WoG  Whole of Government
WIS  Weapons Intelligence Section
WLR  Weapon Locating Radar
WMD  Weapons of Mass Destruction
WNGO  Warning Order
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