



## The Future of Coalition Forces in Iraq

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On 31 December 2008 the UN Security Council Resolution mandating the presence of a Multinational Force in Iraq, expired. Coalition forces will continue to remain in the country at the invitation of the Iraqi government, although caveats on their role, legal status and their eventual withdrawal have been expressly set down in bilateral agreements governing their presence which have been concluded by the Iraqi government and the remaining Coalition countries. On current plans British forces in Iraq are expected to have completed their military tasks in Iraq by the end of May 2009 with a view to withdrawing by the end of July; while all US forces will withdraw from Iraq no later than 31 December 2011.

This note examines the legal basis for the ongoing presence of Coalition forces in Iraq, current troop commitments and plans for the future.

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## 1 Authorisation of Coalition Forces

### 1.1 Background

The presence of the Multinational Force in Iraq had been mandated by a succession of UN Security Council Resolutions since 2003.<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1790 (2007) extended the mandate of that force until 31 December 2008. However, that resolution made clear that further extensions to that mandate would not be made beyond this date.<sup>2</sup>

The status of forces and the establishment of legal jurisdiction over foreign military personnel and private security contractors serving in Iraq have been set down since 2003 under Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order No.17, which was revised in 2004 following the transfer of Iraqi sovereignty. Under CPA Order No.17 MNF personnel were immune from the Iraqi legal process. However, the Order stated that all MNF personnel would respect Iraqi law, including the Regulations, Orders, Memoranda and Public Notices issued by the administrator of the CPA, and would also be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of their Sending States. The Sending States of MNF personnel also had the right to exercise within Iraq, criminal and disciplinary jurisdiction over all persons subject to the military law of that Sending State.<sup>3</sup> Under Section 5 of CPA Order 17, however, requests to waive the immunity of MNF personnel could be made to their respective Sending States. CPA Order No.17 also addressed issues such as the wearing of uniforms and the carrying of arms; tax and customs relief for military personnel; entry and exit rights of military personnel and cost arrangements for MNF facilities. Section 20 of that Order stated that it would only remain in force for the duration of the UN mandate authorising the presence of the multinational force in Iraq under

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<sup>1</sup> UNSCR 1511 (2003), UNSCR 1546 (2004), UNSCR 1637 (2005), and UNSCR 1723 (2006)

<sup>2</sup> The intention not to renew the mandate beyond December 2008 was first set out in the *Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America* in November 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 17 (revised), Section 2, 27 June 2004: [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040627\\_CPAORD\\_17\\_Status\\_of\\_Coalition\\_Rev\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040627_CPAORD_17_Status_of_Coalition_Rev_with_Annex_A.pdf)

UNSCR 1511 and 1546 and any future resolutions, unless amended or rescinded by legislation “duly enacted and having the force of law”.<sup>4</sup>

Following a number of high profile incidents in 2007 involving the shooting of Iraqi civilians by US private security contractors, the Iraqi parliament took initial steps toward repealing that Order. Yet, progress within the parliament was minimal and given that the provisions of a new status of forces agreement between the US and Iraq was intended to supersede CPA Order No.17, discussions subsequently became part of the wider security framework negotiations between the US and the Iraqi government that would govern the presence of Coalition forces in Iraq beyond December 2008.

## 1.2 United States Status of Forces Agreement

The *Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America* which was signed in November 2007 indicated that both countries would work toward establishing a detailed strategic framework for US-Iraqi co-operation in the long term and specifically address the presence of US forces in Iraq beyond the current parameters of the UN mandate, by July 2008.

However, those negotiations had been continually marred by disagreements over the future legal status of military personnel and private security contractors, in particular their immunity from Iraqi law under CPA Order No.17, the presence of foreign military forces in Iraq in the longer term, control of Iraqi airspace and the prerogative of the US military to conduct operations without the approval of the Iraqi government.<sup>5</sup> The unwillingness of the US administration to set firm deadlines for the withdrawal of Coalition forces had also prompted some disquiet within the Iraqi government which sought to limit the number and role of US forces in the country after the UN mandate expires. An article in the *Washington Post* in June 2008 quoted Sami al-Askari, a senior Shi’ite politician on the Iraqi Parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee as commenting that “the Americans are making demands that would lead to the colonization of Iraq”.<sup>6</sup> The Iraqi government also reportedly came under pressure from Iran to resist establishing any long term security arrangements with the US.<sup>7</sup> Speaking at a meeting of Arab ambassadors in the United Arab Emirates in early July 2008 Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, commented:

The direction we are taking is to have a memorandum of understanding either for the departure of the forces or to have a timetable for their withdrawal. The negotiations are still continuing with the American side, but in any case the basis for the agreement will be respect for the sovereignty of Iraq.<sup>8</sup>

After months of political wrangling the US and Iraqi governments signed a Strategic Framework Agreement, which sets out the principles for long term co-operation between the US and Iraq, and a Status of Forces Agreement on 17 November 2008. In a series of concessions to the Iraqi government the US agreed to change its approach to a number of the issues which had been hindering negotiations, including the autonomy of US operations, the legal status of US personnel and a firm deadline for the withdrawal of US forces in the longer term.

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<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> Set out in the letters annexed to UNSCR 1546.

<sup>6</sup> “Iraqis condemn American demands”, *Washington Post*, 11 June 2008

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> “Iraqi PM suggests timetable for US troop withdrawal”, *The Financial Times*, 8 July 2008

The main provisions of the US-Iraqi SOFA are as follows:

- United States Forces will be present in Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government, for the purposes of “supporting Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq, including co-operation in the conduct of operations against al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, outlaw groups and remnants of the former regime”.
- All military operations will be conducted with the agreement of the Government of Iraq and fully co-ordinated with the Iraqi authorities. The co-ordination of all military operations will be overseen by a Joint Military Operations Coordination Committee which will be established. Any issues relating to military operations that cannot be resolved by the JMOCC will be forwarded to the Joint Ministerial Committee for a decision. The Parties to this agreement shall however retain the right to legitimate self defence as defined in applicable international law.
- All US forces will be withdraw from Iraqi territory no later than 31 December 2011. US combat forces will withdraw from Iraqi cities, villages and localities no later than the time at which Iraqi Security Forces assume responsibility for security in a given Iraqi province and by 30 June 2009 at the latest. However US forces can be withdrawn from Iraq at any time and the Iraqi government retains the right to request the departure of US forces from Iraq at any time.
- Surveillance and control of Iraqi airspace shall transfer to Iraqi authority on 1 January 2009. However temporary support to the Iraqi authorities in the surveillance and control of its airspace may be requested from US forces.
- Iraq shall have the right to exercise jurisdiction over US military personnel and any civilian employed by the Department of Defense for “grave premeditated felonies” when they are committed outside of designated US military facilities and while those personnel are off duty. However, the Government of Iraq has agreed to exercise jurisdiction in these matters only after it has determined, and notifies the US in writing within 21 days of the discovery of an alleged offence, that it is of particular importance that such jurisdiction be exercised.
- Offences committed either by personnel who are on duty, albeit outside of designated US military facilities, or personnel inside those facilities at all times will remain under the jurisdiction of the United States. Any US military personnel or DoD civilian arrested or detained by the Iraqi authorities shall be handed over to US Forces authorities within 24 hours, although such persons will be made available to the Iraqi authorities for the purposes of investigation and trial.
- Iraq shall have jurisdiction over US contractors and their employees at all times.
- Provisions determining jurisdiction shall be reviewed every six months.
- US forces may not arrest or detain any individual with the exception of those operations approved by the JMOCC. Such persons must be handed over to the Iraqi authorities within 24 hours.
- Those detainees being held in US military custody and who are wanted by the Iraqi authorities will be turned over to their custody pursuant to a valid arrest warrant. All

other remaining detainees shall be released unless otherwise requested by the Iraqi government.

- Upon entry into force of this agreement the Iraqi government will have full responsibility for the Green Zone.

The Strategic Framework Agreement also makes it clear that:

The United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea and air as a launching or transit point for attacks against other countries; nor seek or request permanent bases or a permanent military presence in Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

Copies of the SOFA and the Strategic Framework Agreement texts are available online at:

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE\\_SFA.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SFA.pdf)

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE\\_SOFA.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/SE_SOFA.pdf)

The Iraqi Parliament voted to accept the deal on 27 November, albeit after linking approval of the agreement to several promised political reforms and a public referendum on the arrangements by the end of July 2009. Those agreements were subsequently ratified by the Iraqi Presidential Council and took effect on 1 January 2009.

However, a number of reservations have been expressed over some of the SOFA's provisions. In particular, both the US military and human rights campaigners have voiced concern over the provisions governing detainees, which prior to the end of 2008 were in US military custody. An article by *Reuters* commented:

Next year the prisons in which US forces hold thousands of Iraqis will be flung open under a US-Iraq security pact.

That worries both the US military, which fears hardened insurgents could again roam the streets, and rights campaigners who fear the opposite: that Iraqi authorities will transfer the detainees to Iraqi prisons – and maybe torture or execute them.

“We are concerned that we will most likely release dangerous detainees back into the communities of Iraq who have directly contributed to the deaths of not only Iraqi and Coalition forces, but countless numbers of civilians” said Major Neal Fisher, spokesman for US detainee operations. “Every detainee in our custody came to us because they posed an imperative threat to the security and stability of Iraq” [...]

But rights groups fear Iraqi prisoners will face torture by Iraqi guards, after the transition to their control [...]

Joost Hiltermann, Iraq expert at the International Crisis Group, said possible mistreatment of the mostly Sunni Arab prisoners under Prime minister Nuri al-Maliki's Shi'ite-led government could stoke sectarian tensions.<sup>10</sup>

An assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies also observed:

The agreement raises important practical issues. Firstly, are Iraqi armed forces capable of taking on their new responsibilities and preventing a return to the internecine bloodshed that was estimated to have killed more than 34,000 civilians in

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<sup>9</sup> *Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Co-operation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq*

<sup>10</sup> “US military frets over Iraqi prisoners”, *Reuters*, 5 December 2008

2006 alone? Assessments are mixed [...] in 2007 both the Iraqi minister of defence and the US general responsible for training said they doubted it would be able to take full responsibility for counter-insurgency until 2012. Professor Anthony Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies... gave this assessment of operations in 2008: 'None...have shown that the Iraqi security forces are able to handle a well armed, organized, and motivated enemy that is willing to stand and fight'.

Secondly, in December 2009 Iraq will attempt to carry out a general election with US forces redeployed to their bases. An obvious question is whether a security vacuum could be exploited by those seeking to derail the polls through increased violence.

Overall, there must be a question mark over the ability of both sides to stick to the timetable if Iraq suffers increased violence and instability as a result of the elections and the reduction in American troop numbers.<sup>11</sup>

As such the assessment concluded that "The temptation for Baghdad and Washington will be to renegotiate the terms of the agreement to protect their common interests".<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3 Legal Basis of Other Coalition Forces

The US-Iraqi agreements were intended to be used as a template for a similar British-Iraqi bilateral agreement governing the presence of British forces in Iraq beyond the end of 2008.<sup>13</sup> However, given the delays in establishing the US-Iraqi SOFA and the impending expiration of the UN mandate, the Iraqi government announced its intention to establish new legal arrangements for the presence of all Coalition forces,<sup>14</sup> other than US forces, in one piece of legislation, rather than as individually negotiated agreements. That draft law, a copy of which was placed in the House of Commons Library on 18 December (ref: DEP 2008-3153),<sup>15</sup> was rejected by the Iraqi parliament on 20 December, however, with deputies in the Iraqi parliament arguing that a treaty or agreement similar to the US arrangements was needed as opposed to legislation.<sup>16</sup>

On 23 December 2008 the Iraqi Parliament did however pass a resolution empowering the Iraqi government to negotiate status of forces agreements with those Coalition countries, other than the US, that intended to retain troops in Iraq in 2009. Such agreements were expected to take the form of a bilateral memorandum of understanding or an exchange of letters, rather than a full treaty or pact, thereby allowing the legal basis for other coalition forces to be established before the end of the year without the need for further recourse to parliament for approval.

Bilateral agreements on the status of Australian and British forces were subsequently signed on 31 December 2008. Under that agreement British, and other non-US coalition forces, have the legal authority to remain in Iraq until the end of July 2009. In a media statement on 31 December Iraqi Defence Ministry Spokesman, Muhammed al-Askari, outlined the basic principles of those agreements. He stated:

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<sup>11</sup> "Withdrawal from Iraq", *Strategic Comments*, December 2008

<sup>12</sup> "Withdrawal from Iraq", *Strategic Comments*, December 2008

<sup>13</sup> Other countries retaining forces in Iraq beyond 2008, for example Australia, will also have to establish bilateral agreements with the Iraqi government governing the future status of forces.

<sup>14</sup> Forces from the UK, Australia, El Salvador, Estonia, Romania and NATO (under the NATO Training Mission)

<sup>15</sup> A copy is also available online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2008/DEP2008-3153.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> "Iraq allows British troops to stay", *Reuters*, 23 December 2008

With the authorization of the Iraqi Government as per Resolution No 439 of 2008 issued by the Council of Ministers, which approved the Draft Law on the Withdrawal of the Troops of the United Kingdom, Australia, Romania, Estonia, El Salvador, and NATO, from Iraq, and called for organizing their activities during their temporary presence, the Iraqi defence minister was authorized to sign a memorandum or an agreement on the withdrawal of these troops. And indeed, the agreement was signed with the United Kingdom this evening. His Excellency Iraqi Minister of Defence Abd-al-Qadir Muhammad Jasim signed the memorandum for Iraq, whereas the British ambassador accredited in Baghdad signed for Britain. Likewise, a similar agreement was signed on the withdrawal of the Australian troops. The Iraqi defence minister and the Australian ambassador accredited in Baghdad signed the agreement. This agreement organizes the work of the British troops in the next six months. Under the agreement, the British troops will provide support and training to the Iraqi troops in southern Iraq and then begin the process of withdrawal. They will provide this support until 31 June. The deadline for the withdrawal of the British and Australian troops with whom agreements were signed is 31 July 2009. This agreement organizes the work of these troops, stipulating that they will not be engaged in combat activity, and that their activities will be exclusively confined to the purposes of training and support. All their activities will have to be approved by the Iraqi Government. Hence, all these stipulations, their work mechanism, and how they will provide the support and other logistical requirements requested by the Iraqi armed forces were enshrined in the agreement. This followed lengthy discussions between the two sides. It also came following authorizations obtained from the Iraqi Council of Representatives and the Council of Ministers. It was also in line with the confines and parameters of Iraqi law.<sup>17</sup>

In a Statement to the House on 18 December 2008 the Prime Minister confirmed that had an agreement on legal status not been established before the expiry of the UN mandate, CPA Order No.17, which confers legal jurisdiction over Coalition personnel, would have remained in place.<sup>18</sup>

As an MOU, the agreement on the status of British forces in Iraq will not be subject to the same Parliamentary procedures as a treaty. The FCO document *Treaties and MOUs: Guidance on Practice and Procedures* states:

Like a treaty, an MOU can have a variety of names and can also be either in the form of an Exchange of Notes or a single document. However, the formalities which surround treaty-making do not apply to it and it is not usually published.<sup>19</sup>

## 2 Troop Commitments

Prior to the expiration of the UN mandate in December 2008, there were approximately 153,000 Coalition troops deployed as part of the Multinational Force in Iraq and responsibility for the security of 13 of Iraq's 18 provinces had been transferred to the Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>20</sup>

Several countries, including Poland and South Korea, indicated their intention to fully withdraw any remaining forces in the country by the end of 2008 and in line with the expiry of

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<sup>17</sup> "Iraq signs security agreements with UK and Australia", *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 31 December 2008

<sup>18</sup> HC Deb 18 December 2008, c1234

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf8/fco\\_pdf\\_treatymous](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf8/fco_pdf_treatymous)

<sup>20</sup> See: [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1469&Itemid=78](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1469&Itemid=78)

the UN mandate. As such only the UK, Australia,<sup>21</sup> El Salvador, Estonia and Romania, along with the NATO Training Mission, will retain forces in Iraq in the first half of 2009.

## 2.1 US Forces in Iraq

As outlined above, US forces have the legal authority to remain in Iraq until December 2011 with forces re-deployed to contingency operating bases by the end of June 2009 at the latest. The handover of security responsibility for the remaining Iraqi provinces, including Baghdad, is therefore expected during the next six months. With the withdrawal of British and Australian forces from the south by the end of July there has been speculation that US forces will deploy into the south to replace those withdrawing personnel. In response to those assertions, the MOD commented:

The Iraqis already have the lead in providing security in Basra, and that will not change. UK combat forces will leave Iraq earlier than US forces, so of course the US will need to protect the main supply routes through the south of Iraq – but there is no question of the US taking over in Basra.<sup>22</sup>

However, the rate at which US forces are drawn down over the next three years, with a view to complete withdrawal by the end of 2011, will be dependent upon the policies of the incoming Obama Presidency. It is worth noting that while the US has the legal authority to remain in Iraq until the end of 2011 the US-Iraqi agreement on the status of forces also provides the US with the ability to fully withdraw its troops “at any time” should it desire to do so.

Indeed President-elect Obama has been a consistent advocate for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and a clear focus on political outcomes. In a speech at the Annual Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Convention on 19 August 2008, then Senator Obama said:

In Iraq, gains have been made in lowering the level of violence thanks to the outstanding efforts of our military, the increasing capability of Iraq’s Security Forces, the ceasefire of Shiite militias, and the decision taken by Sunni tribes to take the fight to al Qaeda. Those are the facts, and all Americans welcome them.

But understand what the essential argument was about. Before the surge, I argued that the long-term solution in Iraq is political – the Iraqi government must reconcile its differences and take responsibility for its future. That holds true today. We have lost over a thousand American lives and spent hundreds of billions of dollars since the surge began, but Iraq’s leaders still haven’t made hard compromises or substantial investments in rebuilding their country. Our military is badly overstretched – a fact that has surely been noted in capitals around the world. And while we pay a heavy price in Iraq – and Americans pay record prices at the pump – Iraq’s government is sitting on a \$79 billion dollar budget surplus from windfall oil profits.

Let’s be clear: our troops have completed every mission they’ve been given. They have created the space for political reconciliation. Now it must be filled by an Iraqi government that reconciles its differences and spends its oil profits to meet the needs of its people. Iraqi inaction threatens the progress we’ve made and creates an opening for Iran and the “special groups” it supports. It’s time to press the Iraqis to take responsibility for their future. The best way to do that is a responsible redeployment of

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<sup>21</sup> Further information on the Australian commitment in Iraq is available online at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/opEx/global/opcatalyst/index.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Defence in the media* 10 December 2008

our combat brigades, carried out in close consultation with commanders on the ground. We can safely redeploy at a pace that removes our combat brigades in 16 months. That would be well into 2010 – seven years after the war began. After this redeployment, we'll keep a residual force to target remnants of al Qaeda; to protect our service members and diplomats; and to train Iraq's Security Forces if the Iraqis make political progress.

Iraq's democratically-elected Prime Minister has embraced this timeframe. Now it's time to succeed in Iraq by turning Iraq over to its sovereign government. We should not keep sending our troops to fight tour after tour of duty while our military is overstretched. We should not keep spending \$10 billion a month in Iraq while Americans struggle in a sluggish economy. Ending the war will allow us to invest in America, to strengthen our military, and to finish the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the border region of Pakistan.

The Obama-Biden Presidential transition website suggests that the phased withdrawal of one to two brigades a month will be possible over the next 18 months. It comments:

We must be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in [...] the removal of our troops will be responsible and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Military experts believe we can safely redeploy combat brigades from Iraq at a pace of 1 to 2 brigades a month – which would remove all of them in 16 months. That would be the summer of 2010 – more than 7 years after the war began.

Under the Obama-Biden plan, a residual force will remain in Iraq and in the region to conduct targeted counter-terrorism missions against al Qaeda in Iraq and protect American diplomatic and civilian personnel. They will not build permanent bases in Iraq, but will continue efforts to train and support the Iraqi Security Forces as long as Iraqi leaders move toward political reconciliation and away from sectarianism.<sup>23</sup>

## **2.2 UK Forces in Iraq**

### ***Current Deployment of Forces***

There are approximately 4,100 British forces on the ground in Iraq at present located at the Contingency Operating Base on the outskirts of Basra and deployed in an overwatch and training capacity. The current number of British personnel deployed on Operation *Telic* as a whole however, including naval personnel in the Persian Gulf, is approximately 6,500.

The current UK Order of Battle for Operation *Telic 13* is as follows:

#### **Ground Forces:**

- 20 Armoured Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron (200)
- The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish)
- 35 Engineer Regiment
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (Queen's and Royal Hampshires)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)

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<sup>23</sup> [http://change.gov/agenda/iraq\\_agenda/](http://change.gov/agenda/iraq_agenda/)

- 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Rifles
- 1 Logistic Support Regiment, Royal Logistics Corp
- 110 Provost Company, Royal Military Police
- 606 Tactical Air Control Party
- 618 Tactical Air Control Party

Elements of:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Tank Regiment
- 5<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Regiments, Royal Artillery
- 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal)
- 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographical)
- 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group
- 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> (Electronic Warfare) and 21<sup>st</sup> (Air Support) Signal Regiments
- 1 and 9 Regiments, Army Air Corps
- 6 and 9 Supply Regiments, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 24 and 29 Postal Courier and Movement Regiments, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 27 Transport Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 1 Close Support Medical Regiment
- 22 Field Hospital
- 3 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- 101 Force Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- 103 Military Working Dogs Support Unit
- 1 Military Intelligence Brigade
- 156 (North West) Transport Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp (Volunteer)
- 148 Expeditionary Forces Squadron, The Royal Logistics Corp (Volunteer)

## **Air and Naval Forces:**

In addition to personnel deployed on the ground, the UK has a small air contingent deployed in the region in support of those forces. The air component of Operation *Telic* currently comprises:

- Elements of 28 and 78 Squadrons, RAF
- Elements of Tactical Supply Wing, RAF
- Elements of Joint Helicopter Support Unit, RAF

HMS *Northumberland* and HMS *Portland* are on patrol in the Northern Arabian Gulf, supported by RFA *Diligence*. HMS *Lancaster* and RFA *Cardigan Bay* are also assigned to Operation *Telic* along with mine countermeasures vessels HMS *Blyth*, HMS *Ramsey*, HMS *Chiddingfold* and HMS *Atherstone*. RFA *Wave Knight* is also the current Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker.

A breakdown of UK forces deployed on Operation *Telic* in each month between March 2003 and January 2006 is available in Hansard (ref: HC Deb 13 February 2006, c1584-5W). Further figures for May 2006, May 2007 and May 2008 are available at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/FactSheets/OperationsFactsheets/OperationsInIraqFactsandFigures.htm>

A breakdown of the number of tours undertaken by individual units between March 2003 and May 2008 was set out in a letter from the MOD on 7 May 2008, a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library.<sup>24</sup>

## **Future UK presence**

On 18 December 2008 the Prime Minister made a statement to the House in which he outlined the future size and role of the British military commitment in Iraq and the broader strategic relationship that is expected to develop between the UK and Iraq in the longer term. Mr Brown stated:

Once we have completed our four tasks, including training for the headquarters and specialists of 14th Division—with the precise timing of its completion decided by commanders on the ground—the fundamental change of mission that I described in the House last summer will take place by 31 May 2009 at the latest. At that point, we will begin a rapid withdrawal of our troops, taking the total from just under 4,100 to under 400 by 31 July. The majority of the remaining troops will be dedicated to naval training.

Yesterday, Mr. Maliki and I agreed that Britain's future role will focus on continuing protection against attack of Iraqi oil platforms in the northern Gulf, together with long-term training of the Iraqi navy—work that I saw for myself at the port—and support for training the officers of the Iraqi armed forces. In other words, that is the realisation of a normal defence relationship, similar to those we have with our other key partners in the region, which I agreed with Mr. Maliki in July was our joint objective for 2009.

Of course, that relationship will be one strand of a broader, enduring relationship with democratic Iraq, which I also discussed yesterday with the Prime Minister. Our future

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<sup>24</sup> Letter to Dr Liam Fox MP, 7 May 2008

relationship will be one of partnership. We agreed to continue the shift of focus to economic, commercial, cultural and educational relationships. We will maintain a large embassy headed by a senior ambassador in Baghdad and maintain small missions in Basra and Erbil. The embassy in Baghdad will expand its commercial office and the Department for International Development will expand its programme of economic advice in Baghdad. We have discussed a plan with Prime Minister Maliki for British companies to provide expertise to the Iraqi Ministry of Oil, and Britain can help Iraq's plans to give 10,000 Iraqi students scholarships overseas.<sup>25</sup>

More specifically the UK and Iraq are expected in the near future to conclude a framework agreement on bilateral relations; establish a strong educational relationship in support of Iraq's Scholarship Initiative and conclude a UK/Iraq Trade and Co-operation Agreement.<sup>26</sup>

Responding to recent comments in the British media that UK forces "had failed to achieve anything in Iraq", Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt stated:

I ponder about the wisdom of some of the armchair critics who have sat very comfortably at home while British soldiers, sailors and airmen and marines have fought with extreme valour in Basra and the south of Iraq over the last six years. Lets face it, this was all about politics in the first place, it was about regime change. That's a very difficult and political undertaking. We had done our part to the best of our ability. It started in politics, it will finish in politics, and in the middle is intra Shia politics.

We have sensitively done what seemed right and stood back when it was right and only re-engaged also when it's right. This is not an easy situation. It has been very complex and I am really dismayed by some of the criticism that's been made [...] and I want to certainly re-assure the soldiers and their families who have taken part in this campaign that it has been absolutely worthwhile and the 178 lives that have been lost have not been lost in vain. We have achieved what we set out to achieve [...]

I don't want to draw comparisons with Northern Ireland (but) it took 38 years of involvement there by the Army to bring that to a satisfactory conclusion, 14 years in Bosnia, nine years and still counting in Kosovo. Yet the operation in Iraq has been concluded and will be concluded in six years. That is relatively quick as far as these things go. It's been complex, it's been difficult, but it's been successful and I really believe that people should recognise that and be appreciative of what our servicemen have done.<sup>27</sup>

### **3 Related Library Papers**

An outline of troop contributions to the US-led Multinational Force in Iraq since 1 May 2003 is provided in the following Library papers:

[SN/IA/4845](#), *Coalition Forces in Iraq – Towards a Drawdown?*, 22 September 2008

[SN/IA/4099](#), *Coalition Forces in Iraq: Recent Developments*, 20 September 2007

[SN/IA/3431](#) *Coalition Forces in Iraq after the January 2005 Elections*, 21 March 2006

[SN/IA/3278](#) *Coalition Forces in Iraq: an Update*, 31 January 2005

[RP04/58](#) *Iraq: Political and Security Issues at the Handover*, 19 July 2004

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<sup>25</sup> HC Deb 18 December 2008, c1235

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Defence Press Release, 17 December 2008

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Defence Press Release, 23 December 2008

SN/IA/3066 *Coalition Forces in Iraq*, 18 June 2004

[SN/IA/2909](#) *Iraq: Political and Security Issues*, 20 February 2004

[SN/IA/2241](#) *Post-Conflict Iraq*, 9 September 2003

A historical discussion of a Coalition exit strategy from Iraq is set out in Library Standard Note [SN/IA/3432](#); while the US Strategy for Iraq is examined in SN/IA/4227, [New Strategy for Iraq: Summary and Reaction](#), 15 January 2007.

The cost of military operations in Iraq is examined in Library Standard Note [SN/SG/3139](#).

#### **4 Suggested Reading**

- Alastair Campbell, *Assessing Britain's Legacy: the UK withdrawal from Iraq*, RUSI, December 2008:  
(<http://www.rusi.org/research/studies/menap/commentary/ref:C494B9295ACCE1>)
- Richard Haass and Martin Indyk, "Beyond Iraq", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009
- "Withdrawal from Iraq", *Strategic Comments*, December 2008