



CASE STUDY NO. 8
COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Basra: Strategic Dilemmas and Force Options

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COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

Complex operations encompass stability, security, transition and reconstruction, and counterinsurgency operations and operations consisting of irregular warfare (United States Public Law No 417, 2008). Stability operations frameworks engage many disciplines to achieve their goals, including establishment of safe and secure environments, the rule of law, social well-being, stable governance, and sustainable economy. A comprehensive approach to complex operations involves many elements—governmental and nongovernmental, public and private—of the international community or a “whole of community” effort, as well as engagement by many different components of government agencies, or a “whole of government” approach. Taking note of these requirements, a number of studies called for incentives to grow the field of capable scholars and practitioners, and the development of resources for educators, students and practitioners. A 2008 United States Institute of Peace study titled “Sharing the Space” specifically noted the need for case studies and lessons. Gabriel Marcella and Stephen Fought argued for a case-based approach to teaching complex operations in the pages of *Joint Forces Quarterly*, noting “Case studies force students *into* the problem; they put a face on history and bring life to theory.” We developed this series of complex operations teaching case studies to address this need. In this process, we aim to promote research and to strengthen relationships among civilian and military researchers and practitioners.

The [Center for Complex Operations](#) (CCO) emphasizes the importance of a whole of government approach to complex operations and provides a forum for a community of practice and plays a number of roles in the production and distribution of learning about complex operations, including supporting the compilations of lessons and practices.

Dr. Karen Guttieri at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) provided the research direction and overall leadership for this project.

Basra: Strategic Dilemmas and Force Options

John Hodgson

The Pennsylvania State University

. . . and [Brig. Gen. Graham Binns] said to me, “Come ‘round the corner and let’s have a quick smoke break before you see my commanders . . . I’ve worked out I could easily get into Az Zubayah now with the most powerful armored brigade the United Kingdom’s [UK] ever put in the field. But if I do, I’ll trash the place. I’ll take unnecessary casualties myself. I will kill lots of civilians. And this can’t be right.” And I said to him, “Well, my conclusion was precisely the same for Basra.”

Major General Robin Brims¹

INTRODUCTION

On March 24, 2004, British Major General Robin Brims faced a difficult decision. In just four days, his 1st Armoured Division had traversed nearly one hundred miles from the Kuwait border, secured the Rumaila oil fields, had begun to secure the port of Umm Qasr, cleared the Al Faw Peninsula at the southern tip of Iraq, and surrounded Iraq’s second largest city, crushing any organized resistance in the process. The first stage of British operations in the Iraq War was conducted almost flawlessly, with very slight casualties. But now, at the gates of Basra, Brims faced several daunting tasks, and competing pressures from the American military and his leadership in London; and every step he made was scrutinized by the British and international media. Basra presented difficult, if not insurmountable, strategic, operational, and tactical challenges.

BACKGROUND OF OPERATIONS IN BASRA

Despite the British historic connection to Basra, their role in the south in the Iraq War occurred largely by accident. The initial planning considerations in the spring and summer of 2002 depended on a two-pronged ground campaign, with thrusts from the south and the north. While the southern component was already beginning to stage out of existing bases in Kuwait, the northern component required some level of agreement from Turkey, if only

to allow the U.S. 4th Infantry Division and other coalition forces, including those of the British, to pass through to reach the Kurdish territories in northern Iraq. Coalition planners were confident that an agreement could be reached in time for the ground campaign, and it was in those northern regions, most likely Mosul, that the British would operate.

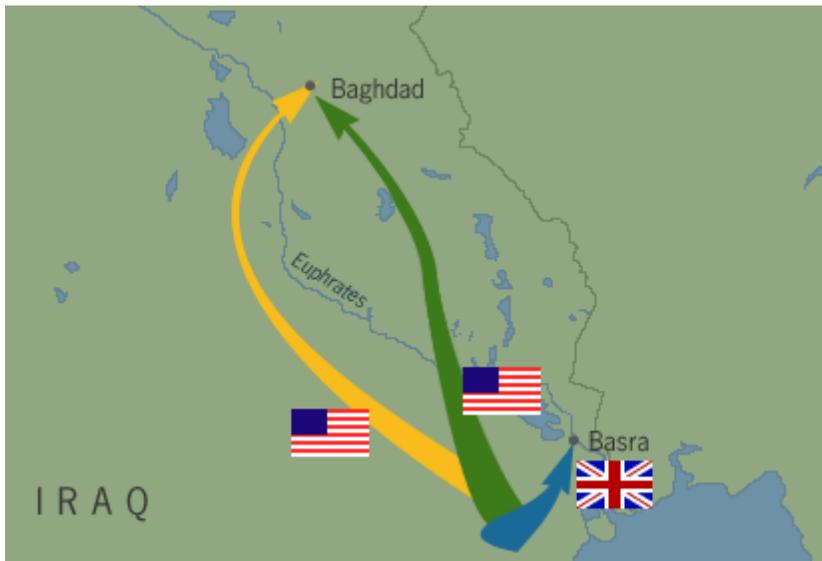
However, the U.S. planners underestimated the international pessimism regarding the Iraq War that would affect the Turkish decision and were seemingly unaware of the record of British-Turkish relations, especially in the early twentieth century. The Turks, with their longer historical memory, had been engaged by the British for similar negotiations before, and it had not worked out in their favor; the 1932 Treaty of Lausanne gave the oil-rich area of Mosul to Iraq, not Turkey.² By the end of 2002, it was clear that the Turks would not allow coalition forces to operate through their territory and certainly would not approve of any plan that would enable the British to operate near their border. Ground forces, including the British, would have to stage and deploy only from Kuwait.

The overall strategic objective of the coalition was clear: remove the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein. Critical tasks included locating and eliminating stores of weapons of mass destruction, protecting oil infrastructure and reserves and, of course, eliminating armed resistance, including destroying both the conventional threat of the Iraqi armed forces and any unconventional threats. American planners, informed by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's "cut the head off, but the body will remain intact" ideal, envisioned a surgical air campaign against high-value targets. This would be followed by a rapid ground advance to and securing of the capital of Bagdad (seen as the decisive point of the war), in order to force a collapse in the highest levels of the regime.

In order to accomplish these tasks, the 3rd Infantry Division was to race to Bagdad through the deserts west of the Euphrates and provide the "left hook" of the coalition as it passed through the Karbala Gap to the south and west of the capital. The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) would traverse at a slightly slower pace through the heavily populated areas in between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, with trail elements cleaning up any pockets of resistance. It was with these latter units that Brims' 1st Armoured Division was joined, with the initial responsibility of securing the southeastern tip of Iraq, including the port of Umm Qasr, the Al Faw Peninsula, the Rumaila oil fields and, ultimately, the city of Basra.

THE OVERALL CAMPAIGN PLAN, MARCH 20, 2003

Brims led a combined arms force consisting of the 7th Armoured Brigade, the 16th Air Assault Brigade, and the 3rd Royal Marine commandos. He assumed that at the first signs of a ground campaign, the Iraqis would set fire to the oil wells and dump reserve stores of crude into the Persian Gulf as they had done in the Gulf War. So securing the Rumaila oil fields was given



Source: Map from “The Invasion of Iraq,” PBS website. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/cron/popup_map1.html.

the first priority. Brims assigned this task to the 3rd Royal Marines, with the assistance of U.S. and British Special Operations forces. Modeling the overall campaign strategy of rapid movement and clearing pockets of resistance backwards, the 7th Armoured Brigade and the 16th Air Assault Brigade would move directly to the outskirts of Basra, securing only the exterior of the city. Then they would secure the Al Faw Peninsula, support the U.S. Marines in securing the port of Umm Qasr, and eliminate any other residual resistance. At that point, American planners counted on the high-powered and experienced “Desert Rats” of the 7th Armoured Brigade to join the march of the 1st MEF to Baghdad. Only the lighter air assault and commando units would remain if needed to clear and secure the southeastern area of operations.

Regardless of the initial operational tasks, the United States and their British partners did not envision continued British responsibility for civil administration of Basra and the surrounding areas. Rather, the Danish ambassador to Syria, Ole Wohlers Olsen, was seen as the Basra representative for the emerging Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

The plan was based on two key assumptions. The first, which applied to all of Iraq, was that the regional and local civil administration would remain intact and functioning after the removal of Hussein and the destruction of the armed forces. The second, which applied specifically to the heavily Shia Basra, was the expectation of a sequel to the Gulf War’s active and armed resistance of Iraqi citizens against the Ba’athist regime and the Iraqi Army. Although coalition leaders anticipated heavy, albeit chaotic and disorganized conventional resistance as they sprinted to the immediate objectives,

they did so with every confidence that the Iraqi people would take up arms against their Ba'athist overlords and install their own local authorities and institutions. This would allow the ground campaign to Bagdad to proceed without any of the distractions of providing stability, support, transition, and reconstruction along the way.

I thought once ground forces crossed into Iraq, that might be the trigger for a large-scale Shia insurgency.

Lieutenant General David McKiernan³

Brims had evidence to support those assumptions. During the Gulf War, the United States had encouraged and inspired Shia resistance in Basra but had failed to support it. Saddam Hussein had placed Ali Hassan Al-Majid, "Chemical Ali," the individual responsible for the 1988 genocide of Kurdish villagers, the 1996 assassinations of Saddam Hussein's prodigal sons-in-law, and numerous other atrocities, in command of the Basra region, specifically to prevent and eliminate any Shia separatist activity. After the war, Al-Majid sought vengeance on the city and ruthlessly murdered tens of thousands.⁴ This time, Brims intended to support Shia hatred of Al-Majid and the Ba'athist regime. British intelligence operatives were present inside the city and had relationships and contacts with midlevel representatives of the Iraqi Army and within the regional government.

We told them our argument wasn't with them, it was only with the regime. We said . . . "Surrender, and you can then rejoin your army under a new leadership." We even asked some to come and be part of our coalition.

Major General Robin Brims⁵

We'd even gone so far as thinking about the possibility of arming those who were prepared to rebel.

Brigadier General Graham Binns⁶

THE GROUND CAMPAIGN

March 20–21, 2003

Triggered by a surgical airstrike on the suspected location of Saddam Hussein, coalition forces stormed across the Kuwait border. According to plan, the 3rd Royal Marines and their Special Forces partners seized the Rumaila oil fields in rapid and dynamic fashion, preventing any major damage to oil reserves or infrastructure. They were able to transition quickly to their second task, clearing the Al Faw Peninsula. The majority of the 7th Armoured and 16th Air Assault brigades bypassed Umm Qasr and raced the seventy miles to Basra in less than twenty-four hours and blocked the major high-

ways and avenues of approach to Bagdad.⁷ In effect, Major General Robin Brims' forces had sealed off the city from any organized, conventional threat from the Iraqi Army, which had been largely absent from the movement. As with other units, the 51st Iraqi Army Division faced widespread desertion of their conscripted soldiers. Unlike the experience of 1991, however, there were few en masse surrenders. Rather, the soldiers simply donned civilian apparel and returned to their homes to face whatever fate had in store for their family and friends. The conventional threat facing Brims was reduced but not eliminated; remnants still remained in Basra and, with such a large area of operations, his forces were vulnerable to counterattacks from reinforcing elements.

It was just a constant barrage for 16 hours. We were told that they were going to surrender in their droves and it was going to be like the first Gulf War . . . But I never saw any of that.

Sergeant Major Keith Armstrong⁸

They're on the ground. They're firing tracer. We're firing tracer. They would just walk up to tanks with RPG's [rocket-propelled grenades] on their shoulders, trying to get as close as they could . . . when you see the whites in their eyes and they're throwing grenades at you, it's very frightening.

Sergeant Kevin Fletcher⁹

March 22–23, 2003

Despite the initial success of the first twenty-four hours of the ground campaign, and casualty numbers that were much lower than initial estimates, coalition forces experienced several setbacks on days three and four of the war. Iraqis had successfully defeated a U.S. Apache raid by the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment, the 507th Maintenance Company had made a much-publicized wrong turn in Al-Nasiriya, and the much-anticipated Shia revolt did not occur.

Fearing a backlash from “Chemical Ali” and with no confidence of support from coalition forces, the residents of Basra had no stomach for resistance. Al-Majid still possessed a means to control the Basra population and defend the city—the *fedayeen* militia, a threat coalition planners had not considered. Inspired by the Somali fighters that had gained international infamy in early October of 1993, Saddam Hussein's sons had created the *fedayeen* primarily to serve as enforcers for the Ba'ath party. What they lacked in training was made up for in ruthlessness.

It was quite clear . . . that we were now up against something the size and scale of which we had yet to sort of [sic] really work out.

Colonel Mike Riddell-Webster¹⁰

Figure 1. “Saddam’s Enforcers:” the fedayeen militia.



Source: Associated Press/CBS, from Carol Kopp, “Saddam’s Enforcers,” CBS News.com, March 26, 2003. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/03/26/60II/main546259.shtml>.

They came forward very stealthily, using civilian vehicles mounted with RPGs [and] heavy machine guns.

Major Michael Waymouth¹¹

They were willing to fight till the end. They were willing to stay there against all odds.

Sergeant Kevin Fletcher¹²

When the British parked at the gates of Basra, the *fedayeen* became the de facto authority within the city. Any semblance of civil administration had vanished, discussions with British intelligence notwithstanding. Unchecked, their ruthlessness intensified; anyone suspected of unquestioning obedience to the Ba’ath regime was interrogated, tortured, and/or murdered. Kidnappings and hostage-taking, the *fedayeen* equivalent of recruiting, became commonplace.

They were held to account by somebody behind them with a gun, or their families were being detained and would suffer the consequences of their failure to act correctly.

Major General Robin Brims¹³

Brims was also aware of a humanitarian crisis within the city as well. Water services, electricity, etc., for a rebellious Shia population were dilapidated to begin with due to intentional neglect by the Sunni Ba’ath regime and, with the absence of civil servants, were abandoned. Although the 3rd Royal Marines had now secured the port of Umm Qasr, in theory allowing a flow

Figure 2. British Soldiers Distribute Food Near Al Zubayr, March 31, 2003

Source: www.war2003action.com.

of humanitarian aid, no organized body existed within the city to accept and distribute it in any organized fashion.

Conditions inside the city were bad and deteriorating rapidly and, as a result, the British now faced a steady and increasing two-way flow of displaced persons. Basra residents were attempting to flee the city, the *fedayeen*, a lack of food and water, and the inevitable destructive result of the pending urban combat. People from the surrounding region were arriving in droves as well to assist their friends' and relatives' transition from resident to refugee. The British quarantine of the city was intended for organized, uniformed resistance. The *fedayeen*, however, were indistinguishable from other refugees and, in the coming days, more of the irregular warriors from Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere infiltrated Basra to prepare the city for the coming fight.

March 24–25, 2003

In addition to the challenges of March 23rd for the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment and the 507th Maintenance Company, a violent sandstorm caused both the 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st MEF to come to a grinding halt. Despite the optimism of the first forty-eight hours, pundits turned sour on the prospective outcome. In addition, from the perspective of U.S. commanders, the British were bogged down in Basra.

. . . there was pressure on the part of [U.S.] higher command to encourage the British to actually take Basra at an earlier date than they wanted to . . .

Lieutenant General James Conway¹⁴

*** NEWSCLIP ***

**Crisis in Basra as Troops Fail to Create Corridor for Aid:
Nearly 100,000 Children Could be at Risk, Warns UN Agency**

Ewen MacAskill, diplomatic editor, *The Guardian*, Tuesday, March 25, 2003

The U.S. and British governments are facing a worsening humanitarian crisis in besieged Basra, Iraq's second city, where electricity and water supplies have been severely disrupted.

The coalition forces are still encountering pockets of resistance in and around Basra, and have been unable to establish a safe corridor for aid.

Large parts of the city have been without water since Friday.

Unicef [the UN Children's Fund] and the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] said yesterday that the people had resorted to drinking from the river, which is also used for sewage, which could result in disease spreading through a population vulnerable after more than a decade of UN sanctions.

Unicef warned that 100,000 children under the age of five were at risk.

The UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, appealed for urgent measures to restore electricity and water.

"A city of that size cannot afford to go without electricity or water for long," he said.

"Apart from the water aspect, you can imagine what it does for sanitation."

The International Committee of the Red Cross said that Basra's main water treatment plant, Wafa al-Quaid, on the northern edge of the city, had been out of action for want of power since Friday, and although other plants were able to supply about 40% of the usual needs, the quality of the water was poor.

The treatment centre also supplies water to the Zubair hospital.

A Red Cross spokeswoman, Nada Doumani, said: "This is an emergency situation. We need to restore the full supply."

Adequate drinking water is vital for the local population because the day-time temperature in Basra, which has a population of 2m, can soar toward 40C (104F), she said.

An ICRC team worked in Basra at the weekend to restore enough electricity for pumps.

With the main treatment plant out of action, the source of water has been switched from the Tigris to the Shatt-al-Arab, as the river is known below its confluence with the Euphrates.

An ICRC spokesman said the population was more vulnerable to water-based diseases because they have had years of poor food. The spokesman said there was also a risk of cholera.

The ICRC team was working yesterday to try to get some generators running to provide the remaining 60% of the population with power.

Tamara al-Rifai, the ICRC spokesperson in Kuwait, said the ICRC was waiting for guarantees of safe passage from the combatants in order to be able to repair Wafa al-Quaid.

Fighting was continuing yesterday.

US and British forces surround Basra and allow Iraqi civilians to pass in and

out through checkpoints, but they do not yet have control of the city.

Huge supplies of food, clean water, blankets and medical supplies are sitting on Royal Navy and US navy ships in the Gulf.

But the commander of the Royal Marines, Brigadier Jim Dutton, said it would be days rather than hours before humanitarian aid could be unloaded.

The approach to the port has only just been declared safe for Royal Navy mine hunters to travel through. Yesterday minesweepers began checking the approach to the port for 70 mines said to have been planted by Iraqi forces.

Brig Dutton said: "There is a delay in getting aid through Umm Qasr and anything that delays the aid's movement is bad news. The town is now reasonably secure, but my estimation is that it will still be days rather than hours before the first ship can start unloading, because of the mine threat.

"But there are other ways we are looking at to get the aid in."

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Sir Galahad, laden with food and other humanitarian supplies, is waiting to enter the port.

Brig Dutton said he was pleased with progress, but added: "It was inevitable that we would be slightly slower in some areas than we originally expected, and faster in others, which has been the case."

A Unicef spokeswoman said: "There must now be a threat of disease as tens of thousands of people in their homes, hospitals and care institutions attempt to cope and find what water they can from the river and other sources. Unfortunately, the river is also where sewage is dumped."

She added: "Not only are they suffering from high rates of malnutrition, in Basra there is the very real possibility now of child deaths not only from the conflict but from the additional effects of diarrhea and dehydration. We estimate that at least 100,000 under the age of five are at risk."

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Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2003/mar/25/iraq.disaster-response/print>.

*** NEWSCLIP ***

Desert Rats Retreat under Fierce Onslaught: Marines and Paratroopers Could be Called in as British Officers Admit Underestimating Resistance

Martin Bentham near Basra, and Ewen MacAskill, *The Guardian*,
Tuesday, March 25, 2003

British commanders are considering calling in paratroopers and the Royal Marine commandos to assist in the battle for Basra after meeting fiercer than expected resistance.

British officers admitted they had vastly underestimated the extent of resistance and expressed disappointment that so far they had not been enthusiastically welcomed as liberators.

The option of calling in the marines and the paratroopers came after some units of the Desert Rats were forced to withdraw about 10 miles from Basra yesterday.

The US and Britain had hoped that once the city had been surrounded, the defenders would give up. However, fighting has continued - not against regular forces but in sporadic episodes against Iraqi fighters, including some said to be in civilian clothes.

British artillery shells were fired into the city yesterday, while exchanges between British tanks and armoured cars and small groups of Iraqis continued throughout the day.

The Desert Rats were forced to retreat to avoid an ambush by Republican Guards, who were reported to be heading out of Basra in civilian clothes in an attempt to kill or capture British troops.

During the fighting, British tanks shuffled back and forwards, refuelling and then heading back to join the fray. Troops approaching along the main road ran a gauntlet of fire. The soldiers nicknamed a stretch of the road notorious for rocket-propelled grenade ambushes "RPG alley."

One British unit reported coming under fire near a bridge on the outskirts of Basra airport. Troops said two men dressed as civilians opened up with rocket-propelled grenades.

Major Charlie Lambert, second-in-command of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards battle group, said the difficulties British troops were facing were caused by Iraqi renegades out of uniform who were "not playing by the rules."

The reaction of British troops to the unexpectedly severe opposition has been mixed, with some showing little sign of concern and others expressing fear that the war could drag on for months.

Sergeant Mark Smith, 38, a provost sergeant with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, said that he remained determined to remove President Saddam but expected a prolonged struggle.

"It's not the Iraqi army we have to worry about, it's the person with the Kalashnikov in the back garden," he said.

"The Iraqis are smiling assassins. They wave at you as you go past, then shoot you in the back. I thought from the moment we left camp in Germany that this would go on for ages."

Captain Patrick Trueman, also of the dragoon guards, said a lot of thinking had to be done before another attempt to clear Basra was made.

He said: "It was expected that the Iraqi government wouldn't concern itself too much with the fall of Basra because of the perceived hatred of Saddam among the local Shi'ite population.

"We always had the idea that everyone in this area hated Saddam. Clearly, there are a number who don't."

British reporters said some Iraqis tried to lure British infantry into a false sense of security by flying white flags of surrender before opening fire. They were also said to have used women and children as decoys.

As some Desert Rats enjoyed a short respite from battle yesterday, there was time for relaxation.

Troops washed clothes and chatted, while some played music by Simon and Garfunkel and the David Gray song Babylon.

Even at such moments, however, thoughts of the tests ahead were not far

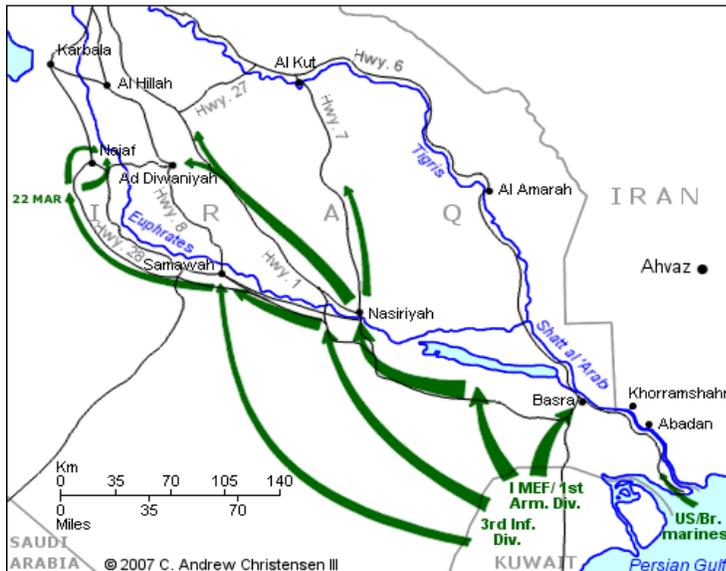
away.

“What we really need is Good Morning Vietnam,” said one officer. “Yes,” agreed another soldier. “That’s what we’ve got here.”

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Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/25/iraq.uk1/print>.

Southern Iraq, March 20–28, 2003



Source: Map accessible at WorldMonitor.info website. <http://www.worldmonitor.info/chron/mar2003.html>.

Facing the immediate challenges in Basra conflicted with the overall Iraqi campaign needs. Although the postwar narrative that contends that the British were more aware of and concerned with support and reconstruction requirements than the Americans in the planning stages may be overstated, the British had to make a decision at that point that would affect Iraq for the next several years.¹⁵ With the fog of war thickening and the heaviest fighting ahead in Baghdad, Americans longed for the capabilities of the 7th Armoured Division. In addition, there was still no assumption that the British would take on the CPA responsibilities in Basra at this point. On the other hand, Brims faced significant military and humanitarian challenges as his units staged on the outskirts of the city, challenges that already stretched his available manpower. Remnants of the 51st Iraqi Division sporadically attacked outposts with T-55 tanks and other antiquated equipment; *fedayeen* attempted raids and constantly harassed patrols, often grabbing children as human shields to prevent the British from returning effective fire. Conditions within the city and the humanitarian crisis worsened. The mobs of displaced persons grew larger.

Figure 3. Displaced Civilians near Basra, March 21, 2003

Source: *Al Jazeera* website. <http://www.aljazeera.info/News%20Photos/2003%20News%20photos/Jan-May%2015/March%202003%20News%20Photos.htm>.

Brims maintained the loose quarantine of the city and began to plan and shape the battlefield. Surgical airstrikes targeted high-value targets—key individuals, Ba’athist headquarters, remaining military command posts and equipment, and *fedayeen* strongholds. Armoured patrols ventured just inside the city, and reconnaissance and sniper teams infiltrated into hide sites.

We will not desert you this time. Trust us and be patient.

British Army loudspeaker announcement¹⁶

It would have been ideal if Basra had surrendered and we had been able to take the city without a fight. But we will probably need to go in and beat any resistance.

Captain Al Lockwood¹⁷

Taking down a city quickly would have been inviting us to attack it very hard, rubble-ize it, to use one expression, but certainly to go in fairly hard. And one of our campaign objectives was to make sure we concentrated on thinking about how we actually rebuilt the infrastructure once the war was over.

Lord Michael Boyce¹⁸

March 29, 2003

“Colonel, Maj. Gen. Brims is on his way. He wants a decision brief in 30 minutes. . . .”

Appendix**ESCALATION OF FORCE OPTIONS:
BEYOND SHOUT, SHOOT, OR RUN AWAY**

... We are very good at fighting and breaking things and teaching other people to do the same. But non-lethal effects are critical to winning the war in Iraq. So, if we are really serious about fighting an insurgency, we have to change our culture and accept the importance and sometimes preeminence, of non-lethal effects.

*Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli*¹⁹

A variety of nonlethal weapons exist in today's arsenal that can provide additional capabilities to warfighters and peacekeepers facing one of the most complex aspects of twenty-first century "hybrid" warfare—the mix of combatants and noncombatants on the battlefield and the difficulty in distinguishing between the two. From twentieth century technologies of rubber bullets and riot control agents (usually referred to as "tear gas"), to the recent acoustic warning systems, optical distracters, and vehicle nets, to the near-science fiction millimeter wave, directed energy technology of the active denial system, nonlethal weapons have the potential to provide additional time and space for military forces to distinguish between combatant and noncombatant. Such weapons also allow military forces to make better decisions and to complete their missions while minimizing the strategic impact of tactical errors, e.g., the number and scale of noncombatant deaths and damage to civilian property due to unfortunate but unavoidable mistakes and accidents, and the subsequent impact on domestic and international opinion. For good or ill, military success, in the postmodern world of 24/7 sensationalist news coverage, has been defined to a large extent as an absence of news to report.

Nonlethal technologies can support two key tenets of twenty-first century warfare in particular: 1) proportionality in the use of force; and 2) legitimacy of a military presence and, by extension, the host nation/supported government. In theory, nonlethal weapons, used appropriately in specific situations, can support those reoccurring themes. However, the historical record is mixed. U.S. forces employed nonlethal weapons successfully in Somalia in 1995 and Kosovo in 2000. Experience in Northern Ireland and Israel-Palestine may suggest that the improper and punitive use of rubber bullets and tear gas bred additional dissent, served as a rallying cry for "insurgents," and decreased the perceived legitimacy of military and law enforcement operations.

Operations in Northern Ireland provided the British military with more experience than any other force in the world in employing rubber bullets and tear gas. Despite (or because of) that experience, and although President Bush had authorized the use of tear gas in theatre,²⁰ the British elected not to deploy nonlethal weapons to Iraq. Facing the crowds of displaced

persons, rioters, and looters, British forces' options were limited to shouting, shooting, or running away.

ENDNOTES

1. Maj. Gen. Robin Brims (commander, 1st Armoured Division) in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS, Richard Sanders and Jeff Goldberg, February 26, 2004. Transcript at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/etc/script.html>.
2. Williamson Murray and Robert Scales, *The Iraq War: a Military History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 135.
3. Lieutenant General David McKiernan, in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
4. Murray and Scales, *The Iraq War*, p. 146, and "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
5. Brims, in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
6. Brig. Gen. Graham Binns (commander, 7th Armoured Brigade), in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
7. An accessible map that depicts operations in southern Iraq can be viewed at <http://www.worldmonitor.info/chron/mar2003.html>.
8. Sgt. Major Keith Armstrong (7th Armoured Brigade), in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
9. Sgt. Kevin Fetcher (7th Armoured Brigade), in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
10. Col. Mike Riddell-Webster (7th Armoured Brigade), in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
11. Major Michael Waymouth (7th Armoured Brigade), in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
12. Fletcher, in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
13. Brims, in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
14. Lt. Gen. James Conway, supplemental interview for "The Invasion of Iraq" website. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/interviews/conway.html#basra>.
15. See, for example, Jonathan Steele, *Defeat; Why America and Britain Lost Iraq* (London: Counterpoint, 2008), pp. 159–192.
16. Quoted in Martin Bentham, "British Snipers, Baath Stoolies Chip at Basra," *Daily Telegraph* (UK), April 4, 2003.
17. Cpt. Al Lockwood (British Army spokesman), quoted in "Basra now military target, says UK," CNN.com/World, March 25, 2003. <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/03/25/sprj.irq.basra/index.html>.
18. Lord Michael Boyce (UK chief of Defense staff, 2001–2003) in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.
19. Peter Chiarelli, interview in *Field Artillery* magazine, September–October, 2005.
20. Although both the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Chemical Warfare Convention of 1993, the United States did so with the caveat that the United States "is not restricted by the [Chemical Warfare Convention] in its use of [tear gas] in various peacetime and peacekeeping operations." See the President's Certification Document to the Chemical Warfare Convention, April 27, 1997 and the earlier Executive Order 11850 (1975).

Basra: Strategic Dilemmas and Force Options

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PURPOSE

The events in Basra in the spring of 2003 provide an example of an intersection of major issues: differences in national interest, differences in opinion regarding strategy and tactics, and competing priorities and resources. All of these appeared in the context of a “hybrid” conflict, that is, elements of conventional and unconventional warfare, humanitarian assistance, control of displaced persons, and security operations with multiple state and nonstate actors, all occurring simultaneously in the same geographic area. In that regard, the situation in Basra in late March and early April 2003 presented a worst-case scenario for military commanders and civilian leadership. As a worst-case scenario, this case represents a challenging test-bed, a venue for students to discuss the dilemmas and issues facing the key actors and to develop a plan—including aspects of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare—with the benefit of hindsight, to bring the situation to an acceptable conclusion quickly and efficiently.

The purpose of the case study *is not* to discuss the legitimacy of the Iraq War, the British involvement therein, or the decisions, largely American, in the early planning stages (e.g., appropriate troop levels and the “rolling start”) of the war. As tempting as it will be for some students to engage in those discussions, the instructor should avoid those arguments and focus on the problems facing the British at Basra. The instructor should discuss U.S. and UK national interests and coalition strategic objectives in an earlier class and, more importantly, should emphasize to students that they are role-playing military leaders in this case study. They have been given a job to do and must objectively identify and address the critical issues with the resources available.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1. Clips from the *Frontline* documentary, “The Invasion of Iraq,” (PBS, Richard Sanders and Jeff Goldberg, February 26, 2004) regarding the British experience in Basra are particularly suitable to begin the

class. The video and supporting website, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/invasion/cron/>, include interviews with civilian and military leaders, soldiers, Iraqi residents, military commanders, and *fedayeen*, maps, a timeline of events, and analyses.

2. Background maps are also useful; some are provided within the case and annotated in the footnotes. The book by Williamson Murray and Robert Scaler, *The Iraq War; a Military History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), includes more detailed maps in the inserts after pages 88 and 152.
3. The initial questions, as with all case studies, should provide the students an opportunity to frame the case, (e.g., What is the case about? Who are the major actors? What are their interests? What are their challenges/problems? Specific to this case, opening questions might include:
 - What are the British operational objectives?
 - What were the key planning assumptions?
 - What is the priority/what are the essential tasks?
 - According to the plan, what is the British sustained involvement to be in postwar Iraq?
4. Ideally, the students will focus on the issues facing Major General Robin Brims and his 1st Armoured Division. As discussed above, the purpose of this case study is to provide a venue for the students to develop a plan to solve the array of challenges, i.e., what are the issues, and how do you address them? The events suggest that Brims faced two key decision points that allow the instructor to focus and/or segment the discussion:
 - 4a. The primary decision point occurred on or about March 24 and 25, 2003. The 1st Armoured Division had accomplished its initial objectives, had arrived at Basra, and had paused to survey and assess the situation. At that point, Brims and his subordinate commanders, as the opening quote alluded to, began to realize the enormity of the challenges in Basra. Yet, they were urged to release the 7th Armoured Brigade to join the efforts in the march to Bagdad. The two-week pause between March 24 and April 6 illuminated the strategic, operational, and tactical differences in opinion on how to proceed between the Americans and the British. Events during that period caused some to realize the fault of key planning assumptions, i.e., a mass Shia uprising and the stability of the local civilian administration. Questions include:

- Should Brims release the 7th Armoured Brigade?
- What are the major challenges/problems?
- In what order do you prioritize them?
- How do you solve/address those challenges?

Some of the “shaping of the battlefield” tasks that Brims executed, such as surgical air and artillery strikes, reconnaissance and intelligence operations, and information and psychological operations (loudspeakers and leaflets), that may not be obvious to the civilian student are provided. A learning objective of this case is that in “hybrid” warfare, *how* the expeditionary force accomplishes its mission is as important as or more important than *what* it does. For example, if the students identify the need to screen the displaced civilians for *fedayeen* and/or deserting Iraqi soldiers, how will they determine if a person is a threat or not? What resources do you allocate to accomplish that task? At the expense of what other requirements?

4b. This case may also be used to highlight the challenges in the transition from major combat operations to stability and reconstruction operations (in the context of “hybrid” warfare). In Basra, that point occurred on April 7, 2003. The British seized the *fedayeen* stronghold in the College of Literature and effectively ended large-scale resistance within the city and surrounding regions. Some sections of the city showed evidence of urban combat, but the vast majority of the homes remained unscathed. Widespread looting, a lack of services (e.g., water, electricity) and other civil disorder disproved the assumption that local authority would remain intact. The British recognized the transition and reconstruction needs but were not resourced nor mandated to fill them. Questions include:

- What are the major challenges/problems? In what priority?
- What resources are available?
- How do you solve the challenges/problems?

Again, for recommended solutions to each identified challenge or problem, it is important that the students specifically address *how* the solution will be accomplished and estimate the second- and third-order effects of each. For example, if students identify the need to create a city/regional police force, who will they hire and train? How will they screen applicants? Who will train them? How will they be resourced? If they recommend reinstating the Hussein-era local authorities, how will the residents react? If they recommend creating

a new force based on a quota system, how will they integrate the members in a nonsectarian manner in a society rooted in sectarian and tribal division?

If the instructor wishes to emphasize this aspect of Basra operations, the section “Epilogue; the Siege of Basra and Aftermath” should be included in the student read-ahead.

5. While students in political science and international relations likely will focus on the dilemmas facing the British at the political and strategic level, students in a military history and professional military education venue likely will focus on the operational and tactical tasks. A more focused class also could discuss specifically the variety of lethal and nonlethal force options available to deal with the tactical problems. Many technologies are available to separate combatants from noncombatants and to control crowds, for example, in order to provide additional space and time for soldiers to make better decisions and mitigate collateral damage and other unintended consequences. The case study, “The British and the Iraqis in Basra in 2003,” in David Koplow, *Non-Lethal Weapons; the Law and Policy of Revolutionary Technologies for the Military and Law Enforcement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) is better suited for a discussion on the use of specific nonlethal weapons in this scenario. The insert, “Escalation of Force Options; Shout, Shoot, or Run Away,” is intended as a point of departure for both a general discussion of nonlethal weapons within the framework of the overall Basra strategic dilemmas or the decision to employ these weapons in Basra or not. Possible discussion questions include:
 - Strategic implications: Will nonlethal weapons help or hinder the mission? Will they add to or detract from the perceived legitimacy of the operation? How will they affect international opinion?
 - International treaties: The United States and the United Kingdom interpret the Chemical Warfare Convention differently (the United States authorizes the use of tear gas in specific situations). In coalition warfare, how do you resolve those differences?
 - Capabilities: If you were a British soldier, what nonlethal capabilities would you want to have?
 - Personnel/training: As a commander, into whose hands do you entrust nonlethal weapons?
 - Legal/ethical: As a commander, what rules of engagement criteria or other instructions regarding lethal and nonlethal capabilities do you give your soldiers?

- Strategic communications and information operations: What information about your nonlethal weapons do you provide to the citizens of Basra?
 - Logistics: You cannot bring everything. What capabilities do you leave behind in order to allow space for nonlethal weapons, their ammunition, and their associated equipment?
6. This case may also be presented as a planning scenario. Professional military education students will be experts in military planning processes and techniques, but undergraduate and graduate students could benefit from this teaching method as well. While it would be cumbersome for those students to become familiar with Field Manual 5.0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*, and Joint Publication 5.0, *Joint Operation Planning*, a review of applicable publications such as the Mass Atrocity Response Operations Project's *Military Planning Guide* may be useful for civilian students to augment a simple problem-solving outline (define the problem, list assumptions, identify resources, explore options).
7. The takeaway of this scenario is to highlight the complexity and difficulties of military and political operations in a "hybrid" environment. It is not to debate the legitimacy of the Iraq War overall, dwell on planning failures, nor critique the British conduct, although some of those points, if focused, can further demonstrate the challenges of hybrid conflict. Rather, the case study challenges students to face the daunting task of identifying, prioritizing, and addressing issues in the most challenging of environments. As a worst-case scenario, the lesson of this class is that there are no right answers, only a series of choices, of which the long-lasting effects are unknown.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

1. For a discussion of "hybrid" warfare, see, for example, Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52 (1st Qtr. 2009): 34-39. http://www.potomac institute.org/media/mediaclips/2009/Hoffman_JFQ_109.pdf, Charles Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal; Leadership in a Three Block War," *Marines* (January 1999), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm.
2. For a history of Basra in the modern era, focusing on the issue of popular uprising and revolt, see Reidar Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State; Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq* (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2005).

3. Williamson Murray and Robert Scaler, *The Iraq War; a Military History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 129-153, "The British War in the South."
4. For a discussion of possible nonlethal force options specific to the Basra situation, see David Koplow, *Non-Lethal Weapons; the Law and Policy of Revolutionary Technologies for the Military and Law Enforcement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 113-128, "The British and the Iraqis in Basra in 2003." For a summary of current nonlethal technologies, see National Research Council, *An Assessment of Non-Lethal Weapons Science and Technologies* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003).
5. For planning references, see *Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO) Military Planning Guide* (Cambridge, MA: Kennedy School, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, and the Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute, 2010), available at http://www.pksoi.org/document_repository/Handbook%20or%20Guide/MARO%20Planning%20Handbook_Indexed-CDR-379.pdf.
6. For a first-hand account of the events and challenges in Basra after the end of major combat operations, see Hilary Synnott, *Bad Days in Basra; My Turbulent Time as Britain's Man in Southern Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

EPILOGUE: THE SIEGE OF BASRA AND AFTERMATH

Over the next two weeks, Brims' approach proved successful; Basra residents provided intelligence to British patrols on the location of *fedayeen*, Ba'athists, and their caches. Brims retained command of the 7th Armoured Brigade and prepared them to enter the city. On April 5, Brims launched surgical air strikes on a Ba'ath meeting and on the suspected location of "Chemical Ali." Many Ba'ath leaders were killed. Al-Majid survived but was believed to have been killed. The rumor was as successful as the intended result and, on April 6, Brims thought the city ready for a British entrance.

Brims launched the 7th Armoured Brigade and air support on a daytime raid deep into the city, planning on pulling them out prior to nightfall, when their vehicles would be more vulnerable to RPG ambush. However, any remaining Ba'ath control of the city collapsed, and Brims decided to destroy any further resistance immediately. Major fighting occurred at a factory complex and at the College of Literature, which the *fedayeen* occupied as a headquarters and barracks. While the fighting was described as a picture of violent, street-to-street and house-to-house combat, the British suffered only three deaths and, by the morning of April 7, resistance had effectively ended. The people of Basra rejoiced.

The coalition planning assumption that the Iraqi people would greet coalition forces as liberators proved to be correct in Basra, at least for a time. The Shia population certainly demonstrated their joy at having the yoke of Ba'ath oppression thrown off. However, they soon reacted to years of frustration by destroying and looting government buildings and other locations associated with the Hussein regime and the Ba'ath party. The British seemingly understood and approved the actions and watched, at the time still focused on rousting residual *fedayeen*. However, in scenes repeated all over Iraq as cities and towns were cleaned of Ba'ath leadership, looters expanded their spread from government offices to homes, sometimes abandoned, sometimes not. In the absence of any police force and adequate civilian administration, the looting escalated to other criminal activity as well. The practice of hostage-taking continued; however, the perpetrators were not merely *fedayeen* but members of rival clans, tribes, and other factions.

The humanitarian crisis did not abate, either. More aid arrived through Umm Qasr, welcomed by disorganized mobs. Meanwhile, the water supply, the electric grid, and other services remained in shambles. The two-way traffic of displaced persons continued. The residents of Basra needed leadership and assistance in reconstruction efforts, a mission that the British were ill-prepared and ill-equipped to accomplish.

. . . We got advice about managing a humanitarian crisis, but that wasn't what was required. We needed professional engineers to rebuild things. We needed water engineers. We needed bank managers.

Brigadier General Graham Binns¹

Olsen, the CPA's senior civilian in southern Iraq, left Basra only weeks after the British toppled the Ba'ath regime. He was replaced by Sir Hilary Synnott, an appointment that formalized British control over the city and region. Since then, the British efforts in counterinsurgency, stability, security, transition, and reconstruction have experienced significant and dramatic ups and downs. Those efforts, after the spring of 2003, as part of the overall coalition experience in Iraq, have been the subject of much debate and scrutiny and are outside the scope of this case. The purpose of this case is to explore the options available to the British in the early stages of the Basra operation. However, it is interesting to ask the question: If the British had pursued other options in late March and early April in Basra, would the experience of the subsequent years have worked out differently?

1. Binns, in "The Invasion of Iraq," *Frontline*, PBS.

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