

PW/03

COS

3 Feb 03

PW HANDLING ORGANISATION

As you are aware, although QDG has been tasked with pulling this piece together, it is at present unsuited and under resourced to undertake this operation efficiently. I make this point not because the task cannot be done, for it can be. But in the wider audience, the way we treat and look after our PW will have an impact on the operation as a whole and how we are perceived in the longer term by the global audience and the Iraqi population.

In addition, no matter the willingness of my BG staff, there will inevitably be a tension between the PW responsibilities and those to the Regiment, notwithstanding their initial fragmentation, which will need some form of direction and support. Finally, should the GOC wish to reconstitute the FR Regiment for operations subsequent to G Day, full extrication of the HQ from the PW organisation may be awkward.

We live in a real world and cognisance of the difficulties of force generation in the UK (FRESCO, etc) must be factored. Nonetheless I also detect an element of GRANBY experience colouring decisions concerning the FET rather than the application of doctrinal templates from JWP 1-10. You will recall a large PW organisation was deployed consisting of Bde HQ, 3 x Type B Bns, RE Fd Tp, MPS supervisors and so forth. It was designed for a daily capacity of 2,500 PW per day with an outflow of 500 per day into the US PW chain. In practice only just over 5000 PW were handled. I think therefore, risk is being taken with this element of our operations judged against past experience and resource constraints. Furthermore, having now completed my initial analysis of the issue, I believe the UK is taking undue risk in this area for the following reasons:

- The UK's legal obligation to provide a dedicated and appropriately trained PW handling organisation.
- The scale of the problem. 1 MEF's desire is to be unencumbered by PW from Phase 1 so to retain combat forces for the drive to Baghdad. This may include the guarding of the Corps PW holding area whilst the US Theatre Internment Facility is built and is likely to last to G+100. Our LO with 1 MAR Div states that units are being issued with vehicle PW packs to coral PWs which are then to be handed onto us, the relieving forces. If this proves to be correct, UK forces may inherit:
 - 13,700 PW within the 1 (UK) Armd Div AO (2,500 from 3 Cdo Bde operation on Al Fawa Peninsular and remainder from 1 MEF initial ops).
 - A daily flow from 1 MEF operations to the north of our AO feeding into the Corps PW holding facility (to be guarded, not administered which will remain a US responsibility).

- 5 Corps PW flow during initial operations. This issue was raised at a recent ROC drill as an aspiration, so as to retain combat power for subsequent ops.

SOLUTION FOR THOUGHT

The gold plated solution is to replicate the Granby organisation. But, I am not convinced we have the resources available or that we can get them here in the requisite time scale.

At the least we need to ensure QDG BG HQ gets here in time or we will have to take a Bn out of the line to act as the coordinating HQ. At present QDG BG HQ is on Tranche 5. In addition, BG Main needs augmentation with a movements cell, Engr resources, G1 (PWRU with AP3 connectivity), Med cell, MPS, legal advisor, EHT and a comms det, probably based on an HF guard net, to give a Corps wide PW coord facility to move, sustain and gather PW. Given this level of augmentation, I believe I can also provide the GOC with a cut down BG HQ (based on step up) to fight the Regiment should more than 1 FR Sqn be required for operations. Finally, the following resources should be noted:

- The planning figure for troops to PW is one coy per 500 PW. If the UK administers only to those likely to be taken by 3 Cdo Bde (@2500), 1 Lt Bn is required. If the remit increases to cover the MEF Corps Phase 1, the bill sits at 6 Bns. Clearly, a degree of risk can be taken given the anticipated compliant nature of Iraqi PW and by stretching time so that PW might spend more time in unit holding areas, thus being able to use fewer resources more often. Nonetheless, the scale of the problem is clear.
- Transport will have to be found. In Op GRANBY, the PWGF collected PW from unit holding areas and took them to Bde areas, thence to Div, relieving unit tpt of the burden. Again the scale of the problem is impressive. On current projections for instance, to outload 3 Cdo Bde PW to the Div holding area (Al Faw to Umm Qsar), 40 TCVs will take 4 days.

CONCLUSION

I regret being the bearer of bad news. But I think it important to raise the issue before we are held up as the bad men for not looking after our PW. We have international, legal and moral obligations to get this right. And whilst we may wish defeated Iraqis to go home or declare a cease fire to obviate the need to resource the problem, I do not think we should base our plans on hope. I think we must address the issue of the HQ staff now, and identify a minimum of one new unit capable of carrying out these tasks. We should also be prepared to use up to another 2 - 3 from within the Division if the US leave us holding the baby.

S009

Lt Col
CO QDG