

53a-e

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Pl. ask Mr. Fray what action
can be taken to speed up
decision-making in view of
- ensure earlier decisions.

Prime Minister

MO 6/17/15/1

PRIME MINISTER

TIMING OF MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ

Our military now says that
they will not be ready for
offensive ground operations until
end-January, & do not believe the
Americans will be better. If the air

I have seen the note of your meeting with the President on
21st December and the discussion of the timing of military action.

campaign takes 7-10 days, that may not

2. The overall judgement of the best timing for military action
is predominantly for the United States. They are providing the
vast majority of the forces; and are best placed to balance the
conflicting factors. My own advisers are surprised that the US
military authorities had advised that they would be ready
by 15th January. From information reaching us through US contacts
in Riyadh we would have expected them to offer a date nearer the
end of the month, though not as late as mid-February. On 30th
December, General Powell confirmed to the Acting CDS (General Vincent) that
US land forces would not be fully ready for offensive operations
by 15th January, but if necessary could continue their final
preparations during the extended air campaign expected to precede
a land offensive.

matter.
But we
cannot
be
responsible
for delay.

3. You should be aware of the position of our own forces. Because
our naval and air forces deployed earlier they will be ready for
an offensive by 15th January; so too will 7th Armoured Brigade.
The plan for the rest of 1 Armoured Division was that they should
"begin to arrive in early January and its elements would become
progressively operational with the division as a whole fully
operational by the end of January" (C(90)1 - para 6). Most of the
move has gone to schedule. All personnel will be in the Gulf by
5th January. Of 64 ships taken up from trade, 16 have already
arrived, and 42 are due by 12th January. Some cargoes have left
later than hoped; these are mainly further key supplies of ammunition
which we had to borrow from NATO Allies whose Governments were
painfully slow to agree to our requests.

you may
have
to guarantee
before 15 January
to have
From
Division
ready
by
26
January
CDN
41



4. Although the bulk of stocks will be available to 1 Armoured Division by 15th January, they will be short in some important areas:

- On average about 50% of the ammunition stocks needed for sustained operations;
- About 35% of field operating theatres and hospital beds will be available;
- Only about one half of fighting vehicles modified with the special side-armour needed for offensive operations.
- A new type of tank ammunition (JERICO - designed to be less likely to explode if a tank is hit) will not be available in adequate numbers for issue to units.

The later part of January is also scheduled for acclimatisation and training for 4 Brigade and 1 Division as a whole.

5. I am advised that the Division will be capable of defensive operations only by 15th January. As illustrated at Annex A, the position will improve quite quickly, with a capability for offensive operations achieved by the end of the month. There are military grounds for delaying operations until then. The US case for earlier readiness assumes there will be a period, while the air campaign is underway, in which land forces can continue working up. This depends on the form that an Iraqi response might take and whether it inhibits logistic supply (eg ships in transit or unloading) or final training. I believe that the military preference would be to wait until the end of the month (given that the US are if anything behind us in their preparations). There are, however, political pressures



too on the US. If the President remains inclined to an early offensive - and his military advisers support him in that view - it cannot be for us to seek to delay the whole campaign. If, however, our contacts with the US suggest they are thinking of a later date we should not, I suggest, seek to dissuade them.

6. I will provide an updated assessment of the readiness position of 1 Armoured Division for your return from Saudi Arabia but you will wish to discuss it with General de la Billiere too. Meanwhile I am taking what steps I can to accelerate availability of key items.

7. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign Secretary and Sir Robin Butler. It should not be shown to anyone else.

Ministry of Defence
31st December 1990

(T K)
(Approved by the Defence
Secretary and signed in
his absence).

ANNEX A TO
LAND OPS 6H
DATED 28 DEC 90

1 (BR) ARMD DIV - OP READINESS MATRIX

	15 JAN 91	22 JAN 91	29 JAN 91	5 FEB 91
1 ARMD DIV PERS IN THEATRE - 25,506!	100%	100%	100%	100%
CR UPARMOURING	52%	66%	66%	100%
WR UPARMOURING	33%	52%	52%	100% (by 8 Feb)
3RD LINE MEDICS AVAILABLE	BEDS 35% FST 35%	BEDS 46% FST 51%	BEDS 83% FST 100%	BEDS 100% FST 100%
WATER % OF DAILY NEEDS	55%	75%	88%	100%
AMMO STOCKS IN THEATRE				
155mm SHELL	50%	50%	100%	100%
155mm SMOKE	35%	35%	35%	100%
155mm ILLUMINATING	58%	58%	58%	100%
8in HE	52%	52%	100%	100%
MLRS	35%	35%	100%	100%
TOW	53%	53%	100%	100%
81mm HE	67%	95%	98%	100%
120mm JERICHO 1 (L14)	33%	35%	47%	47%
120mm JERICHO 2 (L26)	14%	26%	47%	47%
INLOADING OF FFMA	66%	75%	100%	100%
TRAINING				
DIVISION	STUDY DAYS ONLY	NO CHANGE	DIV FTX UNDERWAY	COMPLETE
4 ARMD BDE	UNIT TRG ONLY	BDE FTX	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
7 ARMD BDE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE

LEGEND:

- CR - Challenger Main Battle Tank
- WR - Warrior Combat Vehicle
- HE - High Explosive
- FFMA - Force Forward Maintenance Area (ie combat supplies for fighting units).
- FST - Field Surgical Teams
- TOW - Helicopter Anti-Tank Missile
- FTX - Field Tactical Exercise

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ARTILLERY	UNIT ONLY	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
COMBAT ENGINEERS	UNIT ONLY	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
SUSTAINABILITY IN DAYS AT 60KM A DAY				
CR	15	20	20	22
WR	12	17	17	17
OTHER VEHICLES	23	28	30	30