

The War in Iraq

ADF OPERATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN 2003

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The Middle East



Foreword

It was one year ago that the first Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel were pre-deployed to the Middle East in support of international efforts to disarm Iraq. Since then, more than 2000 ADF personnel have been involved in the operations that led to the removal of the threat to international security posed by weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles in the hands of a rogue state, the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime and the promise of a better future for the Iraqi people.

This report is drawn from a classified review of Australia's contribution to US-led coalition operations in Iraq. It follows the progress of the war – focussing on the part played by the ADF – and identifies some of the key lessons learned during three operations:

- **Operation Bastille** (pre-deployment of forces to the Middle East, acclimatisation and in-theatre training);
- **Operation Falconer** (combat operations to disarm Iraq); and
- **Operation Catalyst** (stabilisation and recovery operations).

While the number of Australian personnel involved in operations was small in proportion to the overall coalition force, our highly-trained and well-equipped forces contributed significantly to the success of the mission. And we are continuing to provide much needed support as the nation rebuilds.

The ADF personnel involved in operations in the Middle East performed their roles with dedication, effectiveness and compassion. Their success on the ground was due in no small part to the ongoing efforts and preparation of military planners and the civilians who support them.

It is a credit to the ADF that it was able to make such a contribution while undertaking numerous other deployments, including Operation Citadel (UN Peace Keeping in East Timor), Operation Relix (protecting Australia's northern borders) and Operation Slipper (war against terrorism).

Whilst the stabilisation and recovery process in Iraq continues, the lessons we have learned during the war, like the lessons we have learned in other operations, will help to enhance our capabilities, protect our servicemen and women and develop our forces for future operations.

Senator the Hon Robert Hill
 Minister for Defence

Introduction

Iraq's refusal to comply with United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions to give up its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and prohibited long-range missile programs, its record of supporting terrorism and its use of WMD against Iran drove the international community to action.

The Government's strategic review, released in February 2003, noted the strategic consequences of WMD proliferation and warned that 'The prospect that Saddam Hussein might threaten to use WMD against his enemies in the region or supply WMD to terrorists reinforces the international community's efforts to ensure Iraq is disarmed.'¹

Australia's support for the United States (US)-led coalition was both an acknowledgment of the need to deal effectively with an issue that threatened global security and an expression of our support for the US alliance.

During the brief period of major combat operations, Australia's forces operated over a wide area as part of a Coalition with US and United Kingdom (UK) forces. Our contingent of approximately 2000 personnel from the Navy, Army, and Air Force performed their roles with distinction and made significant contributions to the success of the operation.



SAS patrolling in Iraqi Western Desert



Australian National Commander, Brigadier McNarn, with RAAF personnel

Background to Australia's Commitment

The ADF contribution to Operations Bastille and Falconer was provided in the context of Australia's commitment to enforce long-standing UN sanctions against Iraq, as well as supporting Operation Slipper - the ADF contribution to the International Coalition against Terrorism.²

The UN Security Council imposed a mandatory requirement on Iraq, as a key ceasefire condition of the 1991 Gulf War set out in UN Resolution 687, that it fully and completely abandon its WMD programs. Between 1991-1998, Iraq played a more or less continuous cat-and-mouse game with UN agencies responsible for ensuring compliance with the Security Council's WMD disarmament requirements, before refusing in late 1998 to allow further access by international inspectors. In the process, Iraq defied numerous Security Council resolutions adopted in response to its intransigence that re-affirmed the obligation to fully and verifiably abandon its WMD activities. ADF personnel, together with Defence and other Australian civilians, made a major contribution to these UN efforts on the ground in Iraq during the 1990s.

During this period, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) regularly provided an Australian

warship presence as part of the Multinational Interception Force. The ADF had also deployed forces to Kuwait in 1998 as part of international efforts to persuade Iraq to co-operate with UN Security Council resolutions to disarm itself WMD and long-range missiles.

After the September 11 Al Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US, the ADF deployed an Australian National Commander to Kuwait in October 2001 as part of Operation Slipper. The National Commander oversaw Australia's contribution to Operation Slipper and the ongoing UN sanctions regime against Iraq.

Australia contributed forces to Operation Slipper, including:

- a Special Forces Task Group;
- two B707 Air-to-Air Refuelling aircraft for operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan;
- four F/A-18 Hornets based in Diego Garcia; and
- two AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft in the Persian Gulf.

On 18 June 2002, the Minister for Defence said the Government would consider supporting further US-led coalitions. He said that 'the need to act swiftly and firmly before threats become attacks is perhaps the clearest lesson of 11 September, and is one that is clearly driving

US policy and strategy'.³ When Al Qaeda's safe haven in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan had been destroyed, international focus shifted to Iraq's refusal to allow verification of its claims that it had dismantled its WMD and long-range missile programs.

Planning and Preparation for Deployment

Development of Military Options. As it had done since 1991, the Government continued to pursue peaceful means to persuade Iraq to abide by relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Nevertheless, in response to clear signs of US resolve to deal with the challenge posed by Iraq, the Government also directed Defence planners in mid-2002 to initiate contingency military planning in case diplomatic efforts failed. This was on the basis that if such action proved necessary it would be fully consistent with Australia's strategic aims to contribute to global security and to counter the proliferation of WMD. The Government's priority, however, was on efforts to achieve a peaceful diplomatic solution to the crisis. The Government communicated its commitment to pursuing all practicable peaceful means to US defence planners in preliminary operational planning in July 2002, and when they invited Australian participation with US

planners in Tampa, Florida in August 2002. In Australian-US military-to-military discussions, information was shared but there was no military commitment sought from either party. At the time, the US clearly indicated that there was no plan for operations against Iraq on the President's desk.⁴ However, perhaps influenced by Australia's successful and professional contribution to Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, US staff consistently indicated they would welcome an Australian contribution including intelligence support, air and sea transport, warships, combat aircraft, air-to-air refueling or special forces. During Operation Slipper, it had become clear that familiarity gained through personnel exchange programs with the US and UK, and regular joint training and exercises had helped ensure that Australia's forces deployed on operations could achieve high standards of operational readiness very quickly.



Minister for Defence meeting Defence Headquarters Operations Staff



Staff at the Australian National HQ Middle East Area of Operations

By August 2002, our joint operations planning staff had developed a good understanding of contingency plans being developed by the US for use if a peaceful solution could not be achieved. They began developing appropriate options for the Government to consider should Australia decide to join US military action against Iraq.

Inter-Departmental Co-ordination.

The Government’s response to the growing crisis had implications far beyond Defence. Inter-departmental mechanisms were critical to ensuring a ‘whole-of-government’ approach to diplomatic efforts to disarm Iraq. The Deputy Secretary Strategic Policy, Shane Carmody, and the Vice-Chief of the Defence Force, Vice-Admiral Russ Shalders, were given prime responsibility for inter-departmental coordination through the Strategic Policy Coordination Group. This Group included representatives from the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Foreign and Affairs

and Trade. It met fortnightly during the second half of 2002. In early 2003, responsibility for Iraq policy matters was transferred to a new body – the Iraq Coordination Group (ICG). The ICG was chaired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and included representatives from a range of Commonwealth departments and agencies (including the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Attorney-General’s, Treasury, and Finance and Administration, and the Office of National Assessments). In addition, an Iraq Task Force, comprising representatives of all relevant government departments and managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, met frequently from September 2002, including throughout the war and subsequently, to exchange information and coordinate whole-of-government policy advice. These inter-departmental links and related task groups from other departments ensured the coordination of Defence planning and broader Government policy.

Lesson Learned

Inter-Personal Networks. Liaison officers placed in US headquarters contributed significantly to the success of the planning process. Many had trained or served on exchange postings in the United States. Their effectiveness demonstrated the importance of personal relationships for developing and maintaining the levels of trust and inter-operability necessary for effective coalition operations. Defence will review personnel exchange postings to ensure they provide the best opportunities to support relationships with our partners and allies.

Rapid Equipment Acquisition. Meanwhile, Defence planners were continually developing and refining force contribution options. For example, the planning process identified a potential requirement for additional desert specific operation equipment. The Joint Logistics Commander and his staff acquired this equipment with great speed so the force could be fully equipped if the Government decided to commit to combat operations.

Efforts to Achieve a Diplomatic Solution. In mid-September, the Minister for Defence warned that the threshold for the tolerance of security risks had changed since 11 September 2001, and that the US would not tolerate indefinitely the threat represented by Iraq. Nevertheless, he emphasised a preference for non-military resolution of the growing crisis.⁵ In late 2002, diplomatic efforts intensified to pressure Iraq to comply with UN Security Council resolutions and permit UN inspectors to return. Without the pressure exerted by the Coalition military build-up in the Gulf in late 2002, it is unlikely that Iraq would have permitted UN weapons inspectors to return. On 8 November, UN Security Council Resolution 1441 was passed unanimously. It afforded Iraq a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under previous resolutions, and established an enhanced weapons inspection regime under the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On 20 November 2002 Prime Minister Howard stressed that the international community, including Australia, could not walk away from the

challenge posed by Iraq. Indicating Australia's strong support for Resolution 1441, he stressed the choice was now Iraq's either to cooperate fully with weapons inspectors and remove its WMD capabilities or face the consequences if it did not meet its international obligations.⁶

At this time, Prime Minister Howard noted that the ADF had 'made appropriate contingency arrangements' if it was necessary to contribute to a new theatre such as Iraq.⁷ These included moving the Australian National Headquarters Middle East Area of Operations in November 2002 to co-locate with the US Central Command Deployable Headquarters.

In early December 2002 the Government directed the ADF to commence work-up training for military action in the event that Iraq failed to comply with the weapons inspection regime established under Resolution 1441. By January 2003, Iraq was still not cooperating fully. Consequently, on 10 January 2003 the Government announced that it would deploy ADF elements to support diplomatic pressure on Iraq to disarm and to prepare for possible operations should they become necessary.

This meant ADF elements from Australia could join those already involved in Operation Slipper in the Middle East and begin Operation Bastille (the preparation and pre-deployment of forces to the Middle East). Officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, both in Canberra and at overseas missions, provided strong support for Defence in the negotiation of basing and access rights in the Middle East to enable the deployments.

Lessons Learned

Whole of Government Response: Inter-departmental information sharing and cooperation is critical to support a coordinated whole-of-government response.

Defence will continue to emphasise inter-departmental coordination when responding to future security challenges.

Rapid Equipment Acquisition: All operations differ in some way and the requirement for additional specialist equipment is often identified in the planning stages of an operation.

Defence is developing a rapid acquisition policy based on successful procedures used in these operations. The policy addresses stewardship, through-life-support, and financial management.

Operation Bastille



Pre-deployed Forces. Pre-deployment from Australia to acclimatise personnel and conduct in-theatre training with other Coalition partners began on 23 January 2003 with the departure of HMAS Kanimbla from Sydney. Other elements travelled by air. Each unit departure was marked with ceremonies charged with the emotions aroused by possible involvement in war. The Defence Community Organisation ensured that our people and their families were supported during this period and the difficult months ahead. By 25 February, about 2000 ADF personnel were in the Middle East assigned to Operations Slipper and Bastille. RAN frigates HMAS Anzac and HMAS Darwin, and the Royal Australian Air Force's AP-3C maritime patrol aircraft continued with duties similar to those they had been undertaking as part of the Multinational Interception Force and Operation Slipper until hostilities began.

Additional forces deployed for Operation Bastille included:

- HMAS Kanimbla with Army Air Defence and landing craft detachments;
- a Navy Clearance Diving Team;
- a Special Forces Task Group;
- an F/A-18 Hornet fighter detachment; and
- a C-130 Hercules transport aircraft detachment.

These forces filled gaps which the Coalition planners identified in the planning stages of the operation.

Command Arrangements. During Operation Bastille, Australia retained control of our forces at all times, while still working effectively within the Coalition (as has also been the case throughout Operations Falconer and Catalyst). Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), General Cosgrove, retained full command of all Australian Forces. To ensure effective overall strategic direction of our efforts in Iraq, he received briefings and advice on an almost daily basis from Defence's Strategic Command Group (SCG).

This group comprised:

- Secretary of Defence (Mr Ric Smith);
- Vice-Chief of the Defence Force (Vice-Admiral Russ Shalders);
- Chief of Navy (Vice-Admiral Chris Ritchie);
- Chief of Army (Lieutenant General Peter Leahy);
- Chief of Air Force (Air Marshal Angus Houston);
- Deputy Secretary Strategic Policy (Mr Shane Carmody);
- Deputy Secretary Intelligence and Security (Mr Ron Bonighton);
- Commander Australian Theatre (Rear Admiral Mark Bonser) (*via video link*);
- Director Defence Intelligence Organisation (Mr Frank Lewincamp);
- Commander Joint Logistics (Major General Peter Haddad) (*via video link*);
- First Assistant Secretary Strategic and International Policy Division (Ms Myra Rowling);
- Head Strategic Operations Division (Major General Ken Gillespie); and
- Director General Military Public Affairs (Brigadier Mike Hannan).

A sub-set of this group (CDF, the Defence Secretary and the Director Defence Intelligence Organisation) then went to Parliament House to provide up to date briefings to the National Security Committee of Cabinet.

The SCG met daily during Operations Bastille and Falconer. Video links were exploited to enable real-time communication with the Commander Australian Theatre in Sydney and, on occasions,



ADF personnel departing for the Middle East with emotional farewells

into the National Command Headquarters in the Middle East Area of Operations.

Commander Australian National Headquarters - Middle East Area of Operations, Brigadier McNarn, exercised national command of ADF forces deployed under Operations Bastille and Operation Slipper. Commander Australian Theatre maintained theatre command of forces assigned to operations in the Middle East.

Lessons Learned

Command Procedures: Improvements in communications technology assisted effective high-level command arrangements throughout the operation.

Defence will continue to pursue appropriate technology to maintain and improve its co-ordination of operations.

Communications: Although communications were successful between Australia and the Middle East, and within the area of operations, they were sometimes hampered by insufficient bandwidth.

The ADF will review communication bandwidth to ensure adequate provision for operational growth.



5th Aviation Regiment Chinook helicopter arriving in the Middle East on US transport

To operate successfully in coalition, the Australian forces in the Middle East Area of Operations needed to operate under the operational control of Coalition component commanders. This arrangement let Coalition commanders assign specific tasks to ADF forces while they remained under their Australian commanding officers at unit level.

Although ADF force elements worked toward the overall Coalition combat plan, there were processes in place to ensure that Australian forces were always employed in accordance with Australian Government policies.

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and special forces officers were placed in the Coalition Air Operations Centre to ensure that targets

assigned to ADF units were appropriate and lawful. Australian Commanders had ADF legal officers to advise them on the laws of armed conflict during the process of allocating targets. Australia received targets on the US-developed strike lists but assessed them according to Australia's own legal obligations. Several target categories were subject to Australian Ministerial approval before they could be engaged. Australian pilots could, and on occasion did, abort missions to avoid the risk of unintended casualties if their target could not be clearly identified from the air. These arrangements, complemented by the training and professionalism of our personnel, worked very smoothly.

Lesson Learned

Operational Health Risk Counter-Measures: All deployed personnel were required to accept a range of health risk counter-measures. This included inoculation against Anthrax, which at that time was considered likely to be used as a biological weapon by Iraq. Procedural factors led to inoculations becoming a contentious issue during deployment.

This issue highlighted competition between individuals' concerns over their personal risks and the collective risk to teams posed by some individuals not having the full range of counter measures.

Defence has revised procedures to ensure personnel are fully informed of any potential health risks inoculations could pose, operational requirements for inoculations and health risk counter-measures.

Lesson Learned

Interoperability: The benefits of continuing high levels of inter-operability with our friends and allies, especially the US, is a major factor in successful coalition operations.

Defence will continue to develop international relationships and its ability to operate with allies and partners. A specific area for development includes information-sharing on Command and Control and Information systems. Development of personal networks will be promoted through exchange and liaison officer programs to facilitate intelligence sharing and to allow speedy resolution of coalition operation issues. Operational deployment of Australian officers already on exchange with overseas forces presented some legal and administrative challenges which are also being addressed.

Australian command and support arrangements were complex because deployed forces needed ongoing technical, logistic and personnel support from Australian-based ADF elements. These elements matched their work routines with those in the Middle East time zone, ensuring command and support arrangements were established and refined during the two months of pre-deployment. Consequently, Australian forces were fully operationally ready before hostilities began.

Failure to Achieve a Peaceful Solution. While the Coalition force built up in the Middle East, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission returned to Iraq on 27 November 2002 and resumed inspections. The

Commission's head, Dr Hans Blix, delivered progress reports on 27 January, 14 February and 7 March 2003. When delivering the 27 January report, Dr Blix indicated that 'Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance - not even today - of the disarmament that was demanded of it and that it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace'.⁸

In the last report, he acknowledged signs of Iraqi cooperation but also found that these initiatives, coming 3-4 months after Resolution 1441, 'cannot be said to constitute 'immediate' co-operation. Nor do they necessarily cover all areas of relevance ...[to] ...solving presently unresolved disarmament issues'.⁹



Chinook detachment conducting final training on Operation Bastille prior to the commencement of hostilities

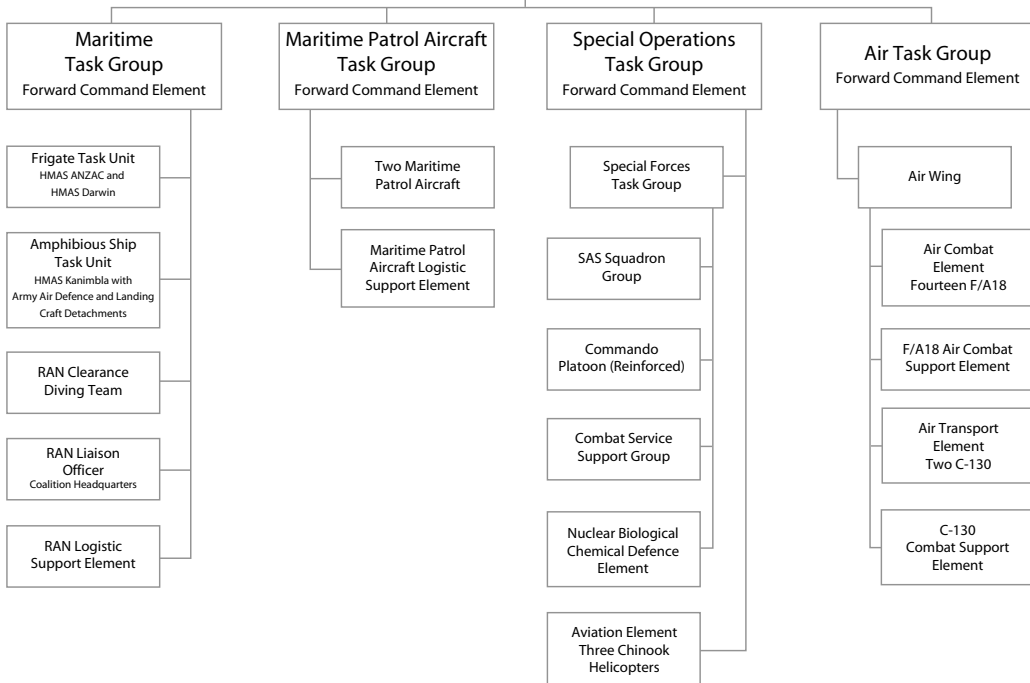
After Blix's last report on 7 March, the US tried to obtain support in the UN Security Council for a resolution to enforce the previous resolutions calling on Iraq to disarm and to permit UN inspectors to verify the destruction of its WMD. After it became clear that the draft resolution, co-sponsored by the US, UK and Spain, would be vetoed, the US sought support from a broad 'Coalition of the Willing' among nations no longer prepared to wait for Saddam Hussein to comply with demands from the international community that Iraq disarm.

The 'Coalition of the Willing' included countries prepared to provide active military support (such as providing troops or permitting the use of operational bases). Others provided diplomatic support for Coalition action. The US President conferred with Coalition members before delivering an ultimatum on 18 March 2003

(17 March US Eastern Standard Time) warning that the Coalition would take military action unless Saddam and his sons, who headed the regime's security and military agencies, relinquished power and left the country within 48 hours.¹⁰

On 18 March, the Prime Minister advised Parliament that the Government had authorised the ADF to take part in operations by the international coalition of military forces.¹¹ On the same day, Saddam Hussein rejected the ultimatum to relinquish power and leave Iraq.¹² Parliament noted that 'United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, in particular Resolutions 678, 687 and 1441, provide clear authority for the use of force against Iraq for the purposes of disarming Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and restoring international peace and security to the region.'¹³

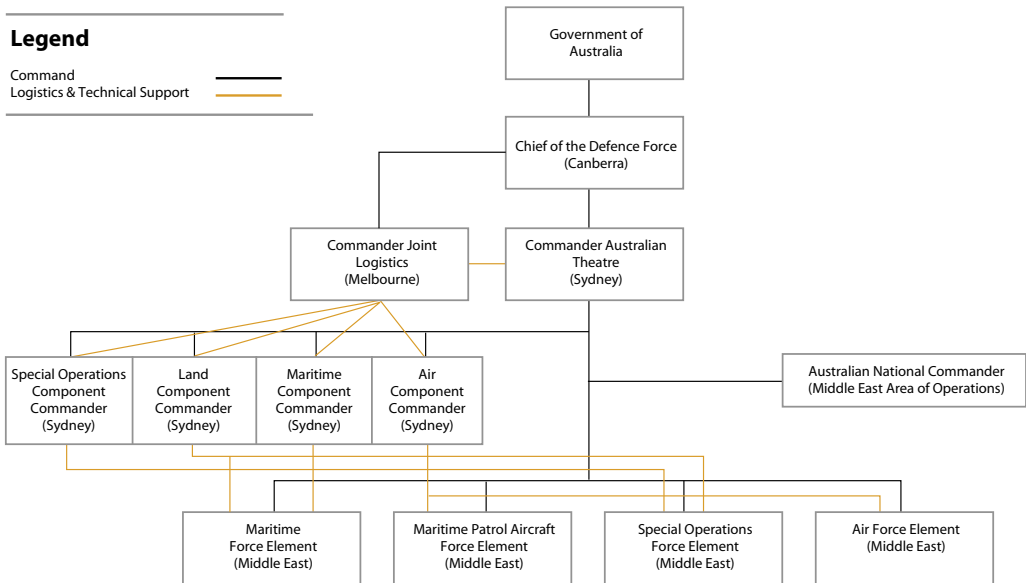
Australian National Headquarters Middle East Area of Operations



Operation Falconer

Legend

Command ———
Logistics & Technical Support ———



Command and support arrangements for Operation Falconer

On 18 March 2003, after Government announced its decision to commit ADF elements to the international coalition of military forces, the ADF began Operation Falconer.

Our forces commenced operations with Coalition naval, air and special force components with whom they had trained over the past two months. While Australian forces operated within these separate components throughout the conflict, they retained their distinctiveness as Australian elements. They were well supported by ADF logistic troops and our Coalition partners in the area of operations, and from Australia. Our deployed forces were also sustained by the activities of the wider Defence organisation and strong support from their families.

As in previous operations, some ADF officers found themselves on exchange postings to US and UK units that were committed to the conflict. By agreement with the Australian Government, these ADF members participated in hostilities as fully integrated members of their host units.

On 20 March there were 30 exchange personnel employed in such positions, including:

- logistic support personnel from each service;
- RAN personnel on US and UK warships and naval aircraft;
- RAAF aircrew in US and UK Squadrons;
- a special forces officer on exchange with the UK; and
- Army personnel in US and UK units.

At the commencement of the war, our special forces took part in operations in the Western Desert to constrain Iraq's freedom of action. The Naval component expanded its operations in the North Persian Gulf and our units in the Air component took part in strike and support operations. These ADF units operated simultaneously in widely dispersed areas across Iraq and the North Persian Gulf.

Maritime Operations in the North Persian Gulf and Khawr abd Allah



Since 1991, the RAN has participated periodically in the Multinational Interception Force to enforce several United Nations Security Council Resolutions imposed against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait. The role of the Force in that period was to monitor, query and board merchant vessels in the North Persian Gulf suspected of violating the conditions of the UN resolutions. The RAN continued this role during Operation Bastille, but also began to prepare for possible Coalition operations in Iraq, focussing around the North Persian Gulf and the Khawr abd Allah.



Australian AP-3C Orion crews provided effective and direct support to Coalition operations



Australian Navy and Army small boats working together in the North Persian Gulf

The North Persian Gulf and the Khawr abd Allah are strategically important in an otherwise land-locked country like Iraq. The Khawr abd Allah is a narrow and shallow stretch of water leading to Iraq's only deep-water port, Umm Qasr. The main aim for Australian maritime activity in Operation Falconer was to seize and clear approaches to Umm Qasr and capture Iraq's offshore oil platforms. The capture of this port would help the shipment of military equipment by reducing the burden placed on Kuwait's port. The continued operation of Umm Qasr was vital for Coalition humanitarian aid shipments and critical for post-conflict reconstruction.

The Coalition needed to continue enforcing sanctions and protecting the sea-lanes by searching and clearing the large number of vessels trying to leave the waterway. Shallow water restricts the types of vessels that can operate in the area. Consequently, Australian and British surface combat vessels, supported by smaller vessels from across the Coalition, were used for these tasks rather than larger US warships. The first part of this operation was to provide Coalition commanders with an accurate surveillance picture of the surface activity in the area. Australia operated two RAAF AP-3C Orions in the Central Persian Gulf night and day. They had a range of sensors to detect and identify

vessels in Iraqi waters and around the Persian Gulf. Of greatest interest were ships that threatened Coalition and civilian shipping, including mine-laying vessels and small boats that could be rigged with explosives for suicide attacks.

Australian boarding parties operated around the clock in the 48 hours leading up to the beginning of hostilities. They had to clear over 100 Iraqi merchant vessels that raced to exit the Khawr abd Allah when rumours circulated in Iraq that the war had started. Boarding activities continued throughout Operation Falconer, but with the commencement of ground action on the Al Faw peninsula and the oil fields of Rumailah and Az Zubayr, the focus shifted toward supporting land forces and clearing the approaches and ports.

Two major ADF maritime actions occurred on 20 March 2003. An RAN warship provided naval gunfire support for the first time since the Vietnam War when HMAS Anzac, sailing close to the Iraqi coast in very shallow waters, used its main gun to provide fire support to UK Royal Marine forces on the Al Faw peninsula. The Royal Marines were attacking an Iraqi coastal defence site when observers in helicopters and on the ground called for naval gunfire support.



HMAS Anzac firing in support of the Royal Marine Commandos on the Al Faw peninsula

Lesson Learned

Naval Gunfire Support: The effectiveness and utility of naval gunfire support was confirmed. It provided accurate and timely support to land forces.

Naval gunfire support remains an important and valuable capability, and must remain part of Navy's operational training and doctrine.

HMAS Anzac provided very accurate fire to support the Marines during the attack. In one of the engagements, HMAS Anzac's first rounds landed so close to Iraqi positions that the Iraqi soldiers immediately surrendered. HMAS Anzac was called on for seven naval gunfire support missions over the next three days.

Also on 20 March, boarding parties from HMAS Kanimbla searched a barge and three tugs and seized 86 sea mines. Iraqi forces used modified oil drums to cover the mines on the vessels to conceal them from Coalition surveillance. The thorough search by the Australian boarding party uncovered this dangerous cargo. If these mines had been deployed, they could have dealt heavy damage to Coalition vessels and merchant ships, and delayed Coalition operations and humanitarian aid delivery.

The Australian Army's LCM8 landing craft contributed to all operations conducted by the task force in the Khawr abd Allah waterway. They transported Coalition ground combat equipment, supported boarding parties and patrols conducted by rigid hulled inflatable boats, transported enemy prisoners of war and provided logistics support to other units.

Surveillance by Australia's AP-3C Orions supported the Coalition fleet in the Persian Gulf

throughout Operation Falconer. Their regular patrols to identify and observe contributed to the overall objective of achieving and maintaining sea control. The superior intelligence produced by the AP-3C Orion's sensors, crews and analysis teams ensured that vessels posing a threat to Coalition vessels were observed or challenged well away from the fleet so operations were not interrupted. Coalition air power dealt with the remnants of the Iraqi Navy quickly. Over the coming weeks, Coalition surface vessels, including HMAS Anzac, HMAS Darwin and HMAS Kanimbla continued to monitor Iraqi internal waters and escort military and civilian vessels.

When security permitted, the Coalition began mine clearance operations in the Khawr abd Allah. These operations included use of Coalition helicopters, mine countermeasure ships and clearance diving teams. The Royal Navy utilised RAN minesweeping equipment during operations, and the Australian Clearance Diving Team 3 provided specialist skills in mine and obstacle location and neutralisation. This Team moved swiftly to the port of Umm Qasr assisted by the Army's LCM8 landing craft and an RAN Sea King helicopter. The Army landing craft provided work platform facilities and logistics support for

Lessons Learned

Intelligence and Surveillance: Intelligence and surveillance information is essential to networked combat operations in modern warfare.

Investments and advances in the integration and networking of intelligence, surveillance and operational information must be actively promoted within the Defence Organisation.

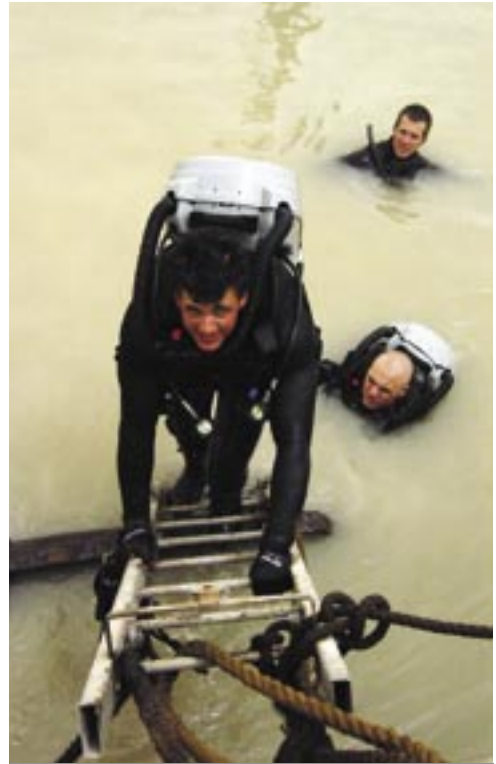
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles: Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were force multipliers through all phases of combat operations.

The Defence Organisation intends to move quickly to develop and integrate UAV capabilities into ADF doctrine, planning and operations.

the difficult job of opening the port to shipping. Clearing this port allowed rapid reinforcement and logistic supply to land forces in Southern Iraq and delivery of essential humanitarian aid.

The Australian Clearance Diving Team 3's task was hampered by the environmental conditions in the port and its waters. Visibility was almost zero and there were many obstacles on the sea floor and around the berths. This meant that using technical detection devices such as sonar was almost impossible. Our clearance divers often had to rely on touch to locate and identify obstacles, sometimes helped by mine-detecting dolphin teams from the US Navy. One particularly difficult clearance involved a sunken Iraqi navy patrol boat carrying mines. The boat was a dangerous obstacle to Coalition shipping, and the Team worked with other Coalition clearance divers to make the vessel safe before raising it from the seabed.

As the port was cleared, the Australian Clearance Diving Team 3 undertook other tasks, including the destruction of explosives stockpiled in a nearby school and support of Iraqi contractors distributing food and water in the local market. The Team eventually moved further north to support US Navy Sea Air Land (SEAL) teams in the final clearance of the Khawr az Zubayr waterway that leads to the port at Basrah.



Royal Australian Navy Clearance Divers working to clear Iraq's ports



HMAS Kanimbla's boarding party conducting operations in the North Persian Gulf

Special Forces Operations in Western Iraq



In the 1990-91 Gulf War, Iraq fired several missiles with conventional explosive warheads into Israel. The threat that Iraq might use similar missiles, but armed with chemical or biological weapons, had been identified as a key strategic risk in the Coalition's battle plans. Although Israel did not respond to the attacks in 1991, some considered that a WMD attack on Israel during this war might prompt Israeli retaliation, and widen the conflict. To reduce this risk, the Coalition planned to insert special forces into all areas of Iraq from where a missile attack against Israel could be launched.

The Australian Special Forces Task Group which took part in operations in the Western Desert to prevent Iraq's use of its ballistic missiles was built around a Special Air Service (SAS) Squadron. It was supported by a reinforced Commando Platoon as a Quick Reaction Force and a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence troop from the Incident Response Regiment. It also had a Forward Command element from Headquarters Special Operations and personnel from the Logistics Support Force and the RAAF. Support came from the C-130s from 36 Squadron and a detachment of three CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 5th Aviation Regiment.

The Australian Special Operations Forward Command element was established in the Middle East to command Australian special forces operations. The Forward Command was co-located with the United States Special Operations Command element. Working relationships developed during Operations Slipper and Bastille meant their actions during Operation Falconer were always closely coordinated with the US and UK special forces operating nearby in the Western Desert.

Our Special Forces Task Group mission was to conduct operations in designated areas in western Iraq as part of the coalition effort to defeat the WMD threat. During February and early March, the Task Group conducted 'Full Mission Profile Exercises' by day and night. They rehearsed all the contingencies they could foresee for operations inside Iraq. The exercises also involved UK and US close air support. This intensive period of realistic training acclimatised the soldiers and honed their skills. This proved to be essential to the eventual success of the operation.

Lesson Learned

Training: Superior training and skilful use of modern weapons was an essential component in the ADF's successful engagement of Iraqi forces.

Defence will continue to invest in best-practice training, and in equipping soldiers with the weapons and resources required for success.

The training period also enabled the Commandos, helicopter assets, medical support and the Incident Response Regiment detachment to rehearse for their Quick Reaction Force role. In this role, they remained on alert to react to an emergency such as a downed or lost aircrew, recovery of wounded personnel, or to provide additional fire power to assist threatened SAS patrols. The Task Group was fully prepared for its role by mid-March and remained poised for a decision to commit to operations.

The Australian Government on 18 March authorised the ADF to take part in Coalition operations. Subsequently the SAS entered Iraq by air and land.

Entry by vehicle involved breaching an earth mound and trench system to negotiate a way through the network of Iraqi border guard posts. They crossed the border successfully without contact, but 30 kilometres inside Iraq the force met numerous enemy vehicles. This engagement was one of the first ground contacts of the war. Iraqi soldiers engaged the Australians but were

overcome by the Australian patrol's fire power. When they surrendered, they were disarmed and SAS medics treated the wounded Iraqi soldiers before releasing them. This did not compromise the mission and the vehicle patrols arrived at their planned locations by first light.

A similar special forces entry by air was also successful. The SAS flew in US helicopters through an extensive enemy air defence system at very low altitude. The US forces demonstrated professionalism and skill, flying by night in poor weather, with air-to-air refueling en-route, to deliver Australian SAS patrols over 600 kilometres from their staging bases. The Australian SAS patrols were the closest Coalition ground elements to Baghdad for several days. Their difficult task involved observing key roads and military facilities while remaining undetected. With great skill and stealth they remained deep in enemy territory, undetected by the nomadic Bedouin or enemy patrols around them. They later played a significant part in neutralising enemy resistance.



SAS pass the wreckage of Iraqi Aircraft



Special Forces Task Group members clear the Al Asad Airbase

Meanwhile, mobile patrols began a high rate of offensive patrolling in a planned sequence of operations. They maintained surveillance on main roads the enemy could have used to deploy Scud Missiles or conventional forces. For the first week of the war, the enemy was actively seeking out the Australian force. The SAS met the Iraqi forces head-on with fire power and tenacity that shocked the enemy.

The effectiveness of the Australian SAS was emphasised through its capture of a well-defended Iraqi radio relay station on the second night. Despite being significantly outnumbered, the SAS exploited ground and air surveillance, cut off exits to the station and conducted a night assault to clear the facility. They then called for close air support to destroy the radio tower.

Destruction of this facility reduced the Iraqis' ability to control their forces and sent a very strong message to the Iraqi leadership in Baghdad about the effectiveness of Coalition forces and their proximity to the capital.

For the rest of the week, SAS patrols came into heavy contact with the enemy almost every day. On the morning of the third day, a larger Iraqi force engaged an SAS patrol in a running fire fight for several hours. Despite their smaller numbers, the SAS used rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, automatic grenade launchers and sniper rifles in an aggressive response. This heavy fire power was supported by Coalition close air support to break the spirit of the enemy assault.

Lesson Learned

Networking and Connectivity: Networked military operations contributed to Coalition success with shared information, intelligence and situational knowledge identified as crucial success factors.

Defence will continue developing its Network Centric Warfare capacity through training, doctrine, equipment acquisition and capability enhancements.



The Special Forces Task Group captured over 50 Iraqi fighter aircraft at the Al Asad Airbase

In another engagement, a patrol was assaulted by about 50 Iraqi troops with rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and machine guns mounted in trucks. The SAS held their ground and their fire power forced the enemy out of their vehicles. One trooper used all available weapon systems mounted on his long-range patrol vehicle, engaging the enemy at different ranges. When the Iraqis set up a mortar to bomb the patrol's position, he used a sniper rifle while exposed to enemy fire to shoot and destroy the mortar tube. The SAS counter-attacked and routed the shocked enemy. For his cool professionalism in the face of a superior force and his significant contribution to the patrol's success, the trooper was later awarded the Medal for Gallantry.

The more static patrols identified 'kilometre 160' - an important crossroads and Iraqi facility that was defended by 200 enemy personnel. Using high-powered optics to pinpoint targets, the SAS called in air support. Over a 48-hour period, they destroyed the facility. Several SAS patrols then assaulted and cleared the installation. The remaining enemy had withdrawn under cover of a sandstorm, but the SAS had identified targets that were indistinguishable from the air and confirmed that the defences had been abandoned. By the end of the first week of the

war, enemy opposition within the Australian area of operations was effectively neutralised and the Iraqis ceased all coordinated counter-special forces operations.

It was also clear that the enemy's ability to launch ballistic missiles from the west had been neutralised and the strategic aim of containing the conflict had been achieved. This enabled the SAS to become more involved in denying former regime leaders escape routes and preventing foreign supporters of the former regime from moving in to Baghdad. These operations led to the capture of a significant number of Fedayeen and Ba'ath Party members as they tried to flee the country.

At the end of March, Australia agreed to a Coalition request to expand our special forces' area of operations. The new area of operations included the Al Asad Airbase, 200 km west of Baghdad, one of Iraq's largest air bases. The whole SAS Squadron concentrated to capture it on 11 April. They were joined by the Commandos and the Incident Response Regiment Element. Over the next 36 hours, they helped clear the massive base of a large number of armed looters while RAAF F/A-18 fighter jets provided overhead cover. When the base was secure, the significance

Lesson Learned

Role of Armour: While Australia did not deploy armour, Coalition forces used armour extensively for force protection, shock action and fire power.

Defence is reviewing the application and role of armour in Army's combined arms team.

of the operation became clear. More than 50 MiG jets and 7.9 million kilograms of explosive were captured. The task group then further demonstrated its flexibility by clearing and repairing the runways using captured Iraqi

military equipment and equipment borrowed from locals. This let fixed wing aircraft fly into Al Asad. The first to arrive was an Australian C-130 from 36 Squadron.



5th Aviation Regiment Chinook providing support to operations.

The Special Forces Task Group played a significant role in rapidly achieving strategic objectives in Western Iraq using the SAS Squadron's highly successful reconnaissance and raids. Throughout the operation, three Australian CH-47 Chinooks transported vital stores and personnel. The Commando Platoon and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence Troop helped with Sensitive Site Exploitation and Explosive Ordnance Disposal tasks at the Al Asad airbase. The Task

Group consolidated on the Al Asad airbase as the regime collapsed and major combat operations ceased. On ANZAC day, the Task Group marked the occasion at Al Asad airbase with a fly-past of two Australian F/A-18s involved in a nearby operation. Some of the Task Group then prepared to move into Baghdad to re-establish the Australian mission while the majority prepared to return to Australia.

Air operations in Southern Iraq and support for the advance to Baghdad



Focal area of RAAF air combat operations

The major ADF contribution to Coalition operations in southern Iraq was provided by 14 F/A-18 Hornets from 75 Squadron RAAF. Their initial role was to protect high-value Coalition aircraft such as air-to-air refuellers and intelligence collection aircraft. Such aircraft are important 'force multipliers' and their loss would have had a significant impact. Their protection remained a priority throughout the operation, but the evolving air situation rapidly led to other tasks that took full advantage of the versatility of the Hornet.

RAAF Hornets can carry bombs while performing an air-to-air defence role with missiles. This meant RAAF fighters could accept new tasks while airborne and engage time-critical targets such as the regime leadership, missiles or enemy forces.¹⁴ While other Coalition members used both precision guided munitions and unguided bombs, RAAF Hornets only used precision guided weapons - either the 500 pound Guided Bomb Unit 12 (GBU-12) or 2000 pound GBU-10.

The multi-role capabilities of the RAAF's F/A-18 Hornets were demonstrated on 20 March 2003 as a Hornet involved in escorting high-value aircraft

Lessons Learned

Precision Guided Munitions: Precision guided munitions (PGMs) were used extensively in Iraq. The RAAF only used PGMs, as these provided improved accuracy and reduced the chance of collateral damage. PGMs were sourced through the US logistics system.

The ADF will continue to focus on the use of PGMs in modern combat operations, including our ability to integrate key munitions with allied logistics systems.

Air-to-Air Refuelling: Air-to-air refuelling was a critical success factor for Coalition air operations in Iraq. Defence will seek to progress Australia's replacement air-to-air refuelling capability as quickly as possible.



Australian F/A-18 refuelling from a US tanker while on a mission over Iraq

was asked to strike a ground target. Air planning staff determined the priority of the task and analysed the potential for collateral damage. After confirming that the proposed strike was consistent with the Laws of Armed Conflict and the Rules of Engagement, the deployed Australian Air Component Commander approved the attack. Minutes later, the first bomb dropped by an RAAF aircraft in conflict since the Vietnam War was released. The whole process took less

than 30 minutes. An initial bomb damage assessment was provided to Australian headquarters just 10 minutes after the target had been engaged. RAAF Hornets were re-tasked in a similar manner on a number of occasions.

As it became clear that the Iraqi air force was unlikely to threaten the Coalition's high-value aircraft, the rate of defensive missions began to slow.

Lesson Learned

Targeting Procedures: Defence modified procedures for approving target planning and attacks at the beginning of Operation Bastille, making full use of improved communications technology.

The speed and effectiveness of the new procedures were demonstrated during operations, and Defence will continue to employ these procedures.

On 23 March 2003, RAAF Hornets conducted their first deliberately planned strike mission.¹⁵ An Australian fighter pilot, flying his first operational strike mission, led a group of Coalition aircraft to attack a Republican Guard facility near Al Kut. Included in the attack formation were RAAF, US and UK strike and electronic warfare aircraft. Together, they attacked Republican Guard targets.

75 Squadron conducted four of these planned strikes against a variety of military targets including Iraqi Intelligence Service facilities. As the number of fixed targets reduced, the focus of the Coalition air campaign shifted to supporting ground forces. RAAF Hornets began conducting regular close air support and air interdiction sorties against tactical Iraqi forces. They supported the US Army V Corps, the US Marines and UK Division operating as part of the 1st (US) Marine Expeditionary Force. In this period, RAAF Hornets attacked numerous Iraqi military force targets including tanks, artillery, ammunition

storage facilities, missile launchers and anti-aircraft systems.

At times, F/A-18 fighter jets supported search and rescue efforts by providing reconnaissance of an area, and being ready to launch weapons in support of friendly ground personnel.

RAAF C-130 Hercules also supported operations in Southern Iraq. Their first mission in Iraq was to airlift ground re-fuelling trucks into the Tallil airfield near An Nasariyah on 30 March. This captured airfield was being used as a forward operating base for Coalition air power and logistic support. The re-fuelling trucks were essential to make it operational.

On 13 April 2003, RAAF C-130s flew their first mission into the newly re-named Baghdad International Airport as part of Operation Baghdad Assist.

As decisive military operations began to wind down, the F/A-18s continued to provide on-call support for ground forces but were being called



Support crews preparing Hornets for missions over Iraq

on less and less to deliver weapons. More often, they were asked by ground forces to provide 'shows of force'. This consisted of fighter aircraft operating low and fast over an area to make their presence known to enemy formations or civilian mobs causing difficulty. The psychological impact of this action was such that the enemy

often stopped firing on the Coalition ground forces and surrendered. By the end of their time in the Middle East, Australian F/A-18s had flown approximately 1800 hours on more than 670 sorties, including more than 350 combat sorties over Iraq.

Logistics and Administration

Effective logistics support underpinned the overall success of the ADF's contribution through all stages of the Iraq War. ADF elements were transported by RAAF C-130 Hercules aircraft, the Landing Platform Amphibious vessel HMAS Kanimbla, as well as chartered commercial heavy-lift aircraft.

Logistic support in the Middle East was a significant task. It involved supporting a complex mix of ADF units with vastly differing needs, spread over a wide area. The RAAF C-130 Hercules detachment performed the bulk of the movement of Australian personnel and equipment in the Middle East Area of Operations. The first Hercules arrived in the area of operations on 10 February 2003. Their first mission was

flown on 22 February 2003. When hostilities began on 19 March, the RAAF's Hercules had carried more than one million pounds of cargo and 500 passengers. They had carried two million pounds by 10 April, and over 4 million pounds of cargo and 2500 passengers by 27 May 2003. They provided a significant contribution to the Coalition's air lift capability as they represented only 3 percent of the total Hercules fleet but lifted 16 percent of the Coalition's total Hercules cargo in the Middle East Area of Operations. They also provided medical assistance with the first fixed wing aero-medical evacuation of wounded Coalition members from Baghdad International Airport on 14 April 2003.



RAAF personnel in Australia package stores en route to the Middle East

Lesson Learned

Logistic Information Management: The success of the logistics system was achieved through careful oversight and intensive management.

Defence will continue to integrate logistics management information to ensure that logistic support for future deployments is well coordinated and managed more efficiently.



Air transport supported the logistic effort of sustaining the force deployed into the Middle East

Australian combat forces were provided with essential support by the range of ADF logistic forces, including:

- a Navy Logistic Support Element, initially established to support Multinational Interception Force operations;
- elements of the Army Logistic Support Force; and
- the RAAF Combat Support Group.

Together they provided equipment supply and maintenance, security, engineering, health

support, aero-medical evacuation, administration and airfield emergency response and recovery for all deployed Australian forces. This broad range of tasks was performed by a relatively small number of personnel working tirelessly to ensure that our forces had the means to make a significant contribution to the Coalition.

The need for logistic support did not end with hostilities. The ADF continues to support its forces remaining in the Middle East Area of Operations which are assisting with reconstruction and rehabilitation operations.



Support staff keeping up morale by distributing Easter mail from home



Australian Medical Staff supervising the handling of supplies during Operation Baghdad Assist

Operation Baghdad Assist

The skill and professionalism of ADF logistic staff were clearly demonstrated when the ADF was asked to provide urgently needed humanitarian relief shortly after the liberation of Baghdad, as part of Operation Baghdad Assist. During this operation, the ADF supported Coalition efforts to provide medical stores and equipment for Iraqi medical personnel to meet the growing humanitarian needs in Baghdad. On 13 April, 6.8 tonnes of medical stores from HMAS Kanimbla were delivered to Baghdad by C-130. The same

day, two C-130s carrying medical equipment and stores left RAAF Base Richmond, in NSW. These aircraft arrived in the Middle East on 16 April and the medical supplies were moved rapidly into Iraq for distribution. Operation Baghdad Assist highlighted the flexibility of our forces as they could quickly re-focus on activities that supported the rehabilitation of Iraq when the regime collapsed and major combat operations ended.



Australian Medical Staff receive medical supplies at Baghdad International Airport during Operation Baghdad Assist



The Minister for Defence and Chief of the Defence Force visiting troops in the Middle East at the conclusion of major hostilities

Redeployment and Force Rotation

On 17 April 2003, the Defence Minister Robert Hill, announced that most ADF personnel deployed on Operation Falconer would return to Australia in May. With major combat operations drawing to a close, the Government decided to scale back its military contribution by bringing home HMAS Anzac, HMAS Darwin, the F/A-18 Squadron, the SAS Squadron (including some of their Combat Service Support Group) and the Clearance Diving Team. HMAS Kanimbla with a Sea King helicopter detachment, Army landing craft, Army air defence detachments and an explosives ordnance team would return in June.

The maritime forces were replaced by the frigate HMAS Sydney, with continued support from a reduced Naval task group command element and a logistics support element. HMAS Manoora sailed to the Gulf to return equipment to Australia. The remainder of the Special Forces Task Group also returned when a detachment organised specifically to provide security for the recently established Australian Representative Office in Baghdad, left Australia for Iraq in mid-May 2003.

Baghdad Security Detachment

As soon as Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, some governments sought to re-establish an official presence in Iraq. Australia was no exception and the Australian Representative Office was established in Baghdad on 8 May.

Initially, security was provided by SAS troopers and commandos from the Special Forces Task Group after they completed their tasks in the Western Desert.

They were replaced with a security detachment of about 75 personnel, three Light Armoured Vehicles (later four) from the Darwin-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment, an infantry platoon from the

Townsville-based 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, communications and logistics elements from the 3rd Brigade in Townsville and personnel from the Brisbane-based 1st Military Police Battalion.

The security detachment provided local protection for the Representative Office. They also rendered unexploded munitions safe, removing danger to local Iraqis, and quickly developed a good relationship with the local population. This resulted in several large weapon and munitions caches being handed over.



Security Detachment members meet a RAAF C-130 flight at Baghdad International Airport

Lesson Learned

Force Protection: Force protection remains a most important factor in modern combat operations and requires effective operational planning and use of all available measures to reduce the risk of casualties. The ADF used various measures to improve force protection, including armoured vehicles, body armour, preventative health counter-measures, close air defence on RAN ships, electronic warfare self-protection equipment on RAAF aircraft, and electronic systems indicating the location of friendly forces. Coalition partners' experience reinforced the importance of effective force protection, especially in urban fighting.

Defence will continue to incorporate appropriate force protection measures in operational planning and capability procurement decisions. This will include the appropriate balance of physical and electronic force protection measures, including the use of armour, weapons systems, defensive sensors and a fully integrated battlespace management system to help forces survive and achieve their mission.



The Prime Minister visiting ADF personnel in the Middle East at the conclusion of major combat operations

Transition to Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Operations

Throughout the conduct of the combat phase of operations, the Government emphasised that Australia's military commitment after hostilities in Iraq would be limited.

As a result of this decision, Australian planners knew that when hostilities ended they needed to contribute to the rehabilitation of Iraq without committing major force elements. Defence Minister, Robert Hill, Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Cosgrove, and Secretary of the

Department of Defence, Ric Smith, received a first-hand impression of what would be needed when they visited the Middle East Area of Operations in late April 2003.

Major combat operations in Iraq formally ended on 1 May 2003 and the ADF's contribution to disarm Iraq began to reduce. However, some force elements remained to make a contribution to the next phase of the operation - Operation Catalyst.

Lesson Learned

Force Extraction Procedures: Rigorous equipment cleaning processes are required to meet justifiably high standards set by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). These high standards do impose a financial, materiel and manpower burden when forces return from an Area of Operations.

In conjunction with AQIS, Defence will investigate less intrusive and less damaging cleaning/fumigation processes to streamline the quarantine clearance process in future operations.

Operation Catalyst



RAAF personnel are providing security and Air Traffic Control at Baghdad International Airport

Operation Catalyst began on 16 July 2003 and the role of the ADF's deployed forces changed again to one of contributing to a whole-of-government effort to assist with the rehabilitation of Iraq. The goals included assisting national recovery and facilitating the transition to self-government.

Over 800 Defence personnel are providing vital support to this operation, through a range of tasks including training volunteers for the new Iraqi army, providing air traffic control services, and searching for WMD as part of the Iraq Survey Group.

The ADF units involved in Operation Catalyst include:

- a Joint Task Force headquarters for national command of ADF elements in the Middle East for Operation Catalyst and Operation Slipper;
- a frigate, a Logistic Support Element and staff to support the Multinational Interception Force Commander (about 270 personnel);
- an RAAF C-130 Hercules detachment of two transport aircraft and about 140 personnel;
- a combat support element of about 60 personnel providing air traffic control services at Baghdad International Airport;
- the security detachment at the Representative Office in Baghdad (about 80 personnel, four armoured vehicles and an explosive ordnance detachment);
- about 16 analysts and technical experts supporting the Iraq Survey Group - to investigate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and associated programs;
- about 90 personnel in various Coalition headquarters units, combined logistics and communications elements;
- a team of six to provide training and assist the development of the Iraqi Defence Force;
- a team of 5 ADF and Defence civilian representatives in the Coalition Provisional Authority; and
- an RAAF AP-3C Orion detachment with two maritime patrol aircraft and about 160 personnel to support rehabilitation in Iraq and the Coalition operation against terrorism.

Lesson Learned

Public Affairs: A deployable public affairs capability is integral to successful modern military operations. The use of Public Affairs officers helps maintain community support by providing visibility of ADF operations to both the general public and Defence families.

Defence will continue to deploy Public Affairs officers and encourage coverage by civilian journalists for operations where operational circumstances permit.



Security Detachment members meeting the locals in the area around the Australian Mission



RAAF personnel being welcomed home in Katherine

ADF Reconstitution, Evaluation and Return to Readiness

With the re-deployment of forces to Australia, the work of evaluating the performance of Defence, reconstituting forces, and returning our forces to operational readiness began. The high level of ADF commitments - some 3,800 ADF personnel deployed on 10 operations around the world in July 2003 - meant that returning forces had to be restored to operational readiness as soon as practicable.

In a tribute to its professionalism, the ADF managed to reconstitute its returned forces quickly while responding to new challenges and additional operational commitments. One such additional commitment began on 24 July 2003,

when an ADF contingent of about 1500 personnel, ships and aircraft, together with Australian Federal Police and Australian Protective Service personnel, provided regional assistance in a mission to the Solomon Islands in Operation Helpem Fren.

In preparation for future eventualities, a whole-of-Defence review was undertaken so lessons could be learned from our involvement and from the experiences of our Coalition partners. The evaluation noted the operation's success but also identified many lessons, some of which are discussed in this report.

Lesson Learned

Information Security: Information regarding ADF operational planning and activity remained very secure through these operations - to the point where there was some criticism that too little information was provided to the public.

Defence will continue to emphasise operational information security but will seek to balance the need to protect our forces with the need to keep the public informed of the employment and performance of the ADF.

Implementing the Lessons Learned

Australia's contribution to the success of major combat operations highlighted areas of performance - such as the employment of modern precision weapons systems - that were very effective and should be sustained for future operations. The evaluation also noted areas that were effective, but which needed improvement. These areas include:

- aspects of planning for operations;
- managing rapid equipment acquisitions;
- policy development; and
- communication support and information management.

There were also areas that needed to be addressed to improve our performance on future operations. These included force protection and ways to sustain our forces once deployed.

The lessons learned by Defence from the ADF's operations in Iraq continue to influence Government decisions on Defence capability acquisition, support and development. Application of these lessons will ensure that our forces continue to be well trained, equipped and led to defend Australia and its national interests.



RAN personnel arriving home in Sydney

Notes

1. *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2003*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, p. 15.
2. Operation Slipper, the International Coalition against terrorism, continued throughout the period of the war with Iraq and continues today. Operation Bastille, the lead up and deployment of ADF to the Middle East, commenced on 19 January 2003. Operation Falconer, the ADF contribution to combat operations to enforce Iraq's compliance with its international obligations to disarm, commenced on 19 March. It ceased on 16 July 2003 with the transition to Operation Catalyst, ADF participation in Iraqi security, national recovery and the transition to Iraqi self-government.
3. Senator the Hon Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, address to Defence and Strategic Studies course, Canberra, 18 June 2002.
4. US Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell, BBC Interview, 31 May 2002.
5. Senator the Hon Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, interview on Channel 7 Sunday *Sunrise* program, 16 September 2002.
6. The Hon John Howard MP, Prime Minister, address to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 20 November 2002.
7. Ibid.
8. Dr Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, speech to UN Security Council 4692nd meeting, 27 January 2003.
9. Dr Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, Progress Report to UN Security Council, 7 March 2003.
10. United States President George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, The Cross Hall, Washington, 17 March 2003, 2000 hours US Eastern Standard Time, cited at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>
11. The Hon John Howard MP, Prime Minister, address to The House of Representatives, Parliament House, 18 March 2003.
12. Joint meeting of the Revolution Command Council and the Iraq Command of the Socialist Ba'ath Party under the chairmanship of President Saddam Hussein, announced by Iraqi State Television 18 March 2003 1250 GMT, cited by Foreign Broadcast Information Service.
13. The Hon John Howard MP, Prime Minister, address to The House of Representatives, Parliament House, 18 March 2003.
14. These activities are often referred to as Time Sensitive Targets, but are also known as targets of opportunity or fleeting targets. These are high-priority targets that are by their very nature difficult to locate. Once located, they are vulnerable for a very short time before they are employed (in the case of ballistic missiles) or move elsewhere (in the case of regime leadership).
15. Deliberate strike refers to an attack on a fixed military target that typically has been identified well in advance of the operation, allowing significant planning of the attack.