

Written Evidence for the Iraq Enquiry from:

Kevin Hurley, Acting Commander, Metropolitan Police and Major Royal Military Police Territorial Army.

The submission relates to two separate deployments in 2003 and 2004 in Iraq. The first is as a Territorial Army Officer, the second as a Temporary Commander with the City of London Police on secondment to the FCO. During both deployments my full time employment was with the City of London Police. I transferred to the Metropolitan Police Service in 2007.

Relevant Personal History:

I am 56 years old and a serving Metropolitan Police Officer currently holding the rank of Acting Commander (Assistant Chief Constable in provincial forces). I have 30 years police service.

I am a member of the Territorial Army, I have held the rank of Major for twenty one years, I have served with the TA for thirty nine years. Within the TA I am a member of the Royal Military Police. I have been affiliated to 16 Air Assault Brigade (Previously 5 Airborne Brigade for seventeen years).

As a police officer, I am a graduate of the Strategic Command Course, a qualified Home Office Senior Investigating officer and have worked in most areas of policing from Public Order, through Serious Crime to Counter Terrorism.

As a reservist army officer, I have specialised in Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) warfare defence, as such I have been trained to provide both strategic and tactical level advice on the issue. Soon after the attacks of 9/11 I used this knowledge and subsequent engagement in the USA to help develop National Civil Preparedness for CBRN Terrorism in the UK.

Evidence:

Mobilisation and the Invasion as a Territorial Army Officer: Feb-Mar 2003

In 2003 I was mobilised three weeks before the commencement of hostilities in Iraq.

I was to perform the role of SO2 CBRN advisor to the commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade (one of the three UK fighting brigades). I have made a separate submission to the Inquiry setting out my experiences there, in particular in relation to equipment and personnel issues.

As Baghdad fell I was then re deployed to Camp Bucca, a large prisoner camp in the desert close to Az Zubayer near the border port.

There were some 7000 prisoners held in a dozen barbed wire enclosures. They were set up in the middle of the desert, there was no running water or sewerage provision. Poisonous snakes and rats were everywhere.

The staff were a mixture of UK and US personnel performing guarding and interviewing of detainees.

My role was to work with joint US/UK teams deciding if prisoners should be detained as insurgents or combatants. It was immediately apparent to me that we had almost no idea why many of the prisoners were in custody. For the most part they appeared to have been arrested by Coalition Forces because they waved white flags. Our procedures required that there should be documentation sent with every person arrested. This had been lost or not completed in many cases. Moreover the system for holding and documenting seized property was completely inadequate.

Many people would never see property of cash seized by the Coalition again.

Worse still there were young children detained amongst the men 10- 11 years old. At one stage I had to intervene to have these children properly cared for. I still retain copies of their ID documents. (I warned an Army Solicitor that I would report him to the Law Society for Human Rights abuses if he didn't act).

On a number of occasions I spoke with UK officers about the insensitive and arrogant way they dealt with prisoners. I had a pointed discussion with a barrister in the UK Army Legal Services who had been particularly rude and bigoted in the treatment of detainees.

There were some riots in the compounds, US guards became trapped in a compound and used M16 rifles to shoot some prisoners offering violence. I saw one being buried by his friends. I do not believe the guards used excessive force in the circumstances: they had no other option but live rounds, had they not done so they would have been overwhelmed and lynched.

I enquired why neither the UK or US soldiers had riot control kit such as baton rounds, pepper spray or CS. I was told that no one had thought to bring the equipment.

As a career policeman with many years of senior investigative experience I was very disappointed to see how little thought had been given to the issues of prisoner management in terms of provision of basic rights, dignity and influencing their decision whether to talk to us.

It was clear to me that the damaging impact on community confidence in the Coalition of our poor treatment of many thousands of detained persons was going to be profound.

I suspect many of the conditions that led to our difficulties in Basra were set in just a few months of poor treatment at Camp Bucca.

We lost a real opportunity in using Iraqi regular policemen who had been detained in the camp on the grounds they had guns and were in uniform. E.g. whilst there, we were experiencing rioting in Basra. Together with a US Military Policeman I identified a large number of prisoners who were Iraqi Police Officers and discussed with their leaders whether they would come and work with us in Basra to deal with the rioting. (It would be many months later before we began to re establish a civil police force).

The Iraqis were keen to do so. The UK camp commander would not make a decision , hence our infantry began the first of many violent confrontations with the civil population. Had we used the policemen we had detained, they could have borne the brunt of the disorder, thus perhaps preserving the reputation of our soldiers as it was at the time i.e. “Liberators”.

Whilst some of the above appears critical of some members of UK and US forces, the majority of those I served with were brave, compassionate, highly motivated and professional.

June 2004 - Dec 2004 Senior Police Advisor Iraq (Commander/ACC rank)

I returned to Iraq in June 2004 as the senior UK police officer in the South based at Basra Palace. At the time the insurgency was at its height. There were regular rocket and mortar attacks on our enclave, road movement was dangerous with regular IED or RPG attacks on vehicles.

There was a tiny UK civil police contingent: Some 20 or so constables and sergeants were conducting very rudimentary recruit training an hours drive away in a derelict old barracks near Az Zubayr (they received a number of rocket and suicide attacks).

At the Basra Palace I had six medium rank officers: Inspector to Chief Superintendent. Their role was to mentor the police commanders in Maysan Province , An Nasiriyah and at Basra. (27,000 personnel)

Additionally in Baghdad there were nine or so UK police officers working on future plans, they had been all but marginalised by our US allies and were effectively ignored.

In an attempt to impact on this situation I later spent much time in Baghdad.

Security conditions made road travel almost impossible. We were constrained by FCO safety rules in that we could not leave our enclaves lest with FCO body guards, we were not allowed to travel in Army vehicles due to their lack of protection (Snatches). We were all but ineffective for most of our time. Ultimately as the insurgency heightened we reached a stage whereby if we could not get a helicopter ride we did not move.

When attacks reduced, out of frustration and with the assistance of UK military personnel I managed to acquire a Czech military body guard team to enable me to get out on the

ground to do my job. The fact that we could not talk to each other was a problem, however we managed for the most part.

Although I was the senior police officer I was not allowed to be sighted on the intelligence picture provided to the UK army commanders and the UK ambassador. (I was Security Cleared).

My staff were all very experienced members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland or MOD Police (25 years service), at the time I was head of Counter Terrorism in the City of London Police.

Depending on our relationships with individual army officers, we were both bemused and frustrated at not being able to contribute fully to the enhancement of security plans. Moreover from our interactions with senior FCO staff, we had a sense of being “blue collar workers kept in the basement of the Embassy”.

In terms of Security Sector Reform I had a sense of being in a rowing boat being towed behind a massive troop ship going somewhere, the trouble was we had most of the charts and plans in the police rowing boat.

Nonetheless we had some impact, we managed to move forward the use of forensic science techniques, develop intelligence gathering systems and improve on investigative techniques. However, we were far less effective than we might have been.

We were a miniscule group 30-40 charged with delivery of key areas of Security Sector Reform. Amongst 20,000 Coalition personnel in the South we were a “drop in the ocean”.

The various Coalition Military units played important roles in training potential police in riot control, searching and weapon handling. As one might expect they were unable to develop key areas of civil policing.

Our problems were exacerbated by the fact that there had been no real planning for what was needed to secure a fractured nation after the breakdown of the established order.

E.g. Police buildings, records offices, forensic labs etc are crucial pieces of the intelligence management needed to police a city.

The Coalition arrived in Basra and made no attempt to secure any local knowledge or intelligence of criminal organisations or offenders. What we did would be akin to a non English speaking foreign army arriving in Manchester and then trying to police with no picture whatsoever as to who held power in the criminal fraternity. We should not be surprised that the Mardi Militia and others flourished.

I would observe that we seemed to sit on our laurels of success against insurgency in Malaya and Northern Ireland in a belief that we were succeeding in Basra. We did not

pay heed to the fact that one of the helpful factors that assisted us in Malaya and Northern Ireland was the existence of a well trained local police force. E.g. the Malayan Colonial Police was led by UK civil police officers whilst the Royal Ulster Constabulary had primacy with Army support in Northern Ireland.

I believe that the British Army did the very best job it could in Southern Iraq. However, it did not have anywhere near the level of civil policing support it needed. By this I mean UK civil police officers able to operate within hostile environments.

The Royal Military Police worked tirelessly to address this shortcoming but they themselves were in very small numbers. Moreover, they are soldiers with some policing skills rather than professional police officers who can work alongside soldiers.

Whilst an ideal solution would be a deployable Gendarmerie or Carabinieri type organisation this is unlikely ever to become a reality.

That said UK civil policing could do much more to support HMG's efforts abroad. However many factors militate against this:

- Individual forces are accountable to local police authorities,
- Chief officers have local targets and don't want to give up staff for overseas work,
- Those staff who do go overseas end up damaging their career prospects on return,
- There is an unwillingness from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) for police officers to be trained to carry long arms (rifles are vital for self protection and a key enabler for police mentors).
- The most senior police officers are generally unwilling to engage in overseas work on the basis that it is not helpful for prospects of advancement; a local police authority is more interested in what an Assistant Chief Constable can do to stop anti social behaviour rather than writing strategic policing plans for a fractured nation.

From a strategic perspective, UK civil police were not engaged in pre conflict planning nor was there any significant consultation with those in theatre as to how the Iraqi Police Service should be developed.

One can apportion very little responsibility for this on the UK armed forces planners. Invading countries and rebuilding infrastructure was not an everyday occurrence in 2003.

I would observe that if we are to continue to undertake expeditionary operations such as Iraq and as currently in Afghanistan, the MOD and FCO would be wise to develop some form of partnership with the Home Office, ACPO and the Association of Police Authorities to create the conditions which would support the deployment of meaningful numbers of professional civil police officers to work on Security Sector Reform in theatre.

I remain quite well sighted on the numbers , ranks and skill sets of the police professionals currently deployed in Afghanistan tasked with developing the Afghan Police and countering narcotics. In my judgement, strategic decision makers still have much to learn from our experiences in Iraq and those ongoing in Afghanistan.

Our civil policing commitment in Afghanistan is very limited for the task in hand.

It is unfortunate that our current provision for the development of an effective Afghan National Police may play a part in the deaths and maiming of more UK Service Personnel.

Kevin Hurley
17/6/2010