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**Iraq War Note: Non-Pause, the True Logistics Story, and Blaming Rumsfeld**  
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**March 29, 2003**

We are still deep into the fog of war, but there are several developments that merit attention.

**1. Pause or Non-Pause**

Much of the press – and many military analysts -- may be fundamentally misrepresenting the story by focusing on the "pause" it sees, and not on the fighting it doesn't and the value of a strategy that seems to be sucking Iraqi forces into the open and weakening the defenses of Baghdad.

The weather has now been clear for several days. The US is building up to some 3,000 men and heavy weapons/light vehicles in the Kurdish area. Rangers and Special forces continue to operate in the West. The Marines are sending elements forward, and the 3rd Infantry continues to probe in and around Karbala while the 101st has just launched its first major deep strike against the Republican Guards Al Madina division. (USCENTCOM made careful claims to have hit elements and destroyed armor, artillery, other vehicles, and radars; other press reports say 65% of the effectiveness of the al Madina Division has been lost over the last few days but seem to have uncertain sources, and no methodology exists to make this judgment.)

The 101st has conducted an incredible dash to positions near Najaf and set up some kind of base. The 82nd is deploying to secure Nassiyrah.

USCENTCOM has also talked about interdicting Iraqi movement from the North into the combat zone, and it is important to note that by Sunday, the Coalition will have flown some 8,000 sorties, over 4,500 attack sorties, and fired over 6,000 precision guided munitions and 675 cruise missiles. There also seem to be continuous long distance uses of precision artillery, including the MLRS.

Many elements of US forces probably are taking the opportunity to pause and regroup and resupply, which is difficult in many areas, but far too much emphasis is being placed on the word "pause." This is particularly true because the best strategy is not to dash forward like Custer, but to make as many elements of the Republican Guards and Regular Army move as possible.

US forces are good in the offense, but even better in the defense, and air power is far more effective when Iraqi units move south. USCENTCOM has talked about "interdicting the northern approaches to the city" which can only be done by the air campaign no one sees. The mission is probably impossible, but certainly inflicting serious losses on Iraq.

The US and British actions do seem to be leading the Iraqis to move units away from the defense of Baghdad and put other units at risk by having them move south.

**2. Logistics, Pause, and Resupply**

It is early days in the logistics and resupply business, but it is already time to start reading the map. The Iraqi resistance is better and more effective than expected. We also have no picture as yet as to what will happen in the cities, flanks, and rear areas of the 1st MEF and the British armored as it advances. Problems will almost certainly continue.



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At the same time, the main logistics route is fairly easy to secure because it goes along the West bank of the Euphrates, and once urban raiding points at Basra, As Samawah, and Nassiriyah are secure, attacks will drop sharply in effectiveness. The logistics line can also adjust to move further West into the desert in many areas at the cost of slowing down and some cost in capacity. The problem may largely be fixable in a matter of days.

The 101st is in place at Najaf where it can both secure this set of rear areas, and send elements on deep strike missions well into the Karbala area. As it regroups, it could dash towards the Western approaches to Baghdad through the Karbala Gap or around the lakes. (Difficult, but possible.) The 82nd is concentrated near Talil south of Nassiriyah and it may be possible to fully secure the line of communication through Nassiriyah over the next few days. The Iraqi resistance at As Samawah may stiffen, but so far has been limited.

In short, US/UK innovation and focused war fighting may largely solve the logistics and resupply problem in this phase of the battle, do so relatively quickly, and show the same innovation that the Iraqis have.

### **3. Rumsfeld, the War Plan and Logistics**

Long before the war even started, General Keane (VCOS US Army) gave a briefing on the fact that the Army was changing tactics to use joint land/air operations to drive armor and spearheads far faster and more quickly and deliberately take the risk of problems in the flanks and rear areas. It was fully clear that the Army planned this – not Rumsfeld – and understood the risk that opponents would use asymmetric warfare.

At a very senior US military background briefing just before the war, a US general explained the fact that the lack of the 4th Mechanized and a second front, and political decisions to delay some movements to give the UN debate time to work, did mean more risks and a lack of some of the forces needed if Iraq did not weaken in the South.

There are very real tensions between the US military and Rumsfeld over budget and programming issues, and particularly force transformation issues – although these impact the future long after 2004 and have nothing to do with this campaign.

There was a debate between Rumsfeld, some OSD civilians in the policy cluster and the military over the size of the US force before the war plan began to be implemented. One expert observer describes that debate as follows:

"Rumsfeld ridiculed what he called unimaginative, traditional military thinking that proposed large numbers of conventional forces to engage in the attack on Iraq. He did this frequently, and the result was an initial plan in which the attacking forces consisted of two Army brigades and a Marine Expeditionary Unit -- no more than 10,000 in the ground maneuver formations (most destruction was to be achieved by Special Forces and airpower). Had there not been pushback to these plans from the components of CENTCOM during the initial war games, we would not have the force we do now.

"The second thing Rumsfeld did exacerbated the first point by creating an environment in which alternative points of view were exposed to criticism and those who challenged were ostracized. For a Service Chief, it is more than personal -- future programs of his Service were thought to be placed at risk. You saw this both by the leak that Gen Shinseki's replacement was identified 18 months before his departure, and by the fact that members of the Joint Chiefs challenged SecDef in the press but not in



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private. Another example might be Gen Shinseki's estimation before Congress that it would take 200,000 troops to occupy post-war Iraq, and the subsequent dismissal of his views.

"... though, there are two elements responsible for the force we have today, and it must be a supplement to the criticism of Rumsfeld. The senior military leadership had a duty to challenge a plan that they either did not agree with, or made them uncomfortable. They had ample opportunity to voice disagreement or concern, and really never took advantage of it..."

Fortunately, in retrospect, Rumsfeld did not get his way and cannot be blamed for the war plan that actually emerged. General Tommy Franks seems to have largely won this debate in getting the 4th Infantry and 3rd ACR as well as the forces in the South and the commitment of follow-on forces including the option of moving units from NATO.

Rumsfeld did make political decisions altering the timing of the call-up and some logistic and movement phasing, but it seems likely that any political leader of the Department of Defense would have had to do the same thing.

There is a clear warning about the dangers of having ideologues shape policy and intelligence analysis. Many in Rumsfeld's civilian policy cluster were far too noisy (and uninformed) about how easy it would be to defeat the Iraqi forces and about the prospect for support and possible revolts in the South. They also put pressure on the intelligence community to downplay the risks of Iraqi innovation and popular support for Saddam.

However, Rumsfeld cannot be blamed for:

- The current state of a war in which no one knows the result of the air campaign.
- A "pause" or "non-pause" makes good military sense.
- The vulnerability of rear areas and the flanks was a risk deliberately taken by the military.
- One-third of the original force is not present because of the loss of access to Turkey.
- The intense initial air strikes were delayed for days because of the need to wait to see if the decapitation strike on Saddam succeeded.
- The politics of the UN debate gave Iraqi months of extra time to adapt and disperse and forced political decisions to delay deployments to the South to avoid giving the impression the allies were attacking without regard for the UN.
- The "shock and awe" synchronicity of the war plan could not be achieved.
- Smart and adaptive enemies are scarcely predictable and focus on the weaknesses of their opponent.

Making Rumsfeld the scapegoat before the major battles begin, and most of the evidence is present, is scarcely fair. Rumsfeld may or may not have much to answer for once all of the facts and the outcome of the war is known – but Rumsfeld does not deserve virtually all of the present blame he is getting. Once again, an expert observer helps put this issue in perspective,



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"The truth at this point, though, is that we do not know whether the force is insufficient or not-- it depends on how the coming fight against the Republican Guard goes, and whether we have to fight to take Baghdad. We do know, however, that sufficiency is more than simply whether the battles are won, but by what margin. The difference is not only American and British casualties, but whether future foes are encouraged by some measure of success against the only Superpower."

"...the importance of a 'pause' are overstated, and the denials may be amplifying it. The truth is there is no pause if you're in the Iraqi Army trying to avoid getting killed by the air strikes, and we do need some time to build sustainability and degrade the Iraqi capability.

"...nine days into the campaign is far too early to be questioning publicly the sufficiency of forces are who is or not to blame. The most credible sources are not in the Pentagon or in the media, but among the field commanders, and we'll know their answer after they take of the Republican Guard and if we have to go into Baghdad."