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CIRCULATED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF

J.P.(55)145 (Final)

**U.K. EYES ONLY**

13th December, 1955

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CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

JOINT PLANNING STAFF

OIL DENIAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Report by the Joint Planning Staff

1. The Foreign Office have submitted a draft memorandum<sup>+</sup> on oil denial in the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms and have invited the Chiefs of Staff to comment on:-

- (a) The value of the oil denial measures in the light of the latest strategic assumptions.
- (b) The memorandum prior to its submission to Ministers.

2. The purpose of the Foreign Office memorandum is to obtain Ministerial approval to the proposals for oil denial in the Sheikhdoms prior to a meeting to be held with United States representatives early in January, 1956.

3. In anticipation of instructions we have prepared a report which is at annex.

4. We have consulted the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Joint Intelligence Bureau and the Foreign Office.

Recommendation

5. We recommend that, if the Chiefs of Staff approve our report, they should forward it to the Foreign Office as an expression of their views.

(Signed) D.S.S. O'CONNOR  
J.G. DAVIS  
L.W. NAPIER

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, S.W.1.

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Annex to J.P.(55)145 (Final)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Foreign Office have submitted a draft memorandum<sup>+</sup> on oil denial measures in the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms and have asked the Chiefs of Staff for their comments on:-

- (a) The memorandum prior to its submission to Ministers.
- (b) The value of oil denial measures in the light of the latest strategic assumptions.

From the military point of view the denial of oil in the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms is closely linked with similar measures in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. This report, therefore, also covers the question of oil denial in all these countries.

2. The existing situation for planning and executing oil denial measures as agreed between the British and American authorities, but without commitment to Ministers, is as follows:-

(a) Kuwait and Qatar

The Americans are responsible for planning and execution, but the responsibility for dealing with local Rulers and for giving the final word of command is British.

(b) Bahrain

The Americans are responsible for planning, execution and for giving the final word of command. The responsibility for dealing with the Ruler is British.

(c) Iraq

The British have complete responsibility for planning and execution. The War Office, with the co-operation of the Iraq Petroleum Company and British Petroleum have prepared oil denial plans for all the Company's installations and the necessary demolition stores are held in Habbaniya. The Iraq Government, however, have recently opened a state controlled refinery at Baghdad and now own the refineries at Alwand and Basra. Oil denial measures are being considered for these plants but as yet no plans have been made.

(d) Iran

Before 1951 oil denial in Iran was a British responsibility. This commitment was considered void after the departure of the Anglo-Iranian oil company in 1951. Since this time no plans have been made for oil denial by ground demolition. The only alternative is air action.

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Annex (Continued)

(e) Saudi Arabia

The Americans have complete responsibility for planning and execution.

(f) Neutral Zone

The responsibility for planning and execution has not yet been agreed.

3. In 1954 the United States formally requested the British to undertake full responsibility for the planning and execution of all stages of oil denial measures in the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar and in Neutral Zone. The Foreign Office agree to this request subject to certain conditions and recommendations. The United States have now intimated that they wish to hold formal talks on this subject in January, 1956. The purpose of the Foreign Office memorandum is to seek Ministerial approval before these talks.

VALUE OF OIL DENIAL

Basis of Oil Denial Planning

4. The value of oil installations and hence the military necessity for their destruction will depend on the nature, course and duration of a future war. The existing plans for oil denial in the Middle East were prepared before the advent of the thermo-nuclear weapon and before the formation of the Baghdad Pact. These plans were based on denial by ground demolition and were dependent upon the close co-operation of the oil companies concerned. These companies are now employing an increasing number of local workers in responsible positions and planning is, therefore, becoming more and more difficult because of national considerations.

The Middle East in Global War

5. The increased Allied nuclear capability and the formation of the Baghdad Pact has made it possible for the Allies to adopt a more forward strategy for the defence of the Middle East. This strategy is based on holding the Russians in the Zagros Mountains and attacking their lines of communication with nuclear weapons. The successful implementation of this policy would make oil denial measures unnecessary but, none-the-less, it would be militarily prudent to keep plans for such measures in being, particularly as, for the next few years, the forces available to the Baghdad Pact powers will be insufficient to guarantee that the Zagros line can be held.

Value of Middle East Oil to the U.S.S.R.

6. If, in the event, the Russians were able to advance beyond the Zagros line, we consider that the positive value of Middle East oil to the Russians would lie in the capture of refined stocks and in the operation of refineries to meet

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the requirements of their Middle East campaign. The existing transport difficulty between the Persian Gulf and the U.S.S.R., which would be further aggravated by war would prevent the Russians from being able to move significant quantities of oil back to the U.S.S.R. for refining. It is evident therefore that in a war protracted beyond the initial nuclear exchange invading Russian forces could derive great value from the capture of refined stocks, refining plant, equipment and all facilities necessary for the local distribution of refined oil.

COMMENTS FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW

Method of Oil Denial

7. The most complete method of destroying oil installations would be by nuclear bombardment. At present this method can only be carried out by American forces. Alternative destruction by air action, using other than nuclear weapons, would require a large number of sorties and the diversion of sufficient forces to meet this task would almost certainly be impracticable in the light of other operational commitments. Oil denial, however, can be most satisfactorily carried out by ground demolition whereas demolition by nuclear bombardment would cause irreparable damage. The former method is the more economical when the co-operation of personnel operating the installations is assured and is the only practicable means available to the British at present.

Planning of Oil Denial by Demolition

8. In the time available it will not be possible to provide sufficient troops to execute all plans based on ground demolition in Iraq, the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms and possibly also in Iran. Such plans can only, therefore, be made fully effective with the co-operation of the oil companies. At present, for security reasons, planning for oil denial has had to be restricted to British and American controlled interests and their own nationals. This has precluded planning for oil denial measures in the state controlled installations in Iraq and Iran.

9. Iraq and Iran. Oil denial measures in the Middle East cannot be wholly effective unless the state controlled installations in Iraq and Iran are included. However, in the interests of sustaining the confidence of these countries in their western allies, any direct approach on this subject on Government level is at present politically unacceptable. Nevertheless planning based on ground demolition should proceed on such information as can be obtained, in case an opportunity arises later to use this method. If war breaks out before detailed demolition plans have been made destruction by nuclear bombardment may be the only alternative. Since it is most improbable that British troops could be made available for oil denial measures in Iran it is considered that this might be more suitably undertaken by the Americans, assisted possibly by British naval units in the Persian Gulf.

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Annex (Continued)

10. Saudi Arabia. Although the United States are responsible for planning oil denial measures in Saudi Arabia, confirmation should be sought as to whether such plans have been prepared and are up to date.

11. Neutral Zone. A decision as to who should assume responsibility for planning oil denial measures in the Neutral Zone should be reached as soon as possible to allow planning to proceed. Since the balance of influence in the Zone lies with the Americans it would seem logical that they should assume the responsibility.

Delegation of Authority

12. It has been provisionally agreed that the decision to set oil denial measures in motion is a joint United Kingdom/United States governmental responsibility. This agreement should be adhered to. The question of delegating authority should be considered when the general field of governmental responsibility to be delegated in Global War is examined.

Additional Points for Inclusion in the Memorandum

13. To enable military planning to proceed in the event of it being agreed in principle that the British will assume responsibility for oil denial planning and execution in the Sheikdoms, the following points should be stressed:-

- (a) All outstanding matters concerning legal, financial and compensatory aspects of the oil denial measures, should be resolved before the responsibility for all denial measures is transferred to the military planners.
- (b) The necessity to maintain the closest liaison with the United States authorities throughout all the stages of military planning and execution.

CONCLUSIONS

14. We conclude that:-

- (a) Despite the better prospects of the forward strategy there is still a need to plan oil denial measures which should be limited to:-
  - (i) destroying refined stocks;
  - (ii) disabling refining plant and equipment;
  - (iii) destroying the facilities and equipment necessary for the local distribution of refined oils;

and that the most suitable method of denying oil is by ground demolition.

Annex (Concluded)

- (b) The Memorandum is suitable for submission to Ministers provided it is made clear that:-
- (i) if all oil denial plans are to be successful close liaison with the United States authorities and oil company representatives throughout all stages of military planning and execution is essential.
  - (ii) all outstanding matters concerning legal, financial and compensatory aspects of oil denial measures must be resolved before military planning begins.
- (c) The desirability of American responsibility for oil denial measures in Iran and the Neutral Zone should be examined at the forthcoming talks. In the case of Iraq our responsibility should continue. The Americans should be asked to confirm that plans have been prepared for oil denial measures in Saudi Arabia.
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