

The Secretary of State for Defence (Des Browne) told Parliament

On 21 February the Prime Minister set out our strategy and plans in Iraq, in particular, changes to the UK force levels and posture in Multi-National Division (South East) (MND(SE)).

These plans will see greater emphasis on the training of the Iraqi Security Forces and, in the view of progress they continue to make, the phased closure of a number of bases in MND(SE). This process will permit a reduction in UK force levels from its present level of 7,100 to approximately 5,500 by the completion of the next roulement of UK forces in June 2007. The force package that we currently plan to deploy to Iraq for this roulement during May/June 2007 will see the lead formation, currently 19 Light Brigade, replaced by 1 Mechanised Brigade, which will take over the command of UK forces in early June. The other major units that will deploy are as follows:

1 Mechanised Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron (215 Signal Squadron Royal Signals)

2 x squadrons from the Household Cavalry Regiment

The King's Royal Hussars

2 x squadrons from the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment

1st Battalion Irish Guards

1 x company from 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh

2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh

4th Battalion The Rifles

1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery

22 Engineer Regiment

1 x squadron from 23 Pioneer Regiment Royal Logistic Corps

3 Logistic Support Regiment Royal Logistic Corps

1 x Company from 6 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Bravo (16) Close Medical Support Squadron, 3 Close Support Medical Regiment Royal Army Medical Corps

158 Provost Company 3rd Regiment Royal Military Police

22 Battery, 32 Regiment Royal Artillery

34 Field Hospital Royal Army Medical Corps

Members of the reserve forces will continue to deploy to Iraq as part of this force package, and we expect to have eventually issued in the order of 300 call-out notices in order to fill some 260 posts