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Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 29 30.03.2003 [10:30]

During the past day the situation on the US-Iraqi front remained largely unchanged. The US is continuing reinforcing the attack group near Karabela for a thrust toward Baghdad. By the morning of March 29 up to 20,000 coalition troops were massed in the area of Karabela. This forces includes up to 200 tanks, 150 artillery systems and more than 250 helicopters. The order for the attack will be given by the coalition commander Gen. Tommy Franks, who, according to intercepted radio communications, will personally inspect the troops during the next several hours.

Around 1900hrs yesterday an Apache attack helicopter crashed. Intercepted radio communications show that the helicopter was heavily damaged in a combat mission. The helicopter's pilot lost control during landing and the helicopter crashed, causing serious damage to another helicopter that landed earlier.

The coalition troops have so far failed to take An-Nasiriya? despite of the categorical orders from the command and more than 800 combat missions by the strike aircraft. All attempts to break through the Iraqi defense were met by Iraqi counterattacks. After 24 hours of fighting the coalition troops only managed to advance several hundred meters in two sectors near An-Nasiriya? at the cost of 4 destroyed armored personnel carriers, no less that 3 Marines killed by sniper and mortar fire, 10 wounded and 2 missing in action. The exact Iraqi losses are being determined.

The Americans have also failed to advance near An-Najaf?. Every coalition attack was met by massive artillery barrages from the Iraqi side. Later during the day the Iraqis mounted a counterattack throwing the US forces back by 1.5-2 kilometers. No fewer than 10 Marines were killed or wounded. After exchanging fire for six hours both warring sides remained in the same positions. Iraqi losses in this area are estimated to be 20 killed and up to 40 wounded.

Near Basra the British troops pushed the Iraqi defense lines on the Fao peninsula but were unable to capture the entire peninsula. The British advance was a maximum of 4 kilometers from the highway leading to Basra. Radio intercepts show that in this attack the Iraqis shot down a British helicopter. Additionally, two tanks and one APCs were destroyed by landmines. At least 2 British servicemen were killed, around 20 were wounded and 15 were captured by the Iraqis.

Exchange of fire continued in the area of the Basra airport. The Iraqis destroyed one coalition APC wounding two coalition soldiers. The Iraqi losses are difficult to estimate, but available information suggests that up to 20 Iraqi soldiers and local militia members might have been killed in the air and artillery strikes.

All attempts by the British troops to break through the Iraqi defenses from the south along the Al-Arab? river have yielded not results. The British command reported that it is unable to storm Basra with the available forces and will require no less than two additional brigades and at least five additional artillery battalions. Thus, to avoid further casualties the British are adopting defensive tactics, while trying to maintain a tight blockade around Basra and trying

to improve their positions with small localized attacks. The British are also maintaining pressure on the Iraqi positions on the Fao peninsula.

The psychological levels among the city's residents, according to interviews, is far from critical. The Iraqi military made several public announcements to the residents offering them a chance to leave the city. However, most of the residents do not want to leave, fearing the faith of the Palestinian refugees, who, after losing their homes, gained pariah status in the Arab world. Basra's residents were extremely depressed by the video footage aired by the coalition command showing Iraqis on the occupied territories fighting for food and water being distributed by the coalition soldiers. The city's population views this as a sample of what awaits them if the Americans come...

At the Al-Kuwait? airport the unloading of the 4th Mechanized Infantry Division is continuing and is expected to be completed by the night of April 1. During a night flight one of the US military transport aircraft requested an emergency landing. What happened to the plane is still being determined.

Currently the coalition command is deciding how better use the 4th Infantry Division. The complete deployment of the division and preparations for combat are expected to take at least 10 days. However, the combat units require immediate reinforcements and it is possible that the [4th Infantry} Division will be joining combat in stages, as the units become ready. This will mean a considerable reduction of the Division's combat effectiveness.

A report was obtained, prepared by the Al-Kuwait-based? coalition Psychological Operations Tactical Group for the coalition Special Ground Forces Command. The report analyzed the effectiveness of the information and propaganda war. According to the report, analysis of the television broadcasts, intercepted radio communications, interrogations of Iraqi POWs show that psychologically the Iraqis are now "more stable and confident" than they were during the last days before the war. This, according to the report, is due primarily to the coalition's numerous military failures.

"...Following nervousness and depression of the Iraqis during the first days of the war we can now observe a burst of patriotic and nationalistic feelings. ...There has been a sharp increase in the number of Iraqi refugees, who left the country before the war, returning to Iraq. A "cult of war" against the US and the UK is now emerging among the Iraqis...", the report states.
Reverse translation from Russian

Coalition analysts believe that if this attitude of the Iraqis is not changed within the next 7 days, a "resistance ideology" may take over the Iraqi minds, making the final coalition victory even more difficult. In response to this report the US Army Psychological Operations command decided to combine all Iraqi POWs into large groups and to distribute the resulting video footage to the world media. A more active use of the Iraqi opposition was suggested for propaganda work in the occupied villages. The same opposition members will be used to create video footage of the "repented" Iraqi POWs and footage of the local Iraqi population "opposing Saddam."

Radio communications intercepted during the last five days suggest that the coalition is using Israeli airfield for conducting night air strikes against Iraq. Combat aircraft are taking off

regularly from the Israeli Hatzetim and the Navatim airbases do not return to the same bases but fly toward the border with Jordan while maintaining complete radio silence.

Possibly these are just Israeli Air Force exercises, However, Russian radio intercept and radar units observe increased intensity of radio communications coming from the Jordanian air force and air defense communication centers during such overflights, as well as changes in the operating modes of the US Army "Patriot" tracking radars deployed in Jordan. This indicates the Israeli airbases as used as forward airfield or that some of the coalition air force units are based there. Normally the IAF F-15I fighter-bombers and A-4N strike aircraft operate from the Hatzetim airbase and the F-16 fighter-bombers operate from the Nevatim base.

Experts believe that these airbases may be used by the F-117 stealth bombers "officially" based at the Al-Udaid? airbase in Qatar. Using these two locations minimizes the risk to the F-117s by allowing them to fly along the left bank of the Euphrates (in the direction of Turkey) and to avoid the dangerous maneuvering over Iraq.

The destruction of the telephone stations in Baghdad did nothing to disrupt the communications of the Iraqi army. The coalition command acknowledged this fact after analyzing the dense Iraqi radio traffic. Because of that the USAF was ordered to employ the most powerful available conventional munitions against predetermined strategic targets. This attacks will be carried out immediately before renewing ground advance.

translated by Venik

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Russian military intel update War in Iraq, March 28, 2003 29.03.2003 [03:28]

According to the latest intercepted radio communications, the command of the coalition group of forces near Karabela requested at least 12 more hours to get ready to storm the town. This delay is due to the much heavier losses sustained by the coalition troops during the sand storms then was originally believed. Just the US 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division sustained more than 200 disabled combat vehicles of various types. The 101st Airborne Division reported some 70 helicopters as being disabled. Additionally, the recently delivered reinforcements require rest and time to prepare for combat.

At the same time the US forces have resumed attacks near An-Nasiriya and An-Najaf since 0630hrs and are continuously increasing the intensity of these attacks. During the night and early morning of March 28 the Iraqi positions in these areas were subjected to eight aerial assaults by bombers and ground attack aircraft. However, so far the coalition was unable to penetrate the Iraqi defenses.

Also during the early morning the British units begun advancing along the Fao peninsula. Latest radio intercepts from this area show that under a continuous artillery and aerial bombardment the Iraqis have begun to gradually withdraw their forces toward Basra.

First firefights between troops of the US 82nd Airborne Division and the Iraqi forces occurred in northern Iraq in the area of Mosul. At the same time the arrival of up to 1,500 Kurdish troops has been observed in this area. So far it is not clear to which of the many Kurdish political movements these troops belong. Leaders of the largest Kurdish workers party categorically denied participation of their troops. They believe that these may be units of one of the local tribes not controlled by the central authorities of the Kurdish autonomy and "ready to fight with anyone" for money.

According to verified information, during the past 48 hours of the Iraqi counterattacks the coalition forces sustained the following losses: up to 30 killed, over 110 wounded and 20 missing in action; up to 30 combat vehicles lost or disabled, including at least 8 tanks and 2 self-propelled artillery systems, 2 helicopters and 2 unmanned aerial vehicles were lost in combat. Iraqi losses are around 300 killed, up to 800 wounded, 200 captured and up to 100 combat vehicles 25 of which were tanks. Most of the Iraqi losses were sustained due to the artillery fire and aerial bombardment that resumed by the evening of March 27.

First conclusions can be drawn from the war

The first week of the war surprised a number of military analysts and experts. The war in Iraq uncovered a range of problems previously left without a serious discussion and disproved several resilient myths.

The first myth is about the precision-guided weapons as the determining factor in modern warfare, weapons that allow to achieve strategic superiority without direct contact with the enemy. On the one hand we have the fact that during the past 13 years the wars were won by the United States with minimum losses and, in essence, primarily through the use of aviation. At the same time, however, the US military command was stubborn in ignoring that the decisive factor in all these wars was not the military defeat of the resisting armies but political isolation coupled with strong diplomatic pressure on the enemy's political leadership. It was the creation of international coalitions against Iraq in 1991, against Yugoslavia in 1999 and against Afghanistan in 2001 that ensured the military success.

The American command preferred not to notice the obvious military failures during expeditions to Granada, Libya and Somalia, discounting them as "local operations" not deserving much attention.

Today we can see that in itself massed use of strategic and tactical precision-guided weapons did not provide the US with a strategic advantage. Despite the mass use of the most sophisticated weapons the Americans have so far failed to disrupt Iraqi command and control infrastructure, communication networks, top Iraqi military and political leadership, Iraqi air defenses. At the same time the US precision-guided weapons arsenal has been reduced by about 25%.

The only significant advantage of the precision-guided weapons is the capability to avoid massive casualties among the civilians in densely populated areas.

What we have is an obvious discrepancy between the ability to locate and attack a target with precision-guided weapons and the power of this weapon, which is not sufficient to reliably destroy a protected target.

On the other hand, precision-guided munitions demonstrated their superiority over conventional munitions on the battlefield. The ability to attack targets at long ranges with the first shot is the deciding factor in the American superiority in land battles.

The second myth disproved by this war is the myth propagated by the proponents of the "hi-tech" war, who believe in the superiority of the most modern weapons and inability of older-generation weapons to counteract the latest systems. Today the technological gap between the Iraqi weapons and those of the coalition has reached 25-30 years, which corresponds to two "generations" in weapons design. The primary Iraqi weapons correspond to the level of the early 1970s. Since that time the Americans, on the other hand, have launched at least two major rearmament efforts: the "75-83 program" and the "90-97 program". Moreover, currently the US is in the middle of another major modernization and rearmament program that will continue for the next five years. Despite of this obvious gap, Iraqi resistance has already been publicly qualified by the US as "fierce and resilient". Analysts believe that the correlation of losses is entirely acceptable to the Iraqis and they the analysts do not see any strategic coalition advantage in this war. Once again this proves that success in modern warfare is achieved not so much through technological superiority but primarily through training, competent command and resilience of the troops. Under such conditions even relatively old weapons can inflict heavy losses on a technologically-superior enemy.

Two enormous mistakes made by the US command during the planning stages of this war resulted in the obvious strategic failure. The US has underestimated the enemy. Despite the unique ability to conduct reconnaissance against the Iraqi military infrastructure through a wide network of agents implanted with the international teams of weapons inspectors, despite of unlimited air dominance the US military command has failed to adequately evaluate combat readiness of the Iraqi army and its technical capabilities; the US has failed to correctly assess the social and political situation in Iraq and in the world in general. These failures led to entirely inadequate military and political decisions:

The coalition force was clearly insufficient for a such a large-scale operation. The number of deployed troops was at least 40% short of the required levels. This is the reason why today, after nine days of war, the US is forced to resort to emergency redeployment of more than 100,000 troops from the US territory and from Europe. This, in essence, is the same number of troops already fighting in Iraq.

The buildup and distribution of the coalition forces have been conducted with gross neglect of all basic rules of combat. All troops were massed in one small area, which led to five days of non-stop fighting to widen this area. The initial attack begun without any significant aerial or artillery preparation and almost immediately this resulted in reduced rate of advance and heated positional battles.

Today we can see that the US advance is characterized by disorganized and "impulsive" actions. The troops are simply trying to find weak spots in the Iraqi defenses and break through them until they hit the next ambush or the next line of defense.

Not a single goal set before the coalition forces was met on time.

During the nine days of the war the coalition has failed:

- to divide Iraq in half along the An-Nasiriya? - Al-Ammara? line,
- to surround and to destroy the Iraqi group of forces at Basra,

- to create an attack group between the Tigris and the Euphrates with a front toward Baghdad,
- to disrupt Iraq's military and political control, to disorganize Iraq's forces and to destroy the main Iraqi attack forces.

A whole range of problems that require their own solutions was uncovered directly on the battlefield. Thus, combat in Iraq raised serious concerns about the problem of coordination between units from different services. Limited decision-making time and the ability to detect and to engage an enemy at a great distance make "friendly fire" one of the most serious problems of modern warfare. For now the coalition has no adequate solution to this problem. At one location or another every day of this war the coalition troops were attacking friendly forces.

The second problem of the coalition is its inability to hold on to the captured territory. For the first time since the war in Vietnam the Americans have to deal with a partisan movement and with attacks against their the US lines of communication. Currently the coalition is rushing to form some sort of territorial defense units for guarding its supply lines and for maintaining order in the occupied territories.

A range of technical problems with equipment has been revealed during the combat operations. Most operators of the M1A2? Abrams main battle tank agree that the tank was inadequate for performing the set combat tasks. The primary problem is the extremely low reliability of the tank's engine and its transmission in desert conditions. Heat from the sun, hot sand and the constantly present hot dust in the air nearly nullified the advantages offered by the turret-mounted thermal sights. Visibility range of these sights did not exceed 300 meters during movement in convoy and reached up to 700-800 meters during stops. Only during cold nights did the visibility range reach 1000-1,500 meters. Additionally, a large number of thermal sights and other electronics simply broke down. The tiny crystalline sand particles caused electrical power surges and disabled electronic equipment.

This was the reason for the decision by the coalition command to stop movement of troops at night when a contact with the enemy was deemed likely.

The main strong side of the coalition forces was the wide availability of modern reconnaissance and communication systems that allowed to detect the enemy at long ranges and to quickly suppress the enemy with well-coordinated actions of different types of available forces.

In general the US soldiers showed sufficiently high combat resilience. Even in the extremely difficult weather conditions the troops maintained control structure and adequately interpreted the situation. Combat spirit remained high. The majority of troops remain confident in their abilities, while maintaining belief in the superiority of their weapons and maintaining reasonable confidence in the way the war is being fought.

It should be noted, however, that the way the war is being fought did create a certain sense of disappointment in most of the troops. Many are feeling that they've been lied to and are openly talking about the stupidity of the high command and its gross miscalculations. "Those star-covered Pentagon idiots promised us a victory march and flowers on the armor. What we got instead were those damned fanatics fighting for every dune and the sand squeaking in your ass!" said one of the wounded recuperating at a hospital in Rammstein. Reverse translation from Russian

Nevertheless, despite of the sand storms the terrain favors the coalition actions by allowing it to employ their entire arsenal of weapons at the greatest possible range, which makes it difficult for the Iraqis to conduct combat operations outside of populated areas.

Overestimating the abilities of its airborne forces was a weak side of the coalition. Plans for a wide-scale use of helicopters as an independent force did not materialize. All attempts by the US command to organize aerial and ground operations through exclusive use of airborne forces have failed. Because of these failures by the end of the fourth day of the war all airborne units were distributed across the coalition units and used by the attacking forces for reconnaissance, fire support, and for containing the enemy. The main burden of combat was carried by the "heavy" mechanized infantry and tank units.

Another serious drawback in the coalition planning was the exceptionally weak protection in the rear of the advancing forces. This resulted in constant interruptions in fuel supply. Tank units sometimes spent up to 6 hours standing still with empty fuel tanks, in essence, being targets for the Iraqis. Throughout the war delivery of food, ammunition and fuel remains a headache for the US commanders.

Among the US soldiers there has been a wide-scale discontent with the quality of the new combat rations. Servicemen are openly calling these rations "shitty." Many soldier just take the biscuits and the sweets and discard the rest of the ration. Commanders of the combat units are demanding from the coalition command to immediately provide the troops with hot food and to review the entire contents of the combat ration.

Among the strong sides of the Iraqi troops are their excellent knowledge of the terrain, high quality of defensive engineering work, their ability to conceal their main attack forces and their resilience and determination in defense. The Iraqis have shown good organization in their command and communication structures as well as decisive and well-planned strategy.

Among the drawbacks of the Iraqi forces is the bureaucratic inflexibility of their command, when all decisions are being made only at the highest levels. Their top commanders also tend to stick to standard "template" maneuvers and there is insufficient coordination among the different types of forces.

At the same time commanders of the Iraqi special operations forces are making good use of the available troops and weapons to conduct operations behind the front lines of the enemy. They use concealment, show cunning and imagination.

The first strategic lessons of the war

Lessons of the war in Iraq are discussed here with a focus on a possible similar war between Russia and the US

The main of such lessons is the ever-increasing significance of troop concealment as one of the primary methods of combat. Concealment and strict adherence to the requirements for secrecy and security become strategic goals of the defending forces in the view of the US reliance and that of its allies on precision-guided weapons, electronic and optical reconnaissance as well as due to their use of tactical weapons at the maximum possible range afforded by these reconnaissance methods. Importance of concealment is being seen in Iraq and was clearly demonstrated in Yugoslavia, where the Yugoslav Army preserved nearly 98%

of its assets despite the three months of bombing. Within our Russian/European battle theater concealment methods will offer us the Russian army an enormous advantage over the US.

The second lesson of this war is the strategic role of the air defenses in modern warfare as the most important service of the armed forces. Only the complete air dominance of the coalition allows it to continue its advance toward Baghdad and to achieve the critical advantage in any engagement. Even the short interruption in air support caused by the sand storms put the US and British troops in a very difficult situation.

Elimination of the air defenses as a separate service branch of the Russian Armed Forces and its gradual dissipation in the Air Force can be called nothing else but a "crime". [This statement refers to the recent unification of the Russian Air Force (VVS) and the Air Defense Force (PVO) and the secondary role of the air defense force within this new structure.]

The third lesson of the war is the growing importance of combat reconnaissance and increased availability of anti-tank weapons capable of engaging the enemy at maximum range. There is a requirement on the battlefield for a new weapon system for small units that would allow for detection of the enemy at maximum distance during day or night; for effective engagement of modern tanks at a range of 800-1000 meters; for engagement of enemy infantry at a range of 300-500 meters even with the modern personal protection equipment possessed by the infantry.

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Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 27 UPDATE 27.03.2003 [23:21]

Intercepted radio communications indicate that tomorrow we should expect a powerful attack by the coalition. During all day today the coalition troops were being reinforced and fully resupplied with fuel and ammunition. Additional units reserved for maintaining security along the Kuwaiti border were moved today to the front lines. The total number of additional [coalition] forces to enter Iraq numbers up to five battalions and around 800 combat vehicles.

By 1600hrs today the sand storm in Iraq has subsided allowing coalition to resume helicopter support of ground troops. At the same time the Iraqi positions were attacked by bombers and ground attack aircraft, which forced the Iraqis to cease their attacks and to resume defensive operations.

Available information suggests that the coalition command, despite of the extreme exhaustion of its troops, will attempt to use elements of the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division to actively contain the Iraqi forces around Karabela and to reach the strategic Al-Falludja highway by moving from the west around the Razzaza lake, thus cutting off the way to Jordan. It is expected that by noon of March 29 the main coalition forces will reach this area.

During the night from March 29 to March 30 elements of the US 82nd Airborne Division aided by the Army Special Operations units may attempt to capture the Saddam Hussein Airport. Immediately following the capture of the airport the coalition plans to use it for the

deployment of a brigade from the 101st Airborne Division, which will be responsible for holding the airport until the arrival of the main forces.

Commanders of the reinforced Marine brigade trying to take An-Nasiriya for the fourth day have received strict orders to suppress the Iraqi defenses and to take the town during the next day, after which to continue their advance toward Al-Kut and Al-Ammara. Similarly strict orders were received by the command of the brigade attacking An-Najaf. They will have to take this town, widen the staging area on the left bank of the Euphrates and push the Iraqis away from the town. By the morning of March 29 both these brigades are supposed join up southwest of Al-Kut, where they will be reinforced by the elements of the 101st Airborne Division and, after forming a southern attack line, they would blockade Baghdad from the south.

The British command has been ordered to completely take over the Fao peninsula, complete the blockade of Basra from the south and to completely take over the (Basra) airport area. After that the British are to advance toward Basra from the south along the Al-Arab river.

Based on this information to say that tomorrow we should expect heated combat would be an understatement. [translated by Venik]

http://www1.iraqwar.ru/iraq-read_article.php?articleId=858&sesid=2

**Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 27, 2003
27.03.2003 [14:25]**

There has been a sharp increase in activity on the southern front. As of 0700hrs the coalition forces are subjected to nearly constant attacks along the entire length of the front. The Iraqi command took the advantage of the raging sand storm to regroup its troops and to reinforce the defenses along the approaches to Karabela and An-Najaf with two large armored units (up to two armored brigades totaling up to 200 tanks). The Iraqi attack units were covertly moved near the positions of the US 3rd Infantry Division [Motorized] and the 101st Airborne Division. With sunrise and a marginal visibility improvement the Iraqis attacked these US forces in the flank to the west of Karabela.

Simultaneously, massive artillery barrages and counterattacks were launched against units of the US 3rd Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division conducting combat operations near An-Najaf. The situation [for the US troops] was complicated by the fact that the continuing sand storm forced them to group their units into battalion convoys in order to avoid losing troops and equipment in near zero-visibility conditions. These battalion convoys were concentrated along the roads leading to Karabela and An-Najaf and had only limited defenses. There was no single line of the front; aerial reconnaissance in these conditions was not possible and until the very last moment the coalition command was unaware of the Iraqi preparations.

During one of such attacks [the Iraqi forces] caught off-guard a unit of the US 3rd Infantry Division that was doing vehicle maintenance and repairs. In a short battle the US unit was destroyed and dispersed, leaving behind one armored personnel carrier, a repair vehicle and two Abrams tanks, one of which was fully operational.

At the present time visibility in the combat zone does not exceed 300 meters, which limits the effectiveness of the 101st Airborne Division and that of its 70 attack helicopters representing the main aerial reconnaissance and ground support force of the coalition. One of the coalition transport helicopters crashed yesterday during take-off. The reason for the crash was sand in the engine compressors.

The Iraqis were able to get in range for close combat without losses and now fierce battles are continuing in the areas of Karabela and An-Najaf. The main burden of supporting the coalition ground troops has been placed with the artillery and ground attack aircraft. Effectiveness of the latter is minimal due to the weather conditions. Strikes can be delivered only against old Iraqi targets with known coordinates, while actually supporting the ground troops engaged in combat is virtually impossible and attempts to do so lead to the most unfortunate consequences.

Intercepted radio communications show that at around 0615hrs this morning the lead of a flight of two A-10 ground attack planes detected a convoy of armored vehicles. Unable to see any markings identifying these vehicles as friendly and not being able to contact the convoy by radio the pilot directed artillery fire to the coordinates of the convoy.

Later it was discovered that this was a coalition convoy. Thick layers of dust covered up the identification markings - colored strips of cloth in the rear of the vehicles. Electronic jamming made radio contact impossible. First reports indicated that the US unit lost 50 troops killed and wounded. At least five armored vehicles have been destroyed, one of which was an Abrams tank.

During the past day the coalition losses in this area [Karabela and An-Najaf] were 18-22 killed and up to 40 wounded. Most of the fatalities were sustained due to unexpected attacks by the Iraqi Special Forces against the coalition rears and against communication sites. This is a sign of the increasing diversionary and partisan actions by the Iraqis.

During the same period of time the Iraqi forces sustained up to 100 killed, about the same number of wounded and up to 50 captured.

Since the beginning of the operation no more than 2000 Iraqi troops were captured by the coalition. The majority of the captured troops were members of regional defense [militia] units.

The Iraqis were able to move significant reinforcements to the area of An-Nasiriya making it now extremely difficult for the Americans to widen their staging areas on the left bank of the Euphrates. Moreover, the Americans [on the left bank of the Euphrates] may end up in a very difficult situation if the Iraqis manage to destroy the bridges and to separate [these US units] from the main coalition force. The US forces in this area consist of up to 4,000 Marines from the 1st Marine Division and supporting units of the 82nd Airborne Division. Currently, fighting has resumed in the An-Nasiriya suburbs.

During one of the Iraqi attacks yesterday against the US positions the Iraqis for the first time employed the "Grad" mobile multiple rocket launch systems [MLRS]. As the result an entire US unit was taken out of combat after sustaining up to 40 killed and wounded as well as losing up to 7 armored vehicles.

There are no other reports of any losses in this area [An-Nasiriya] except for one US Marine drowning in one of the city's water canals and another Marine being killed by a sniper.

During the sand storm the coalition command lost contact with up to 4 coalition reconnaissance groups. Their whereabouts are being determined. It is still unknown what happened to more than 600 other coalition troops mainly from resupply, communications and reconnaissance units communication with which was lost during the past 24 hours.

The situation around Basra remains unclear. The Iraqis control the city and its suburbs, as well as the area south of Basra and the part of the adjacent Fao peninsula, which the British have so far failed to take. The British forces are blockading Basra from the west and northwest. However, due to difficult marshy terrain crossed by numerous waterways the British have been unable to create a single line of front and to establish a complete blockade of the city. Currently main combat operations are being launched for control of a small village near Basra where the local airport is located. The British field commanders report that there has been no drop in the combat activity of the Iraqis. On the contrary, under the cover of the sand storm up to two battalions of the "surrendered" Iraqi 51st Infantry Division were moved to the Fao peninsula to support the local defending forces.

Rumors about an uprising by the Basra Shiite population turned out to be false. Moreover, the Shiite community leaders called on the local residents to fight the "children of the Satan" - the Americans and the British.

During the past 24 hours the British sustained no less than 3 killed and up to 10 wounded due to mortar and sniper fire.

It is difficult to estimate the Iraqi losses [in Basra] due to limited available information. However, some reports suggest that up to 30 Iraqi troops were killed during the past day by artillery and aircraft fire.

During an attack against a coalition checkpoint in Umm Qasr last night one British marine infantry soldier was heavily wounded. This once again points to the tentative nature of the British claims of control over the town.

Information coming from northern regions of Iraq indicates that most of the Kurdish leaders chose not to participate in the US war against Iraq. The primary reason for that is the mistrust of the Kurds toward the US. Yesterday one of the Russian intelligence sources obtained information about a secret agreement reached between the US and the Turkish government. In the agreement the US, behind the backs of the Kurds, promised Turkey not to support in any way a formation of a Kurdish state in this region. The US has also promised not to prevent Turkey from sending its troops [to Northern Kurdistan] immediately following [the coalition] capture of northern Iraq.

In essence, this gives Turkey a card-blanc to use force for a "cleanup" in Kurdistan. At the same time the Kurdish troops will be moved to fight the Iraqis outside of Kurdistan, thus rendering them unable to support their own people.

Along the border with Kurdistan Turkey has already massed a 40,000-strong army expeditionary corps that is specializing in combat operations against the Kurds. This force remains at a 4-hour readiness to begin combat operations.

All of this indicates that the coalition command will be unable to create a strong "Northern Front" during the next 3-4 days and that the US Marines and paratroopers in this area will have to limit their operations to distracting the Iraqis and to launching reconnaissance missions.

During a meeting with the Germany's chancellor [Gerhard] Schroeder the heads of the German military and political intelligence reported that the US is doing everything possible to conceal information on the situation in the combat zone and that the US shows an extremely "unfriendly" attitude. Germany's own intelligence-gathering capabilities in this region are very limited. This is the result of Germany, being true to its obligations as an ally, not attempting to bolster its national intelligence operations in the region and not trying to separate its intelligence agencies from the intelligence structures of NATO and the US.

There has been a confirmation of yesterday's reports about the plans of the coalition command to increase its forces fighting in Iraq. The troops of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) are currently being airlifted to the region, while its equipment is traveling by sea around the Arabian Peninsula and the unloading is expected to begin as early as by the end of tomorrow. The Division numbers 30,000 soldiers and officers. By the end of April up to 120,000 more US troops, up to 500 tanks and up to 300 more helicopters will be moved to the region.

In addition to that, today the US President [George W] Bush asked the British Prime-Minister [Tony] Blair to increase the British military presence in Iraq by a minimum of 15,000-20,000 troops.

At the current level of combat operations and at the current level of Iraqi resistance the coalition may face a sharp shortage of troops and weapons within the next 5-7 days, which will allow the Iraqis to take the initiative. The White House took this conclusion of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff with great concern.

During the past seven days of the war the US Navy detained all ships in the Persian Gulf going to Iraq under the US "Oil for Food" program. Since yesterday all these ships are being unloaded in Kuwait. Unloaded food is being delivered by the US military to Iraq and is being distributed as "American humanitarian aid" and as a part of the "rebuilding Iraq" program. These US actions have already cause a serious scandal in the UN. The US explained its actions by its unilateral decision to freeze all Iraqi financial assets, including the Iraqi financial assets with the UN. These assets the US now considers its property and will exercise full control over them. Captains of the detained ships have already called these actions by the US a "piracy."

[translated by Venik]

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**Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 26, 2003
26.03.2003 [12:30]**

Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 26, 2003 26.03.2003 [12:30]

As of the morning March 26 fierce battles have resumed in Iraq along the entire front. As was previously expected the sand storm has halted the advance of the coalition forces. Additionally, the coalition troops were in serious need of rest, resupply and reinforcement.

For much of the day unfavorable weather paralyzed combat activities of one of the main attack groups of the coalition - the 101st Airborne Division, which was forced to completely curtail all of its combat operations. Combat readiness of this division is of strategic importance to the entire coalition force primarily due to the fact that the division operates 290 helicopters of various types, including the 72 Apache attack helicopters. The 101st Airborne Division along with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) forms the backbone of the XVIII Airborne Corps - the main strike force of the coalition.

In essence, the 101st Airborne Division provides suppression of the enemy while simultaneously conducting aerial reconnaissance and suppression of any newly-discovered enemy forces. It maintain constant contact with the enemy and contains the enemy until the main forces arrive.

Currently the coalition's main forces are conducting combat operations along the approaches to the towns of Karabela and An-Najaf?.

During the past 24 hours the coalition units in these areas sustained 4 killed and up to 10 wounded. All indications are that one coalition special operations helicopter was lost and no communication with the helicopter could be established. The faith of its crew and the troops it carried is still being investigated. Another two coalition helicopters made emergency landings in areas controlled by friendly forces. Aircraft engines were found to be extremely susceptible to the effects of sand.

As was determined by our GRU intelligence even before the start of combat operations, the primary goal of the coalition command was an energetic advance across the desert along the right bank of the Euphrates river, reaching the central Iraq with a further thrust toward Baghdad through Karabela. Another strategic attack was to go around Basra through An-Nasiriya? toward Al-Ammara? followed by a full isolation of the southern Iraqi forces, effectively splitting Iraq in half.

The first part of the plan - a march across the desert toward Karabela - was achieved, albeit with serious delays. The second part of the plan in essence has failed. Up to this moment the coalition troops were unable to punch through the Iraqi defenses near An-Nasiriya and to force the Iraqis toward Al-Ammara, which would have allowed the coalition to clear the way to Baghdad along the strategically important Mesopotamian river valley with Tigris and Euphrates covering the flanks of the advancing forces. So far only a few coalition units were able to get to the left bank of the Euphrates, where they are trying to widen their staging areas.

Additionally, the prolonged fighting near An-Nasiriya? allowed the Iraqis to withdraw most of their forces from Basra region and to avoid being surrounded.

Currently the coalition forces are trying to get across the river near An-Najaf? and Karabela, where, all indications are, heavy combat will continue during the next two days.

Harsh criticism from the top US military leadership and pressure from Washington forced the coalition command to resort to more energetic actions. In addition to that the shock of the first days of war among the coalition troops, when they expected an easy trek across Iraq but

encountered stiff resistance, is now wearing off. They are now being "absorbed" into the war. Now the coalition actions are becoming more coherent and adequate. The coalition command is gradually taking the initiative away from the Iraqis, which is in part due to the reliance of the Iraqi command on inflexible defensive tactics.

Now the main tactical move of the US troops is to use their aerial and ground reconnaissance forces to test the Iraqi defenses, to open them up and, without entering direct close combat, to deliver maximum damage using artillery and ground attack aircraft. The coalition has finally stopped pointlessly moving around in convoys, as was characteristic of the first three days of the ground war.

The tactics allowed for increased combat effectiveness and considerably increased losses of the Iraqi side. Due to such attacks by the coalition during the previous night and today's early morning the Iraqis have lost 250 troops killed and up to 500 wounded. Up to 10 Iraqi tanks were destroyed and up to three Iraqi artillery batteries were suppressed.

However, despite of the increased combat effectiveness, the coalition forces have so far failed to capture a single sizable town in Iraq. Only by the end of the sixth day the British marine infantry was able to establish tentative control over the tiny town of Umm Qasr. During the hours of darkness all movement around the town is stopped and the occupying troops withdraw to defensive positions. Constant exchanges of fire take place throughout the town. Out of more than 1,500-strong local garrison the British managed to capture only 150 Iraqis. The rest has either withdrew toward Basra or changed into civilian clothes and resorted to partisan actions.

Near Basra the British forces in essence are laying a Middle Ages-style siege of a city with the population of two million. Artillery fire has destroyed most of the city's life-supporting infrastructure and artillery is used continuously against the positions of the defending units. The main goal of the British is to maintain a strict blockade of Basra. Their command is confident that the situation in the city can be destabilized and lack of food, electricity and water will prompt the local population to cause the surrender of the defending forces. Analysts point out that capture of Basra is viewed by the coalition command as being exceptionally important and as a model for the future "bloodless" takeover of Baghdad.

So far, however, this approach does not work and the city's garrison is actively defending its territory. Just during the past night at least three British soldiers were killed and eight more were wounded in the exchange of fire near Basra

It is difficult not to notice the extremely overstretched frontline of the coalition. This frontline is stretching toward Baghdad through An-Najaf and Karabela and its right flank goes all the way along the Euphrates and is completely exposed. All main supply and communication lines of the coalition are going through unprotected desert. Already the supply routes are stretching for more than 350 kilometers and are used to deliver 800 tonnes of fuel and up to 1,000 tonnes of ammunition, food and other supplies daily to the advancing forces.

If the Iraqis deliver a decisive strike at the base of this front, the coalition will find itself in a very difficult situation, with its main forces, cutoff from the resupply units, losing their combat readiness and mobility and falling an easy prey to the Iraqis.

It is possible that the Americans are relying on the power of their aviation that should prevent any such developments. It is also possible that this kind of self confidence may be very dangerous.

Massive numbers of disabled combat vehicles and other equipment becomes a strategic problem for the coalition. Already, radio intercepts indicate, all available repair units have been deployed to the front. Over 60% of all available spare parts have been already used and emergency additional supplies are being requested.

The sand is literally "eating up" the equipment. Sand has a particularly serious effect on electronics and transmissions of combat vehicles. Already more than 40 tanks and up to 69 armored personnel carriers have been disabled due to damaged engines; more than 150 armored vehicles have lost the use of their heat-seeking targeting sights and night vision equipment. Fine dust gets into all openings and clogs up all moving parts.

The coalition command has effectively acknowledged its defeat in the information war with the strikes against the television center in Baghdad and now further strikes should be expected against television and ground satellite transmitters. The coalition is attempting to leave the Iraqis without information in order to demoralize them.

The extreme length of the resupply routes and the actions of the Iraqi reconnaissance units have created a new problem: the coalition command is forced to admit that it has no information about the conditions on the roads. Currently, as intercepted radio communications show, the coalition command is trying to establish the whereabouts of more than 500 of its troops that fell behind their units, departed with resupply convoys or were carrying out individual assignments. So far it was not possible to establish how many of these troops are dead, captured or have successfully reached other units.

http://www1.iraqwar.ru/iraq-read_article.php?articleId=729&sesid=2

**Russian military intel update: War in Iraq, March 25, 2003
25.03.2003 [12:30]**

As of the morning March 25 the situation on Iraqi fronts remains quiet. Both sides are actively preparing for future engagements. Exhausted in combat the US 3rd Motorized Infantry Division is now being reinforced with fresh units from Kuwait (presumably with up to 1 Marine brigade and 1 tank brigade from the 1st Armored Division (all coming from the coalition command reserves) and elements of the British 7th Tank Brigade from the area of Umm Qasr. The troops have a stringent requirement to regroup and, after conducting additional reconnaissance, to capture An-Nasiriya? within two days.

The Iraqis have reinforced the An-Nasiriya garrison with several artillery battalions and a large number of anti-tank weapons. Additionally, the Iraqis are actively deploying landmines along the approaches to their positions.

However, currently all combat has nearly ceased due to the sand storm raging over the region. Weather forecasts anticipate the storm's end by noon of March 26. According to intercepted radio communications the coalition advance will be tied to the end of the sand storm and is planned to take place during the night of March 26-27. The coalition command believes that a

night attack will allow its forces to achieve the element of surprise and to use its advantage in specialized night fighting equipment.

There have been no reports of any losses resulting from direct combat in the past 10 hours. However, there is information about two coalition combat vehicles destroyed by landmines. Three US soldiers were wounded in one of these incidents.

Positional warfare continues near Basra. The coalition forces in this area are clearly insufficient for continuing the attack and the main emphasis is being placed on artillery and aviation. The city is under constant bombardment but so far this had little impact on the combat readiness of the Iraqi units. Thus, last night an Iraqi battalion reinforced with tanks swung around the coalition positions in the area of Basra airport and attacked the coalition forces in the flanks. As the result of this attack the US forces have been thrown back 1.5-2 kilometers leaving the airport and the nearby structures in the hands of the Iraqis. Two APCs and one tank were destroyed in this encounter. According to radio intelligence at least two US soldiers were killed and no less than six US soldiers were wounded.

The coalition forces are still unable to completely capture the small town of Umm Qasr. By the end of yesterday coalition units were controlling only the strategic roads going through the town, but fierce fighting continued in the residential districts. At least two British servicemen were killed by sniper fire in Umm Qasr during the past 24 hours.

The coalition command is extremely concerned with growing resistance movement in the rear of the advancing forces. During a meeting at the coalition command headquarters it was reported that up to 20 Iraqi reconnaissance units are active behind the coalition rear. The Iraqis attack lightly armed supply units; they deploy landmines and conduct reconnaissance. Additionally, captured villages have active armed resistance that is conducting reconnaissance in the interests of the Iraqi command and is organizing attacks against coalition troops. During the past 24 hours more than 30 coalition wheeled and armored vehicles have been lost to such attacks. Some 7 coalition servicemen are missing, 3 soldiers are dead and 10 are wounded.

The coalition commander Gen. Tommy Franks ordered his forces to clear coalition rears from Iraqi diversionary units and partisans in the shortest possible time. The British side will be responsible for fulfilling these orders. A unit from the 22nd SAS regiment supported by the US 1st, 5th and 10th Special Operations Groups will carry out this operation. Each of these groups has up to 12 units numbering 12-15 troops each. All of these units have some Asian or Arabic Americans. The groups also have guides and translators from among local Iraqi collaborators, who went through rapid training at specialized centers in the Czech Republic and in the UK.

The sand storms turned out to be the main enemy of the American military equipment. Just the 3rd Motorized Infantry Division had more than 100 vehicles disabled. This is causing serious concern on the part of the coalition command. The repair crews are working around the clock to return all the disabled equipment back into service. The M1A2 Abrams tanks are not known for their reliable engines as it is, but in the sand storm conditions multiple breakdowns became a real problem for the tank crews.

All attempts by the US paratroopers to capture the town of Kirkuk have yielded no result. The Americans counted on the support of the Kurds but the latter refused to take a direct part in the attack and demanded guarantees from the US command that it will prevent a Turkish invasion. The Turkish themselves are avoiding making any promises.

Additionally, the situation at Kirkuk is affected by the lack of heavy weapons on the part of the US paratroopers. The aviation support alone is clearly not sufficient. The northern group of forces commander Marine Brig. Gen. Osman has requested artillery and armored vehicles.

All indications are that so far the US is unable to form a combat-capable strike force in this area.

According to satellite reconnaissance it seems likely that the Iraqis had time to remove the captured Apache Longbow attack helicopter of the 11th Aviation Regiment. The pieces remaining at the landing site following a US bombing strike indicate that the bombs hit a crudely constructed mockup.

Aerial bombardment of Baghdad has so far failed to produce the expected results. All targets designated before the war have been hit 3 to 7 times, but this had almost no effect on the combat readiness of the Iraqi army, their air defenses or the command and control structures.

It seems that during preparation for the war the Iraqis were able to create new, well-protected communication lines and control centers. There is plenty of intelligence information indicating that so far the US electronic reconnaissance was unable to locate and to penetrate the Iraqi command's communication network, which is an indication of the network's high technological sophistication.

A particular point of concern for the US command is the huge overuse of precision-guided munitions and cruise missiles. Already the supply of heavy cruise missiles like the "Tomahawk" has been reduced by a third and, at the current rate of use, in three weeks the US will be left only with the untouchable strategic supply of these missiles. A similar situation exists with other types of precision-guided munitions. "The rate of their use is incompatible with the obtained results. We are literally dropping gold into the mud!" said Gen. Richard Mayers during a meeting in Pentagon yesterday morning. reverse translation from Russian

The US experts already call this war a "crisis". "It was enough for the enemy to show a little resistance and some creative thinking as our technological superiority begun to quickly lose all its meaning. Our expenses are not justified by the obtained results. The enemy is using an order of magnitude cheaper weapons to reach the same goals for which we spend billions on technological whims of the defense industry!" said Gen. Stanley McCrystal? during the same Pentagon meeting. reverse translation from Russian

Since the early morning today the coalition high command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff are in an online conference joined by the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. This meeting immediately follows an earlier meeting last night at the White House. During the night meeting with President Bush emergency actions were outlined to resolve the standstill in Iraq. The existing course of actions is viewed as "ineffective and leading to a crisis". The Secretary of State Collin Powell warned that, if the war in Iraq continues for more than a month, it might lead to unpredictable consequences in international politics.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Mayers reported on the proposed actions and corrections to the plan of the operation in Iraq. George Bush demanded that the military breaks the standstill in Iraq and within a week achieves significant military progress. A particular attention, according to Bush, should be paid to finding and eliminating the top

Iraqi political and military leadership. Bush believes that Saddam Hussein and his closest aides are the cornerstone of the Iraqi defense.

During today's online meeting at the coalition headquarters Gen. Franks was criticized for inefficient command of his troops and for his inability to concentrate available forces on the main tasks.

According to Russian military intelligence Pentagon made a decision to significantly reinforce the coalition. During the next two weeks up to 50,000 troops and no less than 500 tanks will arrive to the combat area from the US military bases in Germany and Albania. By the end of April 120,000 more troops and up to 1,200 additional tanks will be sent to support the war against Iraq.

A decision was made to change the way aviation is used in this war. The use of precision-guided munitions will be scaled down and these weapons will be reserved for attacking only known, confirmed targets. There will be an increase in the use of conventional high-yield aviation bombs, volume-detonation bombs and incendiary munitions. The USAF command is ordered to deliver to airbases used against Iraq a two-week supply of aviation bombs of 1-tonn caliber and higher as well as volume-detonation and incendiary bombs. This means that Washington is resorting to the "scorched earth" tactics and carpet-bombing campaign.

E N D E