

Leaked documents reveal shortcomings of British army in Iraq war

Documents released ahead of a report by the British government on the country's involvement in the 2003 invasion of Iraq contain a highly critical assessment of the British military's planning and operations, according to the Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

Though the British Army, as part of the invading coalition, achieved a military victory, the report says that this was only because the Iraqi Army hardly put up a fight.

'A more capable enemy would probably have punished (our) shortcomings severely,' the documents state.

The papers obtained by the Sunday Telegraph came out two days ahead of public hearings to 'identify lessons that can be learnt from the Iraq conflict', according to the newspaper.

The documents criticise numerous aspects of Britain's engagement in Iraq, from former prime minister Tony Blair's false claim that Britain aimed for 'disarmament, not regime change' in Iraq, to under-resourced soldiers who were, in some cases, flown to Iraq on commercial airlines.

High-ranking military commanders vent their frustrations in the documents at the way in which the mission was carried out. For example, they cite the army's main radio system, which failed to function properly due to the heat, forcing soldiers to rely on mobile phones.

Perhaps most serious among the blunders, the invasion plans failed to consider what would happen after Baghdad fell. This contributed to a notable loss of momentum which allowed insurgents to recover, thus prolonging the conflict.

A final report from the British government's investigation is not expected before elections next spring. The investigation does not carry legal consequences, though it may impact the legacy of Tony Blair.

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