

Mark Thomson argues that coalition strategy in Iraq will go off the rails if it relies on a civilian uprising. Retired US general **Barry McCaffrey** says the US will win, but it must prepare for threats outside Iraq.

Plan doesn't improve with time

Mark Thomson

We are told that the war in Iraq is going according to plan. If so, it's not shock and awe. It's "let's try something and see if it works".

In essence, the plan appears to be to apply increasing pressure until Iraq surrenders, and to do so flexibly, indeed responsively, and without any sort of fixed timetable. It is a plan designed to minimise civilian and own casualties while maximising the prospects for a manageable peace. But whatever else it is, it had better not be to wait for the Iraqi people to topple Saddam Hussein.

We've already seen the coalition plan progress through several stages. First, they threatened invasion while offering Hussein refuge elsewhere. Didn't work. Second, they tried to kill Hussein with the hope that the regime would crumble. Didn't work.

Third, they sought surrender by deploying into Iraq, destroying regime targets and negotiating with the army. Hasn't worked so far and, in fact, the Iraqis have shown a surprising tenacity in harassing the

coalition. It appears that simply turning up will not win this war. And so the plan will continue.

Increasing levels of force will be employed until surrender is secured.

The fourth step will be to stand off (at least from Baghdad) and try to force the Iraqi military to surrender by demonstrating the futility of resistance. The more the Iraqi military comes out into the open, the better chance this will have.

This eventually may include using Basra as a bloody demonstration piece. In the meantime, coalition forces will be built up in case the fifth and final level of inducement has to be used: urban warfare.

The plan does not improve with time. As pressure is cranked up, more civilians will die as a direct result of coalition action. And the prospect of fighting tens of thousands of Republican Guards in the streets of Baghdad is a chilling one. We can expect every other avenue to secure a surrender to be fully exhausted before then.

That is if things continue to go according to plan. But we have not yet, as the military say, gained the initiative. The course of the war can

still change dramatically due to factors well outside of our control. Having a plan is one thing, getting others to play by it is another.

Consider the good people of Iraq. Last week we heard reports of a civilian uprising in Basra. Some saw it as a potential breakthrough. As the coalition pressed from the outside, the people would rise up on the inside and the city would be liberated. Maybe, or perhaps what we saw was a nightmare mercifully avoided. As it stands the coalition is

"The coalition is far from ready for a major urban engagement."

far from ready for a major urban engagement in either Baghdad or Basra. There is still softening up to be done, intelligence yet to be sought from prisoners and fleeing civilians and, most of all, there are still far too few soldiers in the theatre.

Thankfully, there are another 100,000 on the way. We are a long way from having exhausted the least costly avenues to secure surrender,

and we are even further from being in a position to demand one by force of arms in downtown Baghdad.

Imagine if there was a major uprising in Basra tomorrow (don't even think about Baghdad) and al-Jazeera somehow telecasts footage. We see hundreds of civilians being killed, yet the revolt continues. Do we stand by and allow the slaughter?

Or do we ask the British commander of the couple of brigades surrounding the city to rally his men against an unknown number of enemy in a metropolis of 1.3 million and walk into a potential trap. To ask such a sacrifice in a war of choice would be difficult, to abandon the civilians we talk about liberating would be horrific.

Let us hope that the Iraqi military has no imagination, and that Iraqi civilians remember the history of the last Gulf War. And let's stop any talk of having civilians fight a war we started, at least until we are sure we can prevail in their support.

■ Mark Thomson is a program director at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. The views expressed are his own.

EU aims for farm subsidies agreement

Franz Fischler and Pascal Lamy

The European Union, along with other World Trade Organisation members, has been working hard for an agreement on the so-called "agricultural modalities". Unfortunately, the March 31 deadline passed without an agreement.

But, this is not the end of the story; what's more important is to inject new dynamism into the negotiations and to keep working to narrow gaps. The EU is ready to play its part to ensure that a balanced agreement is reached.

At the launch of the new trade round in Doha more than a year ago, all WTO members undertook to open their markets and to update the WTO rule book in a way that would give developing countries a better deal. The EU has made substantial and concrete proposals across the board, but always putting the emphasis on development.

Agriculture is no exception. The EU proposal represents a middle way between extreme positions. It goes a long way to meet all interests, offering greater market access for all, lower trade-distorting farm subsidies, and sharp reductions for all forms of export aid. It takes into account non-trade issues such as food safety and the environment, as well as giving preferential treatment to developing countries.

Listening to some WTO members.

Bring in reserves for a show of strength

Barry McCaffrey

The initial success of the

