

## **Statement of Sally Morgan (Baroness Morgan of Huyton)**

In your letter of 8 July 2011 you asked me to provide a statement to the Inquiry which would:

- summarise my role as Director of Government Relations(sic);
- describe my role in relation to the advice of the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith on the legal basis for military action in Iraq;
- explain the purpose of my attending meetings with Lord Goldsmith in 2002 and 2003;
- provide any other information, comment or lessons I would wish to offer the Inquiry.

### ***Outline of my role as Director of Political and Government Relations***

It may be helpful to understand the background to my appointment as Director of Political and Government Relations.

In opposition I had been Tony Blair's Political Secretary. Following the 1997 election I became the PM's Political Secretary. The post of the Prime Minister's Political Secretary had existed for many years under governments of all political colours, long before the existence of Special Advisors. The Political Secretary was the head of a small Political Office based at No 10. The Political Office provided party political advice to the PM and acted as an important link between the PM and his/her party at Westminster and beyond. My understanding is that the Political Office has always been funded by the governing political party.

After the 2001 General Election I became a peer and Minister of State in the Cabinet Office. I resigned as Political Secretary but continued to advise and attend meetings with the Prime Minister. The post of Political Secretary was filled by Robert Hill (later replaced by Pat McFadden). Anji Hunter was promoted to a new post of Director of Government Relations, moving from her previous post of Special Advisor.

In November 2001 Anji Hunter resigned. As a result I was asked to return to No 10 to take up a new post of Director of Political and Government Relations. I remained in post until the 2005 General Election.

The new post was intended to strengthen the Prime Minister's operation at a party political level and also consolidate and improve wider (non-party) relationships between the Prime Minister and civil society. The post was jointly funded by the Government (as a Special Advisor) and the Labour Party.

I was a member of the Management Board of No10. My responsibilities included oversight of the Prime Minister's schedule and events organised by No 10, the correspondence unit and corporate communications. I was responsible for developing relationships with a variety of individuals and

organisations in the public, private and NGO worlds: “stakeholders” with an interest in the domestic policy priority areas of the government.

As a senior political advisor I had overall responsibility for the work of the Political Office. My team garnered and shared political intelligence and sought to improve communications between the Prime Minister and the Party at all levels, including Cabinet members and their Special Advisors, the Chair of the PLP, backbenchers and the wider party. I would meet the Chief Whip daily.

Within No 10 the senior staff operated as a strong and mutually supportive team particularly at times of pressure. The distinction between my role as a political special advisor and the role of senior civil servants in No 10 was clearly understood. Our functions were different and complementary. My role was to ensure that the political implications and pitfalls of decisions were considered alongside other factors. The division of roles worked well: I did not seek to second-guess the policy advice given by the highly experienced and well regarded senior civil servants; they did not see their role as offering political advice.

I was acutely aware that any eventual decision to invade Iraq would attract greater support if undertaken under the aegis of the United Nations. The government’s commitment to regional peace needed to be underpinned by strengthening the “roadmap” to the Middle East Peace Process and I knew that this had to be well communicated in the House of Commons.

Following the failure to achieve a second UN resolution I strongly supported the need for a vote in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister’s position would have been seriously weakened if a majority of Labour MPs had not supported the government. Along with many others I did what I could to maximise the Parliamentary majority.

### ***My role in relation to the Advice of the Attorney General on the legal basis for military action and purpose of my attending meetings with Lord Goldsmith***

Peter Goldsmith is a friend and a colleague in the House of Lords. We were both born in Liverpool and we have always got on well together. Throughout the past 10 years I have met Peter informally and continue to do so.

In the past some law officers have occupied their positions due to their political experience rather than their legal skills. In contrast, Lord Goldsmith is a talented and highly successful lawyer and former Chairman of the Bar. I know that the Prime Minister was delighted that such a distinguished lawyer was prepared to accept the post of Attorney. It was well understood to all concerned that the Attorney’s advice on legal matters must be based solely on legal and not political considerations. It would have been wholly improper for me to seek to influence Lord Goldsmith’s legal opinion. I certainly did not attempt to make any suggestions about the content of his advice. Had I done so, I have no doubt I would have received short shrift!

I am aware of claims that I somehow exerted pressure on the Attorney to alter his advice to provide a legal justification for military action against Iraq. I wish to state, without equivocation, that such

allegations are untrue. I am not a lawyer and do not feel qualified to question or influence Lord Goldsmith's legal opinion. I have never attempted to pressurise the Attorney on any legal question.

In your letter to me of 8 July 2011 you ask me about the purpose of meetings with Lord Goldsmith in 2002 and 2003.

In response to a request by me for any aide-memoires concerning the dates or contents of meetings, the Secretariat referred me to meetings on 19 December 2002, two meetings on 27 February 2003 and a further meeting on 13 March 2003. I was supplied with notes of the meetings on 19 December 2002 and the first meeting on 27 February 2003. Having read Lord Goldsmith's statement dated 4 January 2011 I note that he refers to a meeting held on 14 October. I believe he is describing the first meeting at which I was present where the Attorney gave an indication of his legal thinking. I cannot recall there being any additional meetings.

Unfortunately I have not retained notes or minutes of these or any other meetings during this period. Nor did I write a diary to which I can refer. I also wish to make it clear that I have no independent recollection as to the dates of the meetings I attended. I am simply relying on the information supplied to me recently. Therefore the references to dates in the following paragraphs should not be taken as providing any additional corroboration as to the dates given by other witnesses.

I would not wish to give the impression that my contact with Lord Goldsmith was limited to the above meetings. I am sure we would have spoken together on other occasions during the period in question.

I am also grateful to the Secretariat who have supplied me with selected passages taken from the transcripts of the oral evidence of Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair, Lord Goldsmith, Matthew Rycroft and Sir David Manning in which they refer to meetings at which the Attorney General and I were present.

Insofar as I can recall these meetings I believe that the material supplied to me accurately reflects what occurred. There is now little I can add.

These meetings were intended primarily to share information. Sir David Manning, Jonathan Powell and Lord Falconer were variously present. The first meeting took place before Resolution 1441 was agreed and included a discussion of the key issues at that point. I believe the later meetings followed a similar pattern in which each person present would contribute their respective knowledge of the developing jigsaw.

My role was to explain my perception of the parliamentary and political mood. Certainly there was no attempt at persuasion; the purpose of all those present was to impart and receive information.

As I remember it, at each meeting Lord Goldsmith updated those present about his current legal thinking. So, for example at the meeting on 14 October 2002 the Attorney outlined his view of what Resolution 1441 would have to encompass in order to provide authority for force, should there be a political decision to take action. On 19 December 2002, after Resolution 1441 had been agreed, there was a discussion of possible next steps, which we noted would include a full Cabinet discussion in January at which the Attorney would be present.

On 27 February 2003 I met the Attorney with Sir David and Jonathan Powell. At that meeting Lord Goldsmith informed us that he had reached a view that there was a reasonable case for military action although he urged that efforts should be continued to get agreement to a second resolution.

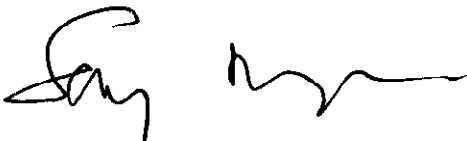
I believe that Lord Falconer and I also met Lord Goldsmith later that day. So far as I can recall Lord Goldsmith re-iterated the advice he had given earlier in the day. We then discussed the growing parliamentary pressures.

I am afraid I cannot remember any details about the meeting on 13 March 2003 but as by this stage the Attorney had already provided his written opinion I think it is likely we had a rather more informal conversation about parliamentary handling especially in the House of Lords.

At no point during any discussion at which I was present did I witness any effort to engage with Lord Goldsmith as to the correctness of his legal analysis. I am certain there was never any attempt by me, or by anyone else present, at any of the four meetings to challenge the Attorney's legal analysis or otherwise to influence the Attorney's legal opinion. I re-iterate that I was not aware of any hidden agenda to these meetings: I viewed their purpose as a valuable opportunity to exchange important information face-to-face.

***Any further information, comments or advice***

Thank you for the opportunity to make further comments. I do not wish to add to the statement I have given above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Morgan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sally Morgan

5 August 2011