

1 (3.45 pm)

2 LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR GRAEME LAMB

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Before the final part of today 's sessions we  
4 are jumping forward in time to September, I think, 2006,  
5 when General Sir Graeme Lamb took up the post of senior  
6 military representative in Iraq and also deputy  
7 commanding general for the Multi National Force, I think  
8 it is correctly described.

9 It is worth noting that General Lamb's period in  
10 Baghdad in this phase coincides with that of  
11 Dominic Asquith, from whom we took evidence last week.  
12 I'm not going to repeat the preamble I offered at the  
13 beginning of the main session, but my remarks at the  
14 beginning of that last session do apply equally to this  
15 one.

16 And so what I would like to start with is just to  
17 ask you, General, I mean, you went to Baghdad in  
18 September 2006 and I imagine in your mind were memories  
19 of, if not, indeed, lessons learned from, the experience  
20 in the south-east and I wonder if you could lead us into  
21 the Baghdad posting with what was in your mind as you  
22 went to it.

23 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I got the call from the then  
24 CJS at the time, General Jackson, who said, "Good news  
25 and bad news, Graeme". He said, "The good news is we

1 are going to make you a three-star," which amazed  
2 everybody in the British army by some margin. And then  
3 he said, "The bad news is it you are going back to  
4 Baghdad". I then corrected him and said since I was  
5 only of some vague use, actually what best suited me was  
6 at the front rather than at the rear, that there was no  
7 better place for me to go. So I was actually quite  
8 delighted to pick up that thread on the basis that, you  
9 know, this is a fight that we are in and my sense is  
10 that -- and it has not changed one jot even as I find  
11 myself in retirement back in Afghanistan -- this is  
12 a campaign of the day.

13 These two conflicts we find ourselves in are ones  
14 where we, as a nation, have been tested, challenged and  
15 it is where we have put our name. And so, therefore, to  
16 finish well and finish properly and do the right thing  
17 on a bad day is, in my view, part and parcel of where  
18 it's at.

19 So going back to Baghdad, in my view, was something  
20 that any soldier would embrace, and marching to the  
21 sound of gunfire wasn't just something that Napoleon or  
22 Wellington did in his day, it remains true today.

23 The second thing was I was going back amongst old  
24 friends. There was a show again for the command of  
25 2003. So it was Petraeus, Odierno, Martin Dempsey and

1       myself all back in town.

2               So there was a depth of experience that -- and  
3       trust, which is not -- which is not given. It can't be  
4       taken, it can only be given, a relationship of trust which  
5       I sensed would bear well, and it did, in what was going  
6       to be challenging times.

7               So that was the basis of me then deploying to  
8       Baghdad. I was originally on for six months, that was  
9       extended to just nearly a year by the time I came back.  
10      But, again, I saw that as no obligation other than duty.

11              As far as -- what did I carry with me? I think Iraq  
12      is an interesting reflection in so much as I went from  
13      the war to civil disorder to an insurgency on steroids,  
14      to sectarian violence, the likes of which I have only  
15      seen in a few parts of the world like Rwanda and the  
16      worst of the Balkans, in a very short space of time. So  
17      the idea that as we discussed in the previous session  
18      there was some certainty that you could develop a clear  
19      plan against these hugely changing dynamics, I think is  
20      one that is worth a reflection.

21              But it is -- it is general hindsight and, therefore,  
22      we have a certainty afforded us now which was not the  
23      case at the time as these things unfolded.

24              So in many ways what I took to Iraq was -- I don't  
25      speak Arabic, but I do understand the sort of cultures,

1 and so my sense is that it was an experience of having  
2 spent time in the Middle East and in particular in Iraq,  
3 and then a sense that there was a fight that -- or  
4 a campaign here that was worth finishing. So that was  
5 the basis under which I then approached.

6 I have always had an -- I have an appalling memory,  
7 which is probably self-evident from this morning's  
8 rather poor reflections, though I haven't actually said  
9 I can't recall quite as often as Ollie North did, I  
10 think, during his hearings. But in many ways I've  
11 tended to approach the problems in front of me rather  
12 than say this is what I did somewhere else.

13 So, therefore, one draws upon one's experience to,  
14 therefore, take -- and that's what I did this time round  
15 in Iraq.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think that is the cue then to  
17 turn to Sir Lawrence for the questions.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much. With that  
19 backdrop, perhaps you can just describe your role when  
20 you went back to Baghdad, and how did you locate  
21 yourself within both the American scene there, your  
22 relationship to the British operations still in the  
23 south and back to London?

24 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Sir, I was pretty clear that I was  
25 a DCG and --

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Which is a deputy --

2 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Deputy commanding general, not from  
3 ego or am I not looking good in charge of these broader  
4 responsibilities, but that was the role that was placed  
5 upon me.

6 I would say that probably 85 per cent of my energy  
7 therefore went towards that function rather than being  
8 fixated by I'm a British officer, and therefore need to  
9 be somehow taking an exceptional view on British forces  
10 which made up just one of the divisions within  
11 a troubled country.

12 You might -- you know, it is for you to judge me,  
13 whether that was right or wrong, but that was the  
14 position I took. I was very clear that I needed to  
15 establish my credentials if with the Americans. I know  
16 them pretty well and they know me reasonably well.

17 I had not worked closely with General Casey before  
18 but I needed to establish those relationships in a way  
19 that they saw me as contributing to the campaign,  
20 because my condition at that time was that we, UK -- to  
21 go back to an earlier observation -- were boxed Basra,  
22 boxed the four provinces, had seen those four provinces  
23 very much as the beginning, middle and the end of our  
24 contribution. Whereas from my perspective the  
25 contribution was clearly one of a campaign which we were

1 engaged in.

2 We had a smaller number than the Americans in the  
3 way of force numbers, but we enjoyed 50 per cent of  
4 the political equity and the political risk, and the  
5 risk to the nation and our name and a whole raft of  
6 other associated that went with these endeavours.

7 So, therefore, from where I sat, the importance was  
8 to contribute to the success of the campaign and with it  
9 set the conditions for the success that Britain should  
10 enjoy for its contribution. So that was the primary  
11 focus.

12 So in many ways -- so the last division I went and  
13 saw when I took over was the British division, and that  
14 was by absolute design. What I did not do was overly  
15 interfere with spending a huge amount of time talking to  
16 Richard Shirreff or Jonathan Shaw, who were the two  
17 general officers commanding down there, to find out what  
18 they were doing and in many ways how I could help.

19 By that time, there was a fairly clear and well  
20 established relationship, one I wouldn't necessarily  
21 think was one I would endorse, but it was the one that  
22 existed, which was a relationship whereby in many ways  
23 the GOC was talking directly back to London and to PJHQ,  
24 I was informed, was aware of what was being discussed.  
25 But just as its other divisions from other nations

1        were -- and brigades and the force levels were talking  
2        back to their own capital cities, in my view that was  
3        part and parcel. What was important was I concentrated  
4        on the wider role of the overall campaign.

5            And that is very much how I approached the 12 months  
6        when I was there. I had a responsibility obviously  
7        to -- and I reported once a week back to CDS in the form  
8        of a fairly short, pithy note that just tried to capture  
9        what I sensed was the -- my reading. And it was very  
10       much a one-man -- one person's view with a very small  
11       staff, had a very good Pol Ad in the form of  
12       Paul Lincoln sitting with me in Baghdad. But in many  
13       ways, it was just trying to capture where I sensed campaign  
14       in America was going on the basis they were driving  
15       a great deal of this. And while our focus may have been  
16       somewhat different from a UK perspective, actually what  
17       was important was they understood how we could best  
18       contribute to the campaign, rather than seeing it as  
19       some isolated activity in four provinces down south, and  
20       the like. But my sense was that is where UK had drawn  
21       itself to for various reasons over the time that I had  
22       been out of the country, before I returned.

23    SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That more or less describes how you  
24       would see your objectives at the time. It was looking  
25       at Iraq as a whole, working closely with all the forces,

1 obviously including the Americans, rather than having  
2 a particularly national role at all?

3 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, and that is just -- I suppose  
4 you might say, you know, who I am, that -- and the same  
5 applies in Helmand. You know, we can win in Helmand,  
6 but lose the campaign. We won't succeed in Afghanistan  
7 through Helmand alone. Helmand is a very important part  
8 of a broader campaign. What is important is the broader  
9 campaign succeeds. And in this case, in Iraq the  
10 hardest nights in many ways were further north. We had  
11 a very complicated situation down in Basra, Maysan was  
12 complex, but the truth of the matter is that it was the  
13 Anbar, Baghdad in particular, the Sunni belt and Mosul,  
14 which was -- it was all going to go back to Mosul at  
15 some point in time. And then the broader politics of  
16 Sunni, Shia and Kurd in the arrangements that I found  
17 myself.

18 Specifically my responsibilities were as the DCG,  
19 and that is exactly how General Casey treated me. He  
20 was very comfortable when he went out of country that I  
21 sat and represented. He was out, for instance, over the  
22 Christmas period when we conducted operations against  
23 the Iranians in Iraq, and he oversaw the execution of  
24 Saddam. So the responsibility was pretty clear.

25 Specifically, he asked me over and above the normal



1 duties of, therefore, helping him was to deal with the  
2 energy issue, and so that was really sort of how to get  
3 power up and running and the like, and the issue of the  
4 early stages of the engagement.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much. Martin?

6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You arrived in Baghdad in  
7 September 2006 and last week Dominic Asquith described  
8 to us the summer of 2006. I think he used the phrase  
9 "the battle for the soul of Iraq". Could you describe  
10 to us the situation in Iraq when you arrived and perhaps  
11 how it had changed since 2003?

12 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes. The insurgency, as I alluded  
13 to it, had moved on to steroids. You can buy insurgency  
14 and there was still, you know, considerable sums of  
15 money that (a) I think remained from that which had been  
16 squirreled away from the previous regime, and shouldn't  
17 forget -- and I remember going into Baghdad in the very  
18 earliest days and I think the following day the  
19 Americans found \$640 million in loose change in various  
20 boxes. So there was large sums of money that had been  
21 pushed away outside the country and was still fuelling  
22 the insurgency.

23 There was also the internal dynamics. Baiji oil  
24 refinery, for instance, north of Basra. I think we were  
25 losing \$1.3 billion worth of refined product a year,

1       which is a considerable amount of money.

2               Now, some of that was going to criminal and  
3       corruption, but in many ways some of it was also being  
4       ploughed back into the broad insurgency. And if haven't  
5       got a job and you need to feed your family, you don't  
6       really give too much to really an American or a Brit,  
7       then the answer is it is quite easy to buy somebody up,  
8       to buy IEDs, to hold caches and the like. So there was  
9       a sense of -- the whole insurgency had grown.

10              I arrived at the time that I think there was an  
11       intelligence report that had been leaked from the  
12       colonel from the US Marine Corps out in Anbar which  
13       suggested that they had lost a province. It was couched  
14       in those sort of terms.

15              As I recall, the Americans in Anbar were, I think,  
16       the US marines were experiencing about 80 attacks a day.  
17       The governor, Mahmoud, was besieged in the Green Zone in  
18       Baghdad. His council had either gone to Jordan or had  
19       been killed. Ramadi was broadly lost. There were no  
20       policemen in Hit. The Fallujah Business Association,  
21       I think, had 23 members. You know, that was the sort --  
22       so -- oh, and Al-Qaeda had claimed Anbar as a califate.

23              So it was going south, I think, in August 2006, in  
24       that sense.

25              Further up north, things were slightly better

1       although Mosul always remained potentially -- as it  
2       still does today -- an unstable piece of real estate,  
3       and Baghdad just was in the throes of beginning to get  
4       the full measure of the vehicle borne IEDs and the  
5       attacks that were being placed upon it.

6             Down south my sense was that we were under a fair  
7       amount of pressure. The -- General Shirreff had put  
8       together a plan, as I recall, called Op Sinbad, which  
9       was trying to take the best of what Pete Chiarelli,  
10      General Chiarelli, had done in Baghdad, which was the  
11      SWET(?) programme of water and electricity, basically  
12      essential services, and doing a great deal within  
13      Baghdad, which he was set upon and General Shirreff was  
14      trying to match that down in Basra with US funding,  
15      again, to enable that.

16            General Chiarelli had done that when he had been  
17      a divisional commander and he was repeating it now as  
18      a corps commander. He probably had that opportunity in  
19      that first time as divisional commander, but actually  
20      the situation had got worse. So it was quite difficult  
21      to try and pull back consent and goodwill when people  
22      were seeing an inevitable outcome which was further  
23      chaos and difficulties looming.

24            And finally, of course, I found myself in a place  
25      where, in -- you know, in times short, I, at the end of

1       2008, both the UNSCOM would be completed and there would  
2       be a -- the President would find himself -- he would  
3       have done his second tour. So time was not on our side.

4       SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You mentioned further chaos and  
5       difficulties looming. Were you concerned about the  
6       possibility of actual defeat?

7       LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I'm not sure I was so concerned  
8       about defeat. I think what I was seeing was a very  
9       serious situation, one where my sense was that the  
10      Americans were committed on a campaign plan that they  
11      were putting huge amounts of effort into, and one should  
12      not in any way underestimate the energy that was going  
13      into their programme in Baghdad to improve essential  
14      services and bring real differences to a pretty -- very  
15      much broken structure, which -- you know, but deep  
16      engineering rather than just superficial change.

17      My concern was that with all the -- their best  
18      endeavours, that that it wouldn't necessarily produce an  
19      outcome that would make a change in the overall  
20      campaign, which was at that point in time, in particular  
21      out in Anbar, not going at all well.

22      My sense was that Britain, at an earlier stage, had  
23      probably found itself where it was looking towards  
24      following through on the PIC, which was the handing  
25      over of provinces, and then setting its conditions for

1       leaving. And my sense was the overall campaign did not  
2       lend itself to one where one could see a successful  
3       outcome.

4   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can you tell us something about  
5       casualty levels and how they were affecting morale?

6   LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: The casualty levels were pretty  
7       extreme. Every day we would come up and I would sit --  
8       the Americans had this formal briefing every morning  
9       which lasted about an hour, at some ridiculously early  
10      time.

11       So one with sat through that. But it was, as one  
12      would expect, hugely important because over time you  
13      began to get very clear trends. What was a very clear  
14      trend was the pressure and the damage that was being  
15      caused upon the force itself. You know, I would go  
16      across to the medical -- the CASH, the medical facility  
17      in Baghdad, and just talk to the nurses and the doctors  
18      there. And one was seeing, you know, every day,  
19      multiple numbers of young men and women coming in in  
20      pretty desperate states in just trying to hold together  
21      this quite difficult campaign at that point in time.

22       And it wasn't just the coalition that was taking  
23      these hits, it was obviously the Iraqi army, the Iraqi  
24      police and, most importantly, the Iraqi people. These  
25      large -- these vehicle borne IEDs were killing -- they

1 happily will kill hundreds of people. And they, by  
2 design, were being presented in a way that got more  
3 sophisticated as time went on, where they would create  
4 an explosion or two, and it would herd people into an  
5 area where they then had very much larger vehicle borne  
6 IEDs with the clear intent of killing innocent civilians  
7 in gross numbers, in order to get effect a this sense of  
8 failing and a failing nation.

9 On a number of occasions we had to just shut down  
10 the city, so there was no vehicle moving at all. If you  
11 think of London shutting all vehicle movement as  
12 a necessary precaution because we had very clear  
13 intelligence that a number of very large vehicle borne  
14 IEDs were going to be presented.

15 So that was the sort of situation that one was  
16 presented with, and it wasn't so much that people were  
17 feeling a sense of failure or that the -- the campaign  
18 was -- it was a sense that people were working as hard  
19 as they could and it didn't look like we were going to  
20 get out of the hole.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I first ask you what you sensed  
22 the British priority in all of this -- I appreciate what  
23 you said about your role in Baghdad, but what was your  
24 sense of the British strategy in September 2006?

25 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Again, I think that what I was

1       seeing was -- all I was sensing was, if you take  
2       the situation I have just presented, that this was not  
3       going particularly well, the campaign, and therefore it  
4       was a case of setting the conditions to hand over to the  
5       Iraqis and a sense that there was not much more we  
6       could do.

7             So it wasn't a sense that we were reinforcing to  
8       build on what we had -- we were unable to convince both,  
9       I think, public and politician back here that the --  
10      that by merely putting more numbers, more money, more  
11      effort into the campaign that was running, in the  
12      conditions that they were in, that the outcome would  
13      then, you know, put us through a turn, that things would  
14      get better.

15            It was very much a case of accepting that this had  
16      been an extremely hard fight, and therefore how do we  
17      hand over in reasonable order. But very much that was  
18      my sense.

19            So it was -- it goes back to, I think, a comment  
20      that -- I think it was General Freddie or General Andrew  
21      made this morning: it was about looking to leaving  
22      rather than to succeeding.

23      SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And to some extent that was the  
24      American strategy as well?

25      LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes. The idea of transition was

1 very much the term that was being used. The problem  
2 that America was seeing at the time I arrived was they  
3 were recognising that their course of transition both in  
4 their ability to improve and train the Iraqi army and  
5 police so they were capable of, therefore, holding  
6 stability, security in a country, was not without its  
7 difficulties and they may not succeed there.

8 In fact, there was every indication that they  
9 thought they couldn't succeed then. The sense was that  
10 the Iraqis wished that level of sovereignty and  
11 authority, and with that somehow it would reduce the  
12 level of the violence.

13 There was four real threats in many ways, I think,  
14 against the stability that we faced: One was crime and  
15 corruption; the second was, depending who you talked to,  
16 it was either seen as those with another agenda, if you  
17 were talking to the Shia, but to a Sunni it was the  
18 Iranian interference and threats that were being  
19 presented; the third was the Saddamists, not Ba'athists,  
20 but those that in fact continued to unpick any sense of  
21 success; and obviously the fourth was Al-Qaeda and this  
22 sense of the extremist movement underpinned by the Sunni  
23 insurgency that was sitting out there, and then all of  
24 this wrapped up into still remaining some quite serious  
25 sectarian issues.



1           In February of that year, of course, we had the  
2           Golden Mosque had been destroyed and that had taken Iraq  
3           into a very dark place. It very quickly saw Shia and  
4           Sunnis beginning to contest -- and one should not forget  
5           when you look at Baghdad before and then you look at  
6           Baghdad during the Saddam era and then Baghdad  
7           afterwards, you can see that the Sunni belts were not  
8           something that was a natural status. They had been  
9           created by Saddam for good reason about establishing an  
10          authority and responsibility around him.

11          So they were being contested by Shia, and just  
12          generally bad practice and evil intent. But the  
13          sectarian piece overlaid all of this following the  
14          bombing of the Golden Mosque, which sort of unhinged  
15          this opportunity for people to take sectarianism forward  
16          to a new and different level.

17       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Against this backdrop, was there  
18          ever much chance that the -- did it seem to you there  
19          was much chance that the Iraqi security forces could be  
20          forged in such a way as to be able to take over?

21       LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: No, and that was the genesis of,  
22          therefore, see if that was -- I used the term call it  
23          a third way, but whether there was a way through this,  
24          which in many ways was, therefore, the issue of  
25          recognising that in the time that remained, if you take

1 the end of the UNSCR in 2008, change in presidency at  
2 the end of 2008, but if you looked at the throughput  
3 that General Dempsey -- because he was running MNSTC-I  
4 at the time, which was the organisation that trained and  
5 then equipped the Iraqi army -- that at the speed he was  
6 operating at -- and he was spending some considerable  
7 volume of money every month to deliver humvees, new  
8 equipment, training programmes, a throughput of  
9 individuals. But the maths was one that did not -- in  
10 my mind, did not see that you could create the police  
11 and the army to a level of Q2, quality and quantity,  
12 that would be able to contest an insurgency that was  
13 working rather well against unfolding sectarian  
14 valuation which was on the threshold, in my view, of  
15 beginning just to unpick everything to where then  
16 revenge, retribution, retaliation would have been very  
17 much the watch word of the day, and passion would have  
18 taken over. And one would have seen events that we can  
19 recall from 1969 back in Northern Ireland, just people  
20 acting without thought or conscience. If you did that  
21 on a national scale, then we would have found ourselves  
22 in a very difficult position.

23 So my sense was that we did not have the time to  
24 prepare those forces to the quality and quantity  
25 required to be able to challenge the insurgency that was

1       really in many ways unsettling. And then allowing that  
2       to be driven, which then was taken by opportunity by  
3       both Iranian, Iraqi crime -- organised crime and  
4       corruption and this sort of what I call legacy of the  
5       old former regime, the Saddamists rather than  
6       Ba'athists, who continue to want to seize opportunity  
7       out of this chaos because they do rather well in these  
8       conditions.

9   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was the view of the Iraqi  
10       government? Presumably you were able to talk to  
11       Prime Minister Malaki at this time?

12   LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I think I established fairly  
13       reasonable relationships, and again, acting as the  
14       deputy one carried, therefore, a fair amount of "wasta"  
15       with various politicians. One established -- I worked  
16       well with both the Kurdish side, as well as making  
17       a relationship with the Sunni and the Shia.

18       My view was that it was very early days. Here was  
19       a government that had not long been formed.  
20       Prime Minister Malaki had found himself fired into the  
21       position which he was not expecting, greatness was  
22       thrust upon him. He suddenly came -- and arrived there  
23       in many ways, one shouldn't forget, with the Sadrist  
24       trend vote, which got him the seat to where he then  
25       found himself.

1           I had long discussions with Dominic about Malaki,  
2           which we both had sort of -- just we weren't in violent  
3           disagreement but we had difference of opinion. My view  
4           was I thought Malaki was perfect.

5   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   Why?

6   LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB:   Because he didn't speak English.

7           He was a bit like Tommy Cooper, he didn't quite fit into  
8           his body, but when I talked to many Iraqis, both inside  
9           the country and outside, and people outside in the Arab  
10          fraternity, you know, they all had one view: that Malaki  
11          was an Iraqi, you know, and that was not unimportant.

12          He had spent his time in exile in Syria, as  
13          I recall, and I had -- I quite liked him, actually.  
14          I thought here was somebody that was given a very  
15          difficult challenge and he was -- he was manfully trying  
16          to stand up and take the post.

17          One shouldn't forget both in Iraq and places like  
18          Afghanistan there is, notwithstanding that people would  
19          turn round and say, "He only just got in" or "He wasn't  
20          chosen", that having got the position of prime minister,  
21          that he then represented -- of which watching cabinet  
22          meetings -- that they defaulted to the Prime Minister.  
23          There was no question about trying to undermine or  
24          circumnavigate. You know, the system had come through  
25          and said he was the Prime Minister and, therefore, he

1        was the Prime Minister. And my view was he did a manful  
2        job at what was a very difficult time as he tried to  
3        struggle -- because he forget indebted to the Sadrist  
4        trend, he gave them Ministry of Health, the Ministry of  
5        Transport, and I can't remember the other one. There  
6        were three principal ones.

7        They ran them really badly. They took them as  
8        almost fiefdoms to their own interests to exhort money,  
9        to use money and all the rest, and you could sense the  
10       disappointment. But he had a debt of honour and,  
11       again -- something which, you know, we shouldn't  
12       underestimate in these sort of societies and these  
13       cultures -- a debt of honour which he felt duty-bound to  
14       see through, which he did.

15       And it wasn't blind obedience. It was a sense that,  
16       you know, they had to just -- and he had to check on  
17       a number of occasions, so eventually he could turn  
18       around and say, "I have given you this course of action,  
19       you know, I've done my part and you have now failed me  
20       and so, therefore, that's where we now stand."

21       But my view was that the individuals I came across  
22       Barem Salah, Mam Jalal, Talabani, these were people that  
23       were not lightweights in understanding their own kind,  
24       and the like.

25       So, yes, I established, I think, good and

1        respectable working relationships with politicians.

2        SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Against this background, in

3        January 2007 President Bush announced a new strategy for

4        Iraq which would lead to a surge of some 20,000 extra

5        American forces. I wonder what was your view of this

6        strategy. Had you been involved in its preparation?

7        Did you think it would work?

8        LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Because the engagement piece,

9        I watched in September/October time, I think it was,

10       when Sheikh Sattar had stood up a force -- again, you

11       know, often misunderstood -- you know, an initiative

12       supported by Prime Minister Malaki where he gave money

13       in order that they could set up a force in order to

14       bring some order back to Ramadi. So -- it was about

15       300-odd or so he was empowered at that point in time to

16       look at.

17       My view was that given my earlier observations that

18       I didn't think there was the time to be able to improve

19       the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police in the timescales

20       that were remaining, against this sense of a situation

21       that was unfolding on the wrong side of progress, that

22       this just represented an opportunity which was the one

23       that was the third way, which was this idea of

24       reconciliation and, you know, dealing with, in this

25       case, the Sunni insurgents.

1           And, therefore, that was something that fell within  
2           that bailiwick of myself. The conditions had really  
3           been set in many ways by the US marines who had been out  
4           there for some considerable time holding the line in  
5           Anbar and demonstrating to both friend and foe, you  
6           know, to go back to earlier comments, you are judged in  
7           this part of the world by your actions, not by what you  
8           say.

9           And so they were being judged by their actions of  
10          acting against all sorts of provocation, acting  
11          reasonably, of not acting badly when they were attacked,  
12          and not just responding with overwhelming and violent  
13          force, but actually trying to understand who had  
14          attacked them and then contain their responses, down to  
15          just dealing with those that had come through, that,  
16          therefore, these opportunities began to emerge out in  
17          Anbar that the issue of reconciling the Sunni insurgent  
18          and an opportunity to also reflect across on the other  
19          side, which is to reconcile and understand better what  
20          people had blindly called -- saw Jaish Al Mahdi as  
21          a single entity, which was not the case -- the Shia  
22          militia -- that there were large components of these  
23          forces, in our corporate view, that could be reconciled  
24          back into society and were fighting well for a bad  
25          cause. And so that was part of the work I was doing at

1       the time, as we went through 2006.

2               So by the time of 2007, I was really quite

3       comfortable that I could see a way through the problem

4       that was -- and there was always that time lag between

5       events at the front, given the fact that we see all the

6       intelligence from the high side through to the sense and

7       smell and feel of the souk or individual relations, that

8       the time lag is always then one that comes back into

9       capital cities that just draws a little slower. They

10      get information, but you just cannot get a tangible feel

11      of either success or failure that, in this case, I was

12      pretty confident that, as we went into October --

13      into December, that I could see how this thing could

14      unravel from a reconciliation point of view, which would

15      then move component forces from the insurgency away from

16      Al-Qaeda and what they were currently doing to somewhere

17      else. And the same with those elements in the

18      Jaish Al Mahdi, by understanding better that

19      organisation which the intelligence community had done

20      a great deal of work on in trying to understand that

21      there were those who were following the old father

22      Moqtadr, you know, through to members of the OMS, through

23      to in fact those that followed Moqtadr himself, rock

24      star status -- he could call out a large crowd a bit

25      like the Rolling Stones -- through to then those who, in



1 fact, just took on the mantle of the Jaish al Mahdi, but  
2 were actually there for criminal purposes, and those  
3 that in fact were quite clearly connected to Iranian  
4 influence and direct funding in order to -- but all --

5 So understanding how these organisations worked,  
6 therefore, in my view, gave us a position -- my sense by  
7 January 2007, I was reasonably comfortable and confident  
8 that we could -- we could work our way round the problem  
9 that many people were seeing at the time and deliver  
10 both with the surge a sense of a change in dynamics and,  
11 therefore, in fact regaining the initiative very much to  
12 our advantage.

13 We were also at that time beginning to understand  
14 the networks, the (inaudible) networks in Baghdad and  
15 how we would take those apart at the same said time. We  
16 started to introduce concrete -- Sir John will remember  
17 this well from Ireland, that you do have to separate the  
18 individual and, more importantly, the vehicle from the  
19 crowd. And, therefore, the use of concrete T walls and  
20 all the things that don't look particularly attractive,  
21 but actually deliver a demonstrable effect, and stop  
22 this sectarian sense of, you know -- that where both  
23 sides will just attack each other harder, all that was  
24 beginning to change by that time.

25 So my view was that the surge was something which we

1       could have probably taken advantage of all those little  
2       1 per centers had the surge -- because it just  
3       demonstrated, against the odds, resolve. And if war is  
4       a battle of wills, then counterinsurgency, which we know  
5       is the darkest and the infernal place in Hell itself, is  
6       the resolve of everyone's will.

7               So, therefore, that changed the dynamic in many  
8       ways --

9       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This resolve of will,  
10       Dominic Asquith said there was no question that the  
11       United Kingdom would be part of the surge. Did you  
12       discuss this with the UK in terms of providing some  
13       demonstration of British will to increase numbers or was  
14       that never likely?

15       LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I mean, all my -- and I think you  
16       have seen all those weekly reports which I would fire  
17       back to London, sort of captured my sense of -- which  
18       people saw as blind optimism, as I recall, and everybody  
19       doubted by at the end of 2006. And they had good reason  
20       too challenge that.

21               But my sense was that what I did not get was a view  
22       that we were still very much looking towards the course  
23       we had set ourselves upon and, therefore, it was --  
24       because, again, there was a time lag in the sense of  
25       trust me -- which is always dangerous -- it is going to

1       get better, was one of which we were set on a course.

2           I think what happened was we began to then check

3       that course, because America asked us to on the basis of

4       the wider campaign, which was the important part for us

5       as an organisation, as a country, to recognise that this

6       wasn't Americans just asking, this was about the

7       coherence of the campaign to reinforce that resolve to

8       maintain our part in something where they had made

9       a significant contribution of force.

10   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So our contribution was not to go

11       down rather than to go up?

12   LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Correct.

13   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And by the time that you left, was

14       your confidence growing?

15   LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I was reasonably comfortable

16       that by that time -- because I left in about -- I think

17       it was July -- July 2007 -- that one was seeing at that

18       point in time large elements of -- you know, all the

19       indications in the discussions I was having with some

20       unsavoury people that the chunks of insurgency and

21       chunks of elements within the Jaish Al Mahdi were

22       looking for other courses of action rather than one

23       which was just rather desperate.

24           I do recall when the two minarets were then blown

25       up, and I can't remember the exact date but it was

1 about March time, I think, so almost a year later, of  
2 which the assumption would have been that one would have  
3 seen again the same level of violence, the same sort of  
4 cathartic moment of anger. But of course the shrine was  
5 both Shia and Sunni, which was interesting.

6 But what was fascinating was as that occurred there  
7 was almost an immediate calling from the coalition, from  
8 the political authority, from the tribal chiefs, from  
9 the religious authorities saying, "Don't go there, let  
10 us not return to where we have been this last year".

11 So if you add all that together, then my view was  
12 that as I was leaving Iraq, I was reasonably confident  
13 that we were in a very much better place. Not that this  
14 was going to provide, you know, an easy solution or  
15 a definitive answer or outcome to Iraq, but what it  
16 would do is provide Iraqis with choice, which my view  
17 was in -- in August 2006, they did not have.

18 It was going south. By the time I left in  
19 July 2007, my view was the situation was stabilising,  
20 the insurgency in this case you had Ansar Al Sunna,  
21 Jaish Al Islami, Jaish Al Mujahideen, the 1920 Brigade,  
22 you had all these individuals in various guises now  
23 beginning to contest Al-Qaeda and see them for what they  
24 were.

25 That was, therefore, having a significant impact.

1 By the time I left in July, I think attacks in Anbar  
2 were down to less than ten a day. The telling metric in  
3 many ways was -- I think it was about February time,  
4 January/February time of 2007, when the US marines went  
5 from about -- I think it was about sort of 20 weapons  
6 caches and ammunition IED caches they were finding in a  
7 period that suddenly that jumped to about 114. And it  
8 wasn't their intelligence and it wasn't they had better  
9 dogs or they didn't have some new techno kit. It was  
10 because the locals were saying, "It's over there, son,"  
11 which showed a behavioural change, which is the part  
12 that really mattered.

13 So by the time General Petraeus went back and gave  
14 his hearing, he was able to present that sense that, you  
15 know, it is hard but not hopeless and we can see how  
16 this is unfolding.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My final question is what you have  
18 been describing is in a sense a policy from the  
19 multinational headquarters in Baghdad, and you have  
20 given us an indication of how the UK fitted in with that  
21 in terms of not doing less rather than doing more, but  
22 I wonder if you have got any sort of reflections from  
23 your time -- I mean, lessons from your period in 2003.  
24 What lessons you would be drawing for the UK from this  
25 period of 2006/2007?

1 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I suppose my sense is that, you  
2 know, had President Bush not committed to the surge,  
3 then all that I have explained would probably not have  
4 happened.

5 It showed both a political will, which was not one  
6 that all his advisers were saying, "This is the course  
7 you should take". It also saw the, you might say,  
8 that -- this stoic sort of containment, this holding the  
9 line that General Casey had held and then  
10 General Petraeus's arrival with an unleashing and  
11 looking at a new way of how to move the campaign to a  
12 different way, embracing reconciliation, which was in  
13 many ways -- and I have used the term before when I said  
14 that the most difficult element in Iraq to reconcile was  
15 not the Shia militia or the Sunni insurgent; the most  
16 difficult people to reconcile in Iraq were the  
17 Americans, with the idea of reconciliation, the idea of  
18 dealing with somebody with blood on their hands. And  
19 the answer is, "Who didn't have blood on their hands?"

20 When you drop a 500-pound bomb into a compound, the  
21 answer is there is a lot of blood on the hands. And  
22 just get over it. The answer is these things, they had  
23 to finish -- they have to finish in dialogue, they have  
24 to move to somewhere where you just don't bash each  
25 other.

1           It is not about winning and losing, it is about  
2           setting the conditions for progress and change, and all  
3           of that -- that was -- that was the belief of the  
4           American. They had not given up on this campaign. They  
5           were in no sense leaning backwards and looking for -- no  
6           doubt there were some that you could see that were maybe  
7           inclined to take the sum of their fears.

8           I think the credit to the UK was in recognising some  
9           change and, therefore, it did not pursue blindly let's  
10          depart. Did it match America? No, in that sense of  
11          commitment, in the sense of here is a campaign that we  
12          should pursue. I sense, therefore, that  
13          General Richards, a campaign footing, in many ways now  
14          driven to Afghanistan, was one that we had not gone on  
15          to. We were just continuing to do our duty and doing  
16          the best we could do in Iraq rather than seeing that --  
17          how we could push harder, pull longer, demand more of  
18          our own people in order to what I call add to the  
19          campaign.

20       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

21       SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you able yourself to engage in  
22          persuading us not to pursue the let us depart strategy?

23       LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I think, you know, a lot of people  
24          will turn round and claim all sorts of things. My view  
25          is that I would hope that some of those -- the

1 discussions I had with individuals, the sort of blind  
2 obstinacy that I applied, the -- had a part bearing  
3 upon those at least to hold steady. But what mattered  
4 was how people had acted and then this whole range of --  
5 you know, Britain's contribution was not just in Basra,  
6 it was this whole range of staff officers spread, which  
7 the Americans give us extraordinary access, and  
8 therefore, in fact, extraordinary influence, within  
9 their own internal machinery to be able to -- and if one  
10 acts well there, then you can --

11 So many people, you know, were part of that sort of  
12 hold the line, this will get better, trust us. That's  
13 a huge ask because you have all the internal pressures,  
14 domestic pressures from the UK that are being presented  
15 here and you have got a few people that are (inaudible)  
16 and just saying it will be all right. You know -- it  
17 is -- I get the sort of what I call the challenge  
18 represents, but many people then presented that.

19 One of the seminal moments was when I was sitting  
20 down talking with a very senior cleric, one of the  
21 emirs(?), and they tend to be the sort of operations  
22 officers, of one of the insurgent groups who said, "You  
23 are a force of occupation, understand this, and we  
24 resist a force of occupation because it is quite clear  
25 that you challenge our faith and our way of life and,



1       therefore, we will fight you for however long it takes,  
2       generations upon generations. It is the nature of our  
3       faith."

4           And then they have come and said, "But we have  
5       watched you very closely for the last three and a half  
6       years -- that was the US marines, the US military, the  
7       army -- just stoically going through, holding the line,  
8       taking casualties but acting well." So one tends to  
9       gauge things often by the Abu Ghraibs and all the rest,  
10      which are dreadful. I have no difficulty with that.  
11      But so what you miss out on is this extraordinary  
12      courage of young men and women acting really very well  
13      in the most diabolical of circumstances and uncertainty.  
14      And they have done that for three and a half years, of  
15      which the comment was, "We have watched you for three  
16      and a half years and we have talked about this in Syria,  
17      in Saudi Arabia, in Iraq and we have come to the  
18      conclusion that you do not threaten our faith, nor  
19      threaten our way of life, Al-Qaeda does."

20   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

21           Usha, would you like to ask a last question?

22   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I don't have any questions.

23   THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

24           Right, just to round off, you stayed on beyond the  
25      expected length of tour under not unwilling compulsion,

1 I suspect?

2 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I have a very understanding  
3 wife, and the answer is it was exactly the right place  
4 to be.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. We have had a long-ish day already,  
6 thank you very much indeed for your testimony. It has  
7 been a valuable day for us. We are grateful for it.  
8 And I'm also thankful to those who have been attending  
9 through the day on and off.

10 Our next hearing starts tomorrow morning at  
11 9 o'clock, not ten, and we will be seeing  
12 Sir John Sawers in two roles: as private secretary in  
13 10 Downing Street with responsibility for foreign  
14 affairs, and then in his role as UK Special  
15 Representative in Iraq. And the first part of our  
16 session tomorrow will cover Number 10's perspective on  
17 the state of UK policy in Iraq in 2001, going back to  
18 the beginnings, and then the evolution of policy in that  
19 year. And we will look at the policy reviews initiated  
20 by the UK and US Governments in 2001.

21 We have had some testimony already, but this will be  
22 from, I hope you won't mind my saying, the horse's  
23 mouth. And the second part of the session will cover  
24 the UK's objectives for Iraq and the implementation of  
25 them as seen from Baghdad in those crucial months May

1 to July 2003.

2 And with that, and with thanks again to those  
3 present and to our witness, I will close the session.

4 Thank you.

5 (4.37 pm)

6 (The Inquiry adjourned until 9.00 am the following day)

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