

1 Tuesday, 19 January 2010
2 (10.00 am)

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Good morning.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Today we
7 begin hearing from members of the government who were
8 involved in the build-up and the decision to commit the
9 United Kingdom forces to action in Iraq in 2003.

10 The objectives of this session are to examine with
11 the Rt Hon Geoff Hoon, the former Secretary of State for
12 Defence, the key discussions and decisions taken on Iraq
13 and their implementation within the Ministry of Defence
14 and the government during his, your, period as Secretary
15 of State for Defence. So the session will cover from
16 the summer of 2001 through until May 2005.

17 I should say at this point that a number of issues
18 and specific incidents which occurred in Iraq during
19 Mr Hoon's time as Secretary of State are currently
20 subject to a range of judicial proceedings, including,
21 for example, the use of Snatch Land Rovers. In fairness
22 to all parties to those proceedings, therefore, the
23 Committee will not focus on these in detail during this
24 session.

25 Now, we recognise that witnesses are giving evidence

1 based on their recollection of events, and we, of
2 course, can cross-check what we hear against the papers
3 to which we have access, some of which are still to come
4 in.

5 I remind every witness that he will later be asked
6 to sign a transcript of his evidence to the effect that
7 the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

8 With those preliminaries, I will ask
9 Sir Martin Gilbert to open the questions.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Mr Hoon, could you tell us what you
11 saw, while you were Secretary of State for Defence, as
12 the division of responsibilities between you, as
13 Secretary of State, and the Chief of the Defence Staff?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The first Chief of Defence Staff that
15 I had, Charles Guthrie, once described the
16 Ministry of Defence as being like a three-legged stool.
17 There were the politicians, the civil servants and the
18 military. In a sense, what he was driving at was that
19 it was important that all three elements of the stool
20 worked together, otherwise we had problems. So I always
21 remembered that in the almost six years that I was
22 there; it was important for me to enjoy the confidence
23 of the military, but at the same time ensure that those
24 responsible for developing policy on the Civil Service
25 side were comfortable with where we were going.

1 Having said that, I think sometimes there is a myth
2 about the extent to which the policy-makers act upon the
3 military. I think one of the great successes of the
4 Ministry of Defence is the extent to which it is
5 genuinely joined up, that there is real integration
6 between the civil servants and the military, to the
7 extent that, sometimes, it wasn't always possible, when
8 people were wearing civilian clothes, to determine who
9 was from the military and who were civil servants.
10 There were civil servants who were determined to
11 demonstrate that they were every bit as robust as the
12 military, and there were military people determined to
13 demonstrate their considerable grasp of a policy.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Specifically, your relationship with
15 the Chief of the Defence Staff.

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I -- there were a number of
17 chiefs in my time in the MoD. I hope that they would
18 say that we had an excellent relationship. The door was
19 always open. We had very regular, both formal and
20 informal meetings, and obviously, in the course of
21 campaigns like Iraq, they were on a daily or more than
22 daily basis.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could turn to your own experience
24 of the United States, I wondered what contrast you saw
25 in your role and in its execution and that of

1 Donald Rumsfeld of the Department of State and how you
2 would characterise your relationship with Rumsfeld?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: First of all, I first worked with
4 Bill Cohen, who was Donald Rumsfeld's predecessor.
5 Inevitably, individuals bring their own style to bear.
6 I would say that probably initially Donald was
7 somewhat -- I think, to use the right word, suspicious,
8 perhaps, of a Labour government. He was a Republican
9 politician. He had been a congressman many years
10 before. He had previously been Secretary of Defence.

11 I don't think he was wholly persuaded that a Labour
12 administration was necessarily one with which he could
13 be comfortable, but I think he developed, in particular,
14 a considerable admiration for the Prime Minister, and we
15 got along and I think we were able to do business.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How were you able to allay his
17 suspicions over the period?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think by being consistent. I think
19 he was -- I think he was anxious to ensure that people
20 did what they said they were going to do.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you feel you had a good line of
22 communication with him, that you were getting a good
23 picture of what was on his mind?

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I accept that initially -- as I say,
25 there was this -- "suspicion" is possibly too strong

1 a word, but a feeling that perhaps we came from
2 different places. But, yes, I think, as it went on, we
3 had no difficulty in frankly discussing the issues that
4 had to be resolved.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Hoon, could you say just a little about
6 the difference between the set-up in terms of giving
7 direction to the armed forces in the United States and
8 here, because the President is the head of the
9 United States armed forces, I understand, the Secretary
10 of Defence is more Directive, as I understand it and you
11 have a very, in modern times, simplified set-up with the
12 various commands working directly through Sec Def to the
13 President, unlike our system.

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think certainly in the course of
15 the events that you are enquiring into, it was clear
16 that the Chiefs of Staff in Washington weren't always in
17 the direct line of communication to the Pentagon, in the
18 sense that Donald would deal more directly with
19 General Franks and with people in the commands out of
20 the United States, whereas in our system, it was clear that
21 whatever information was coming through the military
22 chain, came through the CDS and the other military
23 heads.

24 So to that extent, their structure was, I suppose,
25 in business terms, flatter. The Secretary for Defence

1 was able to go direct to CentCom and to Tommy Franks.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to the

4 question of sanctions and to ask how concerned you were

5 about the humanitarian aspects and the much publicised

6 suffering of the Iraqi people, and, in particular, the

7 MoD's concerns about public support for our policy, for

8 the UK policy, being undermined as a result of

9 widespread public concern about the suffering of the

10 Iraqi people?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I became a Foreign Office Minister

12 responsible for the Middle East in May 1999, and from

13 then on I was a fairly regular visitor to the

14 Middle East. There was little doubt that

15 notwithstanding the meetings that we might have had with

16 the leaders of those countries, who were always, in

17 private, expressing concern about Iraq, and, indeed,

18 about Iran, to be fair. Once we went out, and if we

19 did, say, a press conference, it was completely

20 different. Journalists, people in those meetings would

21 be actually very angry about their allegations arising

22 out of the sanctions. They blamed us for, they said,

23 starving the Iraqi people, for depriving them of medical

24 supplies. So to that extent, sanctions were failing, in

25 that they were not delivering the benefit that we

1 anticipated politically and, moreover, worse than that,
2 we were getting the blame for things that actually were
3 Saddam's responsibility.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there something that the MoD was
5 able to do in terms of public perception?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think we could try. I remember
7 certainly in the Middle East a whole series of extremely
8 uncomfortable press conferences, where Arab journalists
9 would blame us for the sanctions, blame us for the
10 suffering of the Iraqi people, and I'm sure other
11 Ministers did their level best, as I did, to try and set
12 the record straight. I have to say I didn't feel that
13 we had much success.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: To return to the United States and the
15 Department of Defence, we understand that in the spring
16 of 2001 the Pentagon wanted any new Iraq policy, which
17 was then under discussion, to include a threat of
18 military action. What caveats or conditions did you and
19 the MoD suggest, particularly with regard to the legal
20 base and also international preparations, and were these
21 discussed in Cabinet? Was this an issue that the
22 Cabinet discussed at that time?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Your dates puzzle me a little. Do
24 you mean the spring of 2002?

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: 2001.

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Before 9/11?

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Right.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: The new administration coming in, in
4 Washington.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not particularly aware of any
6 detailed conversations about Iraq prior to 9/11.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We will come on to that sequence in
8 a moment.

9 Another issue which has been raised by a number of
10 our witnesses relates to the discussion with regard to
11 a more active campaign to influence the Arab street, the
12 Arab public opinion, in terms of the problem of what was
13 perceived in the Arab world as, somehow, our dual
14 standards with regard to the Arab/Israel conflict, on
15 the one hand, and our Iraq policy on the other.

16 May I ask what was your input to this debate and
17 whether you felt enough was being done?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, again, I mean, going on from
19 the press conference, I can't say that I had regular
20 contact with the Arab street, but I think the press
21 conferences that I was describing earlier, were probably
22 a fair reflection, in the sense that I think many of the
23 Arab journalists were influencing opinion in the Arab
24 street, who were avid newspaper readers at the time.

25 So clearly, we judged, and I don't just mean me,

1 I think the government judged that what was required was
2 real progress on the Palestinian track on improving
3 relations between the Palestinians and Israel.

4 As a Foreign Office Minister in May, June
5 and July 1999, I had been involved in some of
6 the final status issues that were then being negotiated.
7 So we absolutely saw that as being the way forward
8 because that really was the underlying problem with the
9 Arab street, that we were seen to have not
10 pushed as hard as we could have done, a settlement in
11 the Middle East.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was this something which you recall
13 being discussed in Cabinet or recall your own
14 contribution?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Obviously, my own involvement in 1999
16 was only for a few months, but I went to Gaza, I met
17 Yasser Arafat, I saw the Israelis. We were very
18 much engaged as a government at that stage on some quite
19 detailed issues relating to borders, water, the location
20 of the capital city, and in a sense that all went wrong.

21 So we were well aware that this was a fundamental
22 issue, as far as the Arab Street and the Arab world in
23 general was concerned. In fact, I would say the period
24 since then, the street has been absolutely consistent in
25 its views of the importance of this issue. What has

1 probably changed is the extent to which Arab leaders and
2 Arab governments have regarded this as being more
3 important.

4 I was always a little surprised, in the late 1990s, about
5 the extent to which the leadership of Arab nations, some
6 Arab nations at any rate, did not see this as being
7 a particularly significant issue for them.

8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to the
9 No Fly Zones. After the February strikes in 2001, there
10 was considerable concern in the United States to keep
11 the action low-key.

12 How did you see the role of the No Fly Zones in
13 terms of our containment policy and what advice were you
14 giving with regard to what our position should be?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Again, if I go back to your point
16 earlier about sanctions, one of the further issues that
17 was consistently raised with us was the fact that we
18 were perceived in the Arab Street to be attacking
19 Iraqis, that when we took action against radars and
20 missile sites in -- under the No Fly Zones, we were
21 accused by the street of attacking Iraq.

22 Again, try as I might, it was extremely difficult to
23 persuade people that what we were doing was for the
24 protection of people under the No Fly Zones. That's how
25 the No Fly Zones were -- how and why they were

1 established and why we continued to patrol them.

2 The difficulty -- and I think this is what your
3 question was referring to -- was that, unless we had
4 pretty regular patrols over the No Fly Zones, and I'm
5 most familiar with the southern one, then it was much
6 harder for the pilots to retain a picture of where
7 mobile missile launchers were located.

8 The Iraqis were becoming more sophisticated in the
9 later stages of the zones at both locating radar
10 equipment out of the zones, even though they could then
11 direct missiles from inside the zones, but also having
12 mobile launchers that were hidden in -- sometimes in
13 residential districts, in the centre of towns, in places
14 where they knew that an attack would be very difficult
15 for us because of the risk of civilian casualties, and
16 they became very adept at what I think the Americans
17 called "shoot and scoot", which was to move these things
18 around on a very regular basis, so that if you were
19 flying from Kuwait and you were over a zone, then,
20 unless you had a pretty clear picture as to where these
21 things might be, and you got that from experience, then
22 it was quite hard to be sure that our pilots would not
23 be at risk.

24 So I think the advice -- the specific answer to your
25 question is that I became increasingly concerned that,

1 unless we patrolled regularly, there were growing risks
2 to our pilots.

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to ask about the question
4 of advice and what advice you were getting about Iraq
5 and particularly about the sustainability of the
6 containment and about potential alternate policies, both
7 from your own officials and also from other government
8 departments.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think obviously the MoD was much
10 more concerned about the issue we have just been
11 discussing, about No Fly Zones.

12 I think my sense, for the reasons I have given to
13 the Inquiry already, was that politically this was
14 failing, that we could not go on indefinitely being
15 blamed for the starvation of the Iraqi people and not getting
16 medical supplies, us appearing to attack Iraq, when
17 actually all those policies were designed for the
18 benefit and protection of large numbers of Iraqis.

19 So there was a complete mismatch between what we
20 were intending to do and the effect politically that it
21 was creating in the Arab street.

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: This leads us to the pre-Crawford
23 period, which is obviously one of tremendous importance
24 for us. I would like to ask first, what was your view,
25 before Crawford, of how the United Kingdom should

1 respond to any American request in support of their
2 policy of regime change? What should our attitude be?
3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: There are quite a number of separate
4 issues in that question, if I can try and separate them
5 out.

6 I think our first reaction in the Ministry of
7 Defence was to think about precisely what the President
8 was getting at in relation to his Axis of Evil speech
9 and, therefore, having identified potential threats to
10 the United States and to the West, then we did think
11 about what that might mean as far as the MoD was
12 concerned. Indeed, I think I wrote a note to the
13 Prime Minister at some stage saying that, Iraq
14 was of concern, but, actually, probably the longer-term
15 threat to the United Kingdom was from Iran.

16 I don't think that was a particularly remarkable
17 thing to say, but nevertheless, it did indicate that we
18 were thinking, not solely about Iraq, but we were
19 thinking more widely about potential threats, and
20 I think that reflected what had happened in the
21 United States after 9/11.

22 I was never really persuaded -- I have family and
23 I have lived in America and I have many friends there.
24 I don't think the United Kingdom ever quite grasped the
25 extent of the shock that 9/11 caused to the

1 United States, both to the political system, but also to
2 ordinary people, and I think the Americans became very
3 anxious to avoid being taken by surprise again and
4 looked hard at the kinds of risks that there were
5 around.

6 Iraq was one of them, but I would say in the
7 pre-Crawford period, as far as the Ministry of Defence
8 was concerned, it was only one of them.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What did you suggest from the MoD
10 perspective, the Prime Minister should be asking the
11 President at Crawford?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think what we were looking for at
13 that stage was a sense of: what were the consequences of
14 this speech? What was the President aiming at in terms
15 of making this pretty powerful speech about an Axis of
16 Evil? What did it mean in terms of the likely American
17 responses and where would we be, as a country, and as
18 a Ministry of Defence, if we were called upon to take
19 action? Because, as I say, we all know that the
20 Americans were -- the world was taken by surprise by the
21 events of 9/11.

22 My sense of the United States was that it was pretty
23 determined not to be taken by surprise again.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you feel that the President could
25 give us some access to United States military planning,

1 that this was the time when we should really know what
2 the Americans had in mind?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: In the preparation for Crawford,
4 I know that we suggested that the Prime Minister should
5 raise with the President precisely that question, that
6 we should ask for access to US planning, so that we were
7 aware of what they had in mind. I'm reasonably
8 confident that he asked for that. I have to say that it
9 didn't happen particularly quickly after Crawford.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: So, sorry to interrupt, but we actually had
11 staff embedded in CentCom for Afghanistan planning by
12 that time, didn't we?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: But that was kept quite separate.
14 I was not aware that there was any overlap. I think
15 I learned later that the Iraq planning side was kept
16 very, very separate from Afghanistan.

17 So our people -- they might have had a general sense
18 that something was happening, but they didn't have any
19 specific information about precisely what that was.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you asked for access to
22 planning, was that on the assumption that there would
23 be, by necessity, if the Americans were going to get
24 involved in an operation of this scale, some interest,
25 expectation, requirement, for a British military

1 contribution?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure necessarily expectation,
3 but I think certainly there was a sense that we wanted
4 to know what was happening, so that, perhaps, we could
5 influence it, perhaps we could share in what was, at
6 that stage, an essentially political process.

7 At that stage, as far as I was concerned, what we
8 were trying to do was to disarm Saddam Hussein and that
9 the emphasis was on a peaceful process through the
10 United Nations, but ultimately with a threat of force,
11 which is something that I think was consistent
12 throughout.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you were assuming that the
14 British might wish to make a military contribution if
15 this process ended in large-scale military action?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that in the military mind and
17 in the Ministry of Defence, there was a sense that this
18 was a possibility. I would put it no higher than that,
19 certainly not an expectation, and that, therefore, we
20 needed to be inside the process, both to influence it,
21 but equally to understand what was happening, so that
22 if, later on, there was such a request, we knew the
23 nature of that request and why it had been made.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But your focus pre-Crawford was that
25 we had to maintain our position in terms of being able

1 to both influence and participate in some future
2 military operation?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, that we needed to understand
4 where the Americans were going, both in the political
5 process but, equally, if necessary, militarily.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: After Crawford, did you set out for the
8 MoD your perspective and the government's perspective of
9 what our policy on Iraq was at that time?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think we were clear that our --
11 I think I have probably just done it actually, that this
12 was essentially a conditional political process, where,
13 if necessary, and in the event of those conditions being
14 satisfied, then military action might be necessary, but
15 I think we were a long way off taking any of those kinds
16 of decisions.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: At what point then did you ask for an
18 assessment of the potential military options?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that had been part of the
20 work that was being done even prior to Crawford.
21 I think there were some people in the Ministry of
22 Defence involved in that.

23 The actual paper that the Prime Minister took to
24 Crawford did -- slightly curiously, it was
25 a Cabinet Office paper. It had involved MoD people, but

1 it didn't come through the MoD. I think it was sent to
2 me in parallel, which is a process that sometimes would
3 occur, where a number of departments are involved. So
4 my assumption is that other departments would have contributed to
that paper, as well presumably, most
6 obviously, the Foreign Office.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You were, I believe, at Chequers for
8 the immediate pre-Crawford discussions?

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Actually, I wasn't, and I haven't
10 been able to establish precisely why. I must have been
11 overseas on another visit. Sir Kevin Tebbit went on my
12 behalf.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you get a report from Sir Kevin?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I knew that there were quite
15 detailed discussions about what was going to happen at
16 Crawford.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: To go back to the options, when you
18 received the options, what was your own assessment of
19 what the United States might prefer?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think, if you go through the three
21 options, the United States would have been,
22 I think, probably understandably, very disappointed if
23 we had not been able to provide basing at places like
24 Diego Garcia, which we would have to agree to. So the
25 minimalist option I thought, in a sense, was

1 self-evident. It would be highly unlikely that, for our
2 closest ally, we would refuse access to our bases.

3 Option 2, which was an air force, maritime package
4 was relatively straightforward. A number of those
5 assets were not too far from the area and, therefore,
6 could be deployed relatively straightforwardly.

7 I think early on, we thought that option 3, which
8 was a full armoured division -- I have to say that these
9 things changed slightly over time. I'm summarising the
10 picture to some extent, because there was some overlap
11 between 2 and 3. Some of the elements of 3 changed over
12 time, but nevertheless, the land option, is how I might
13 characterise 3, was something that I probably thought at
14 that stage was quite a big ask, given our extensive
15 involvement in Afghanistan at the time.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Previous witnesses have spoken about
17 the importance with regard to the options of our
18 potential influence with the United States. Did you
19 have a particular view on that?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it was undoubtedly the case
21 that we would be taken more seriously if we were making
22 a substantial contribution. I think it goes without
23 saying in a military alliance, if that was what it was
24 going to become, that if you are involved to
25 a significant extent, that means that your voice is

1 necessarily louder in the discussions that take place.

2 If we had a minimalist involvement, our views would be

3 much less significant.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That would affect also our views with

5 regard to the actual policy?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't quite understand that.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: With the actual policy towards Iraq, as

8 opposed to simply the way in which a military operation

9 would be conducted, were it to be?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry, I see what you mean. I think

11 there is no doubt that that influence then extends to

12 the shaping of the policy, that if we are seen to be

13 willing to participate to a significant extent

14 militarily, that allows us a greater say in the

15 non-military aspects of the policy. Is that what you

16 meant?

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Yes. I would like to end my little

18 section of questions with the meeting with the

19 Prime Minister which you did attend on 23 July, which

20 has been called a key meeting on Iraq.

21 Did you recognise at the time that it was a key

22 meeting, and what was the -- from the MoD perspective,

23 what was the outcome of it?

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't recall that as being a key

25 meeting as such. I don't think there was a sudden

1 change in atmosphere or in the pace of preparations.

2 I would say that this was part of what I would describe
3 as an iterative process.

4 We were working out both what the Americans were
5 planning, what contributions we could make, they were
6 necessarily constrained by the political process, by the
7 conditions that the Prime Minister had imposed on our
8 participation, and, moreover, by sort of real world
9 judgments as to what actually we could do.

10 So I wouldn't have said -- all of those meetings are
11 key in one sense, but I wouldn't have said that suddenly
12 something changed as a result of that meeting.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Your contribution to it?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I am afraid there were many such
15 meetings. I do not have a specific recollection of my
16 particular contribution at the time.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: I think just to be clear about the exact
19 sequence within the summer of 2002, there was,
20 Lord Boyce told us, thinking about military options
21 against the political context and the constraints from
22 early May, but it was a very small number of people, and
23 General Reith told us that he didn't actually submit
24 a paper on options with a planning base behind it until,
25 I think, September. So is this part of the

1 evolution, July, somewhere in the middle of that?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, it was. One of the issues

3 that -- I need to go back a little. I learned later

4 that the Americans, on a shelf somewhere in the

5 Pentagon, had a plan for Iraq, and I know, and I learned

6 later, that Donald Rumsfeld was not at all happy with

7 that plan. It was a very heavy plan, it involved large

8 numbers of troops, I think up to half a million, and he

9 had asked CentCom to think again, basically, to take

10 down that plan and look at it in quite a different way,

11 which is what they were engaged upon.

12 When General Pigott went to Tampa, June 2002,

13 I have a recollection that he persuaded the

14 Americans about the so-called northern option, certainly

15 we had had --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard that evidence too from military

17 quarters. That's right.

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We had had that discussion, I know,

19 in the Ministry of Defence before he went. He was

20 a very -- he was one of -- a very thoughtful, very

21 creative soldier, and, you know, he set out the kinds of

22 options for an attack on Iraq, that, you know, any

23 military man would consider, and I think he went to the

24 Tampa and, as I say, my recollection is, although I have

25 no specific knowledge of this, that he persuaded the

1 Americans that it was sensible to have a two-pronged
2 attack, to divide the Republican Guard, to keep them
3 guessing as to where the attack was actually coming
4 from.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Looking to the political context in the
6 States in this summer of 2002, were you getting a sense,
7 either from military sources or from general awareness,
8 or even from Donald Rumsfeld, that the US administration
9 was getting closer to the point of contemplating regime
10 change, if necessary by military action, rather than
11 simply running through a range of broad strategic policy
12 options?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it was getting pretty real by
14 then. I think there was a real sense of the Americans
15 thinking through in a very practical way the
16 consequences of the Axis of Evil speech and focusing on
17 Iraq. So we had no doubt, at that stage in the summer,
18 that they meant business.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think you are looking in my direction,
21 John.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: I am.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to get a bit more into the
24 detail of the military planning in a minute. I just
25 wonder if, before I do that, I can come back to the

1 question of sanctions and containment, that you were
2 talking to Sir Martin about earlier.

3 From 1991 onwards, we had had a policy of
4 containment, which, of course, had gone beyond
5 sanctions, had had a number of different elements.
6 Trade sanctions were indeed part of that, which you were
7 talking about earlier. Another part of it was the UN
8 embargo on the export of defence material to Iraq, the
9 No Fly Zones, another part, the Naval embargo, another
10 part, and, indeed, the stationing of coalition forces,
11 including some British forces, in neighbouring
12 countries. That was all part of this policy of
13 containment.

14 Now, by 2001, what had that achieved? Had that
15 contained Saddam Hussein?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It had, yes. I mean, I think it had
17 certainly stopped him from, for example, acquiring
18 fissile material. He had an ambition earlier to develop
19 a nuclear weapon. I think that we were pretty confident
20 that -- that his ambitions had been constrained, if
21 not -- I mean, they certainly weren't eliminated. There
22 were many aspects of things that he was engaged upon
23 that were contrary to the sanctions. He was trying to
24 extend the range of one of his existing missiles.
25 I think it was called an Al Samoud, but I would have to

1 check. He was certainly trying to develop longer-range
2 missiles. I think inspectors found casings and engines
3 that were larger than was allowed under the rules.
4 There was no doubt that his agents were trying to
5 acquire fissile material. So he was constantly pushing
6 at, and indeed breaching, the rules.

7 So it wasn't completely successful, but, equally,
8 I think, the spirit of your question, it wasn't
9 a complete failure either. So there were areas in which
10 he was able to get around the rules and I think --
11 I think, but for those -- but for that policy, he would
12 have done a lot more and become a lot more dangerous
13 more quickly.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But for the policy, he would have been
15 more dangerous. As you say, he still had ambitions to
16 break out from it, he was trying to.

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It was more than ambition. The
18 issues I described --

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, he was making efforts --

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: -- in relation to the missiles were
21 real. No, he was doing it.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. But was it the case in 2001 that he
23 wasn't actually a serious threat to the region, to the
24 countries around him?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: He was a potential threat and that is

1 what I think changed, particularly in the United States,
2 after 9/11. Instead of simply dealing with a threat
3 today, I think the Americans became much more sensitive
4 about potential risks because they had not seen 9/11
5 coming. We knew very little about Afghanistan. We had
6 very little information about Afghanistan, and, out of
7 apparently nowhere, an attack on the most powerful
8 country in the world.

9 I think straight away the American administration,
10 under, I think, as well, some pressure from some of the
11 politicians I met in Congress, they were just not
12 prepared to tolerate a similar set of events occurring
13 again, whether that was from Iraq or Iran or Libya or
14 from North Korea.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Many other witnesses have talked, as you
16 have done, about the shock effect of 9/11 and the way
17 that this changed American tolerance of risk, but the
18 question I'm asking is about the actuality of the risk,
19 whether, in actuality, he had been contained in a way
20 that he wasn't able seriously to threaten his neighbours
21 at this time.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, the intelligence evidence was
23 that he retained stocks of chemical, and, indeed,
24 biological weapons, and clearly, had been prepared to
25 use them both against Iran and against his own people.

1 So there was little doubt that, having got that
2 capability, he was capable of using it.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But his nuclear programme had been
4 frozen.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: His nuclear programme had been frozen
6 because of the absence of fissile material, but I think
7 there was a sense that his efforts to develop larger and
8 longer-range missiles was part of an ambition to deliver
9 a nuclear weapon, if he could secure the fissile
10 material.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Leaving the Americans on one side, we
12 have heard, we heard from Jonathan Powell yesterday,
13 that there were differing views in the
14 British Government about the extent to which containment
15 was a sustainable policy, could be continued,
16 particularly if the sanctions were made more targeted in
17 a way that dealt with the political problem, the
18 political downside you talked about earlier.

19 So they focused more on military weapons, and,
20 indeed, if firmer action was taken to prevent evasion of
21 sanctions and smuggling. Where did you lie in this
22 debate?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure that I was particularly
24 engaged in it. I can recall discussions about smarter
25 sanctions, I think was the expression that was used,

1 but, as far as I was concerned my -- I think I have put
2 it in answer to previous questions -- it seemed to me
3 that politically we were not succeeding with that
4 policy.

5 I was concerned, increasingly concerned, about the
6 risk to RAF pilots patrolling the No Fly Zones, because
7 we were not always able to respond in the way that was
8 necessary to make those patrols as safe as they needed
9 to be and my sense was that this policy was breaking
10 down, that containment was not delivering the political
11 results, as you say, that were required, but that it was
12 simply not something that could go on indefinitely.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Even if it was reinforced?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, as I say, I was not much
15 involved in the -- in those discussions, I think they
16 were discussions probably more taking place in the
17 Foreign Office.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Your department was responsible for an
19 awful lot of the containment. Shouldn't you have been
20 involved in discussions?

21 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I have no -- I don't know what
22 the dates were for that, but I certainly don't -- I can
23 recall that there were discussions about improving
24 sanctions and about making them smarter and more
25 targeted. I don't recall any conclusions from those

1 discussions.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But -- I mean you have talked earlier
3 about the ongoing series of meetings with the
4 Prime Minister about Iraq, and presumably in those
5 meetings you were one of the Ministers most closely
6 involved in Iraq policy and must have been taking
7 a position on the strategy, on whether we should look to
8 sustain containment -- and we were still pursuing
9 containment in the United Nations -- or whether we
10 needed to go in a completely different direction.

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think I have set out for you
12 already that my concerns -- I visited the base in
13 Kuwait, I can't remember its name, but I had been there,
14 I talked to the pilots. I had been briefed in detail on
15 the kinds of operations that they were conducting.
16 There was considerable concern about the risk to that
17 operation.

18 So I was just much less persuaded than perhaps I had
19 been prior to that, that this policy could continue, not
20 least because the real downside was that every time we
21 attacked missiles in Iraq, we were accused of attacking
22 Iraq and causing civilian casualties.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What did the Prime Minister tell you
24 about his discussion with President Bush at Crawford?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think he told me anything

1 directly. I saw a record of the meeting. I think one
2 of the -- inevitably enquiring into Iraq, but one of the
3 sort of -- it creates a slightly artificial sense of
4 what was happening. Much of our preoccupation at the
5 time, much of our preoccupation in the
6 Ministry of Defence was about what was happening in
7 Afghanistan. The Foreign Office I know, were very
8 concerned about the Middle East peace process. For the
9 reasons I mentioned earlier, I took a continuing
10 interest in that.

11 The sense that this was all about Iraq, in my
12 recollection, was wrong. It was part of a
13 process.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm sure you are right. This Inquiry is
15 about Iraq, but obviously we have to understand the
16 wider context. To what extent, more generally --
17 I mean, Jonathan Powell told us that there were
18 different records of Crawford. There is one that has
19 now been declassified, which is was one paragraph that
20 was sent out for the guidance of diplomatic missions
21 overseas, and which is not exactly very informative, and
22 indeed we have heard from others that distribution of
23 the Prime Minister's records, as was traditional, was on
24 a very differential basis.

25 To what extent were you, as Defence Secretary, privy

1 to the Prime Minister's exchanges with President Bush
2 orally and in writing, in the course of 2002 about Iraq?
3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: An almost impossible question to
4 answer, but I -- I saw the exchanges that you had with
5 Alastair Campbell. I think there were probably -- but
6 I'm reconstructing to some extent. I think there were
7 probably two sorts of letters. There was what I might
8 describe as a round-robin letter where the
9 Prime Minister would set out a number of concerns from
10 different departments, the Foreign Office, the MoD,
11 perhaps DFID on occasions, and possibly other issues,
12 that I would certainly have seen and was used to seeing,
13 and that letter would be, in a sense, a statement of the
14 British Government's position on a range of issues,
15 including some affecting the Ministry of Defence that
16 would then go to the White House.

17 My impression from your exchanges with Alistair is
18 that there were probably other rather more private
19 communications that may have taken place. I'm
20 reconstructing, because I don't know, because I did not
21 see those more private communications. The
22 Prime Minister was a great note writer and -- it would
23 not surprise me at all that there were private notes
24 that he would send to the President. Moreover, that he
25 would have had private conversations with the President

1 that I would not necessarily have been privy to.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If he was writing notes that could be
3 read by the recipient as committing Britain to military
4 action, wouldn't you have expected, as
5 Defence Secretary, to have been consulted?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I would have been, and that is why
7 I don't believe he was ever unconditionally committing
8 us to anything. I think that right up until the vote in
9 the House of Commons, our attitude towards the use of
10 military force was always conditional. It was always
11 conditional on either securing a UN Security Council
12 Resolution eventually in November.

13 In fact, the Prime Minister had set out, almost at
14 the outset, a whole set of conditions about the
15 Middle East peace process, about communicating our
16 concern about Iraq, a range of other conditions. So
17 I never -- I never assumed that we were in a position of
18 unconditionally resorting to military action actually
19 right up until the vote in the House of Commons.

20 It was only at that point -- and as you are probably
21 aware, I had a conversation with Donald Rumsfeld that
22 day, indicating to him that, if the vote went the wrong
23 way, we would not take action and we could not take
24 action.

25 So even at that late stage, in my own mind, we had

1 not unconditionally committed ourselves to using
2 military force.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, I mean, you will have seen
4 Alastair Campbell described the tenor of this
5 correspondence as:

6 "We share the analysis, we share the concern, we are
7 absolutely with you in making sure that Saddam Hussein
8 is faced up to his obligations and that Iraq is
9 disarmed. If that can't be done diplomatically and it
10 has to be done militarily, Britain will be there."

11 Now, that's Alastair's summation of what the
12 correspondence was saying. Were you aware that this was
13 the general tenor of the way that the Prime Minister was
14 putting our position to President Bush?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's wholly consistent with
16 what I have just said. Facing Saddam up to his
17 obligations is conditional and the conditions were his
18 obligations to the United Nations and to the various
19 Security Council Resolutions that had been passed.

20 So --

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you were aware that this was the
22 nature of the exchange at the very top level?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I wasn't aware of that specific
24 exchange. What I was aware of -- I think your question
25 was a fair one -- the general tenor of our position.

1 Our position was that we wanted to go through
2 a political, a diplomatic, process to disarm
3 Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime that he led.

4 If, ultimately, that required the use of force, we
5 were prepared to contemplate that, but it was very much
6 conditional upon going through those processes first.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Would it be fair to say that these
8 conditions, accepting that we wouldn't -- couldn't move
9 unless and until they were satisfied, nonetheless were
10 the British view for the coalition of what it would take
11 to execute a successful strategy towards Iraq?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I think that's right, yes, that
13 we couldn't simply go to a military response without the
14 kind of discussion that the Prime Minister had described
15 in relation to the Middle East peace process, which
16 I have mentioned already was a very important issue for
17 the Arab street, without developing an understanding of
18 why we were taking action in the United Kingdom and,
19 indeed, in other western countries.

20 So those conditions were a necessary part of the
21 process. But, you know, again I emphasise that we
22 wanted those non-military processes to be successful.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I can now turn to the question of the
24 military planning and the influence that we gained
25 through it, which you were also talking about earlier

1 with Sir Martin. We heard from, among others,
2 Sir Christopher Meyer that word got to Washington in the
3 fairly early summer of 2002, I think around May, that
4 the British were offering a land contribution,
5 a division, the big package.

6 That was the impression that had lodged itself in
7 the heart of the American administration. Now, this was
8 long before you and the Prime Minister had taken any
9 such decision. Were you aware that this had happened?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think so, no. My
11 recollection of those events is that there was a sense
12 in which we were a little disappointed after Crawford
13 that we hadn't immediately received a request from the
14 United States to send someone to Tampa, and I don't
15 quite know how that eventually was resolved. It wasn't
16 until, I think, the end of June/early July that actually
17 we sent General Pigott and his team there.

18 So there was quite a long period of
19 wondering what was going on and wondering why we weren't
20 being involved.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If the Americans were effectively
22 assuming that we were going to come in in a big way,
23 that we were going to be by their side, would that have
24 undermined to a degree your ability to exercise
25 influence over the process in the way that you wanted to

1 do?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Had that have been the case, then
3 I suppose it logically follows, yes, but that was not my
4 understanding, and, indeed, I think I answered the point
5 in a different way already, that I wasn't persuaded at
6 that stage that it was possible for us to offer that
7 armoured division in the timescale that was required.

8 Indeed, even later the process, perhaps we will come
9 on to it, at one point, I think in October, we pretty
10 much assumed that the Americans had discounted the
11 prospect of precisely that contribution and were
12 planning without our involvement, simply because we had
13 not taken the decisions that were required in the
14 timescale that was at that stage required.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I mean, we had General John Reith at the
16 end of last week, telling us that he had a very close
17 relationship with General Franks, his opposite number,
18 and that throughout this General Franks was assuming we
19 were going to be there.

20 Sir John said he, meaning Tommy Franks, couldn't
21 conceive that America's closest ally wouldn't go with
22 them into Iraq if they went. Reith described how he had
23 to put our position in a caveated way:

24 "I couldn't actually say to him, 'It is all right,
25 my friend, I'm with you. We will be there'. Throughout

1 this process I was saying to Tommy Franks, 'This is what
2 we could do, but I can't guarantee we are'."

3 Now, if you are Tommy Franks, and your pal is saying
4 this, he's saying, "This is what we could do", one could
5 see that Tommy Franks would pretty well come to the
6 assumption from that, "This is what they are going to
7 do", which may be what had happened.

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I can't speak for General Franks, but
9 what I can say is that, when General Pigott was sent to
10 Tampa, he was sent with very clear instructions that
11 whatever he said or did, whatever discussions took place
12 were always subject to a very clear political caveat
13 that we had made no decision whatsoever about our
14 involvement, and that was absolutely clear.

15 In a sense your quotation from General Reith rather
16 confirmed that, that the -- that those engaged knew full
17 well that this was planning, it was preparation, and it
18 was what might have to happen if a certain set of
19 conditions followed. But those conditions were
20 paramount and the absolute paramount instruction to
21 General Pigott was that we had not taken any political
22 decisions whatsoever to be involved.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because we had another episode of this
24 in September 2002, when there was a big conference of
25 the military at Tampa and we were represented at it and

1 you had meetings beforehand, and, at that point, you and
2 the Prime Minister, your instructions were that we could
3 offer the second package, the maritime and air package,
4 but not the third package.

5 But then word came back that we had also discussed
6 in some caveated terms at that conference the land
7 option, and I think that came back through Number 10 to
8 your office and -- can you remember your reactions when
9 you heard that your instructions appeared to have been
10 perhaps interpreted in a rather liberal way?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think those instructions were
12 interpreted in a liberal way. I don't think it is
13 particularly surprising that military people would talk
14 about what the United Kingdom could conceivably do.

15 By the end of the summer, there was a further
16 complication, in that there was a likely fire strike and
17 we were required to make available a significant number
18 of members of the armed forces to deal with that. So
19 that was another complication, in terms of, not what we
20 could do, but whether, given what we could do, we could
21 actually translate that into any kind of reality.

22 I wouldn't be at all surprised that military people
23 would be able to reflect upon the possibilities, but
24 that does not mean that those possibilities are
25 translated into reality. I don't think any -- I have no

1 sense that -- in all my conversations with the
2 United States, with Donald Rumsfeld, Tommy Franks and
3 others, that they ever assumed automatically that we
4 would be there.

5 Indeed, as I say, in October, there was a report
6 that the Americans were continuing their planning on the
7 assumption that we wouldn't do the third option and, of
8 course, I have referred already to the
9 conversation I had with Donald Rumsfeld on the day of
10 the debate in the House of Commons and he went from that
11 conversation to a press conference in which he said that
12 the British might not be there, and, if they weren't
13 there, the US could handle it.

14 So I'm not sure that I agree with this idea that
15 there was some sort of inherent assumption all the way
16 through that we would take military action.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we are in a difficulty, Mr Hoon,
18 because Lord Boyce told us in his evidence, quite
19 correctly in terms of the policy, as you and others have
20 described it:

21 "We will go through the planning, but we are not
22 committed until we are committed."

23 But he then goes on to say, "But the US don't
24 believe it".

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not in any way contradicting what

1 his experience was of dealing with the American
2 military, but both in the United States and in the
3 United Kingdom, ultimately, these decisions are taken by
4 political leaders, by the President, by the
5 Prime Minister, and, in the case of the United Kingdom
6 in this particular case, by a decision of the House of
7 Commons.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just ask, because you were in close
9 touch from time to time with your exact opposite number,
10 Donald Rumsfeld, who was, as it were, at the forward
11 edge of US policy-making. Did he understand our
12 political constraints and conventions and needs?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Very much so, and Donald is a keen
14 student of British politics and of the House of Commons,
15 and would, from time to time, surprise me by the fact
16 that he had been watching events in the House of
17 Commons, sometimes probably more assiduously than I had
18 been, and would make reference to what had been said and
19 the debates that were taking place.

20 So he was in no doubt of the constraints that we
21 were under politically. I'm not saying that he shared
22 our view of, say, the UN process or of the other
23 conditions, but I think he well understood that, once
24 the Prime Minister had said that there would be a vote
25 in the House of Commons, that that was the decisive

1 factor.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Just to wrap it up, when Michael Boyce said
3 the US didn't believe us, he is really talking US
4 military?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I can't say what was in his mind, but
6 that wouldn't surprise me, which is, I think, the point
7 I made to Sir Roderic earlier. It wouldn't be at all
8 surprising that military men, sitting around discussing
9 what was possible, would have that sense of what could
10 be offered, but that does not mean that it was on offer
11 and had been decided.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were a little cautious earlier when
13 you described your relationship with Donald Rumsfeld.
14 You said he had perhaps been a bit initially suspicious
15 of a Labour government.

16 By this stage, how good was the relationship? Were
17 you talking to him frequently? Did you meet frequently?
18 Did you feel that you really had a sort of good, frank,
19 straightforward relationship with him?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I always felt that I had a very good,
21 frank straightforward relationship, because he is a very
22 straightforward man and very clear about what he wants
23 and what he is going to do.

24 We certainly spoke on the telephone whenever we
25 needed to. I wouldn't say that it was on a -- it

1 certainly wasn't on a daily or possibly even weekly
2 basis, but it was very regular. We met frequently. He
3 was not a man to have idle conversations. He didn't
4 sort of sit around chatting about politics or the world
5 or even what was happening in the Pentagon. The
6 conversations, the meetings, were extremely
7 business-like. They were very focused. He did what he
8 had to do and moved on.

9 For example, I mean, I was well aware that
10 Jack Straw had a very different kind of relationship
11 with Colin Powell, where, you know, they talked about
12 things on a far more regular basis, far more detail,
13 and, you know, they were friends in a very -- in a way
14 that meant that their relationship was probably quite
15 different from mine with Donald.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were in the course of putting some of
17 your biggest military chips on to Donald Rumsfeld's
18 table. Did you feel that this made it possible for you
19 to exercise some influence over the way he was
20 approaching the Iraq conflict?

21 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I think we had some -- this was
22 a two-way process. There were a number of occasions on
23 which I set out very clearly the position of the
24 United Kingdom government, and we had some quite -- it
25 is fair to say we had some fairly lively exchanges on

1 occasions.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because a lot of the argument in favour
3 of our big contribution was that this would give us
4 influence with the Americans. We have heard this from
5 many witnesses.

6 Can you point to areas in which you recall it did
7 actually give us influence, in which we were able to
8 change things in the way that we wanted them changed?

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have given one example already,
10 although it didn't happen in the end. I'm pretty
11 confident that we persuaded them about the northern
12 option, about going in through Turkey. I'm fairly
13 confident that in a number of areas of detailed
14 planning, that people like General Pigott were extremely
15 influential in shaping the nature of the campaign. We
16 were very clear about the requirement for improving the
17 aftermath planning. So there were a number --

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were clear about the requirement for
19 improving the aftermath planning, but the aftermath
20 planning turned out to be a disaster, didn't it?

21 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think it turned out to be
22 a disaster. It did not go as well as we wanted it to
23 go. You asked me for examples of where we had
24 influence. We certainly -- I took a paper to the
25 Pentagon, I think in February 2003, setting out our

1 concerns about what might happen after the invasion, and
2 I was given assurances that that was to be acted upon,
3 and certainly, in the south, to a great extent it was.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But ORHA was described as -- has been
5 described by witnesses, described in the papers, which
6 was the Pentagon's first attempt at aftermath execution,
7 as a shambles.

8 So had they paid any attention to our concerns about
9 this? Other witnesses have suggested not.

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think there is a distinction to be
11 drawn between ORHA's role in Baghdad and the north and
12 what was happening in the south.

13 I think, as I understand the evidence that you have
14 been given so far, that was mainly focused on what ORHA
15 was doing in and around Baghdad, which I accept was
16 a centre of gravity for Iraq and the key city that had
17 to be resolved, but, in the south, the picture was
18 significantly different, not least because of the
19 predominantly Shia population.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we will probably come back to
21 that later on, so perhaps I can just ask you one or two
22 other questions about the way that the decision to
23 actually take the package to the largest of the options
24 was taken.

25 I mean, that was a decision which, as we have

1 established, hadn't been taken in September, but, after
2 that, I think in October, you recommended to the
3 Prime Minister that we should go for the option 3, the
4 big package. What, for you, were the critical factors
5 in making that recommendation?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, if I can just step back
7 a little, actually what happened, and I have alluded to
8 it already, was that there was growing concern -- and
9 I think Mike Boyce shared this concern -- that, given
10 the then timescale for American action, which was
11 essentially January at this point, that we really had to
12 make a decision, because we would not have had time to
13 prepare that third option.

14 The problem was that the Foreign Office,
15 Downing Street, were heavily engaged in negotiating a UN
16 Security Council Resolution and they did not want any
17 overt military preparation to affect their diplomatic
18 efforts.

19 So in a sense, by October -- and I think I have
20 mentioned it already -- I was really saying to the
21 Prime Minister, "Look, if you are going to do this", and
22 we had had this discussion on several occasions by then,
23 "You have really got to decide". Because, at the
24 moment, my understanding, by the middle of October, was
25 that the Americans were assuming we wouldn't be there,

1 that -- sorry, we wouldn't be there with the third
2 option, that we wouldn't be there on the land, and that
3 their planning was moving ahead on that basis, and, as
4 the weeks went by, meeting a January timescale was
5 increasingly impossible.

6 So essentially, once we got to the point -- what
7 I was really saying to the Prime Minister was, "You have
8 got to decide. You have got to decide whether we are
9 going to offer this third option and this package of an
10 armoured division on the land", and eventually, I think
11 probably as late as the very end of October, that
12 decision was then taken.

13 The reasons for it essentially were to -- clearly,
14 we have discussed already the question of influence, to
15 provide us with a big role in the south. There was an
16 assumption that that would provide us with a coherent
17 area in the south, that we would operate right across
18 the southern provinces. I think one of the factors
19 I recall in some of the conversations, perhaps with the
20 Foreign Office but certainly in the MoD as well, was
21 that, had we have not gone in at that stage as part of
22 the military invasion of Iraq, we would nevertheless
23 have been expected to be involved afterwards.

24 So let us assume we didn't do option 3,
25 nevertheless, quite soon afterwards, the assumption was

1 that there would be a further UN Security Council
2 Resolution, that that would require or encourage member
3 states to send troops to Iraq for peacekeeping, and
4 that, as a permanent member of the Security Council, we
5 would be expected to play our part.

6 So there was a sense -- and I recall this from some
7 of the military -- that it was better to be there at the
8 beginning, to establish ourselves, to know what the land
9 was like, rather than going in later for a peacekeeping
10 operation without having that prior experience and
11 information.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So that was one of the arguments, but
13 actually it turned out that we ended up doing both, the
14 campaign and staying six years on.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, but not in the numbers that we
16 might otherwise have had to send. That was part of the
17 consideration. We drew down significantly from the
18 46,000 that we sent as part of the invasion to, I think,
19 initially around 15 or 16, and then actually down to
20 about 10.

21 So there was a pretty rapid reduction in our
22 numbers, and that, again, was part of the consideration,
23 that we might have had to send more later if they had
24 been involved in a purely peacekeeping role.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What about other arguments? If I don't

1 misquote him, I think Jonathan Powell was telling us
2 yesterday that there was a strong argument being made in
3 terms of the army wanting to do this, of its morale, its
4 self-respect -- I'm not using the exact words here.

5 Was that an argument that was being put to you and
6 through you to the Prime Minister?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't recall the argument being put
8 to me in quite those terms. I think anybody who had
9 spent so long as I had spent by then in the MoD was well
10 aware of the tremendous qualities of our armed forces
11 and their desire to be used and to participate.

12 So there was a sense, particularly amongst the army,
13 that they did not want to be left out. But I don't
14 think -- I wouldn't have regarded that as being
15 a substantial argument, as something that you put on the
16 table and say it was a major factor in the
17 decision-making.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But there was quite a strong push from
19 the army --

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: They knew that -- and that has
21 probably been true in the more recent conflict,
22 particularly in Afghanistan. They knew that the kind of
23 capabilities that we had in the Royal Air Force and the
24 Royal Navy were relatively easily available and they --
25 and certainly there was a sense that they wanted to play

1 their part.

2 As I say, I don't regard that as being a major
3 factor in the actual decision-making. It made it
4 easier. They weren't saying, "We can't do this. Under
5 no circumstances will we go", they were saying, "If
6 necessary, we can play our part in this particular way".

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was there any sense that the thing -- the
8 Americans needed us if the thing was going to be done
9 really well, that there were things we could provide to
10 this operation that perhaps we thought we were better at
11 doing than the Americans?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I recall at one stage -- this was
13 never a sort of -- as I said earlier, this was never
14 a fixed package, there were always changes, and at one
15 stage I think the Americans were planning in the south
16 to substitute a relatively heavy brigade with a rather
17 lighter one, and I think we had some reservations about
18 the extent to which that was sufficiently capable of
19 doing the job in the south.

20 So sending an armoured division, some of our very
21 best people, certainly meant that we felt confident that
22 the job would be done and be done well, but bear in mind
23 that we were -- what was the expression -- relief in
24 place. The task of the armoured division was to follow
25 in behind American forces, who were pushing rapidly

1 ahead towards Baghdad. So that particular
2 responsibility was -- it wasn't as if we were the ones
3 pushing on to Baghdad.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: One last question on this subject, and
5 then I think we are going to take a short break.

6 Were the people in your department or in Whitehall
7 arguing against the idea of sending the big package,
8 suggesting that, if we sent package 2, that would be
9 a pretty significant contribution with a lot of ships,
10 a lot of aircraft, some other bits, special forces
11 perhaps?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it was recognised ultimately
13 that that was a political judgment for the
14 Prime Minister, in terms of the wider picture of the
15 kind of things that we had been discussing in terms of
16 influence and coherence. I think the big concerns that
17 I faced, particularly by the time the summer had passed,
18 was whether we could manage. We had got people in
19 Afghanistan, we had got a potentially big commitment to
20 Operation Fresco to deal with a fire strike and
21 whether -- sending this number of troops to Iraq and
22 then being able to replace them thereafter, whether we
23 could actually cope with that. So there were some
24 proper reservations expressed about whether the
25 Ministry of Defence could manage all of that

1 simultaneously.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So there were those questions about

3 whether we were overstretched or not, and then there was

4 a political judgment to be made as to whether package 2

5 was a sufficiently respectable contribution or we really

6 needed package 3 with the land element and that was

7 a political decision for the Prime Minister?

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, but on the basis of military

9 advice as to whether or not it was do-able. the

10 Prime Minister would only take that decision, as I would

11 have taken a corresponding decision, on the basis of

12 whether it was practical, not only for us to deliver --

13 I think it is important to emphasise, not only for us to

14 deliver the number of troops required in the early

15 stages and however long the fighting stages would last,

16 but also to recognise that, once we were there, there

17 was going to be a continuing obligation, although

18 qualified by the point I made to you just now, that that

19 continuing obligation was likely to arise in any event

20 as a result of whatever UN Resolution was passed in the

21 aftermath.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Let's take a break now and come

24 back just a bit before half past, thank you.

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Thank you.

1 (11.12 am)

2 (Short break)

3 (11.28 am)

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sir John, one of the things I kept
5 referring to without being able to put my finger on the
6 date was a letter in October, and I have been able to
7 just check. It was on 29 October that, in a sense, my
8 office wrote to David Manning saying that US military
9 planning was continuing, increasingly assuming that
10 there would be no UK land contribution.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that. That's helpful. Let's
12 resume where we left off. Sir Lawrence?

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks. Just following on from
14 that, we have talked about these options and effectively
15 the two in play were the number 2 and number 3. I think
16 that's fair to say.

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Number 1 was assumed.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Number 1 was assumed, that we would
19 not actually go out of our way to make it hard for them
20 to conduct their operations. Number 2 was a significant
21 air and maritime, and number 3 was a division.

22 You have given us some indications of the pressures
23 and considerations that argued for a division. How were
24 the different options evaluated? Because you have also
25 indicated that they had different political implications

1 as well as military implications. What was the actual
2 process by which you assessed which of these we would
3 like to go for?

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think in terms of what actually was
5 achievable, I think it was assumed that we would want to
6 be helpful to the United States in the situation and,
7 therefore, how would we go about offering as much as was
8 consistent with all of the other pressures that we
9 faced.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there a paper at any point which
11 went through the political, military, financial,
12 whatever, advantages of the different options?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think actually the letter that
14 I just referred to, to Sir John, on 29 October, does
15 indicate some of those points, not least the -- and I --
16 it is actually written by my private secretary, but it
17 is obviously a letter from my office to the
18 Prime Minister.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just out of interest there, by and
20 large, your letters came from office to office rather
21 than sort of you writing directly to the Prime Minister?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It seemed to vary. I never quite
23 understood why, sometimes, it was done in different
24 ways. I'm sure there is some Civil Service convention
25 for this, but I think it tended to be the case that

1 I would write my own personal views directly to the
2 Prime Minister; if I was writing on behalf of the
3 department, it was more likely to come through my
4 private office.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So basically, the different options
6 are being set out, as in -- saying it's time for
7 a decision, as late as October 29th --

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The 29th, yes.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- which is quite well on. It is
10 perhaps worth recalling Lord Turnbull's assumption that
11 actually all this had been settled by the start
12 of September. It clearly wasn't settled by then.

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No. Again, in response to a question
14 from Sir Roderic earlier about sort of aftermath, there
15 is a sentence here:

16 "It is also worth noting that, while package 3 is
17 significantly more expensive in itself than package 2,
18 making it available could significantly reduce our
19 vulnerability to US requests to provide a substantial
20 and costly contribution to post-conflict stabilisation
21 operations."

22 So that was clearly in my mind as part of the
23 decision-making process.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, again, just to clarify on this
25 point, because you seemed to be suggesting before the

1 break that what that implied was not that we wouldn't be
2 involved in post-conflict stabilisation, but that our
3 forces would be better prepared because they would know
4 the terrain, the people, they would be acclimatised.

5 What you have just said implies that, to use the way
6 these are often discussed, we would rather be there
7 making the meal than dealing with the washing up, that
8 our forces wanted to be part of the main action and that
9 the post-conflict was seen as something rather secondary
10 to that. Is that fair?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think there is also an assumption,
12 which I would share, that British forces are pretty good
13 at making the adjustment from war fighting to
14 stabilisation and to peacekeeping and nation building.
15 The three-block war, I think we were pretty good at, and
16 I think there was a sense in which we were confident
17 that we could -- we would do a very good job, if we made
18 that kind of transition, that it would be more difficult
19 but they would still do a good job if they simply came
20 in for the peacekeeping part.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to clarify this point, you are
22 not assuming that these were alternatives that you
23 either, to use my analogy, did the cooking or you did
24 the washing up. You are saying you could still do both.

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We could do both, but I think

1 implicit was the assumption that, if we did the washing,
2 that we would have to do that on a larger scale than had
3 we have been involved in the war fighting stage.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But that would require a presumption
5 that there would be other countries prepared to
6 contribute to what could be a pretty challenging task.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So there could be no guarantees on
9 that?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On the way that these options were
12 viewed, what was the position of Number 10 on these
13 alternatives between 2 and 3?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: My sense was that, generally
15 speaking, the Prime Minister wanted us to be involved to
16 the maximum extent that was possible, but that he would
17 accept the advice from the military and from me as to
18 what was practically achievable. The Prime Minister
19 was, generally speaking, anxious to do what the
20 United Kingdom could to help.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But as you have described,
22 over September and into October there had been the
23 concerns about the competing demands of
24 Operation Fresco, the firemen's strike, and also that
25 the Americans might just go before there was any way

1 that we could be ready. So was it the case that the
2 Prime Minister was prepared to describe to the Americans
3 option 2 as a significant contribution? Didn't, in
4 fact, he do this at Camp David?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think he would have accepted, had
6 it have been the case that, because of the American
7 timescale, or because of other factors affecting the
8 deployment of our forces, that we could not do option 3,
9 he would have accepted that. It was not that I was
10 under huge pressure from Downing Street to offer
11 option 3. My assumption was that that's what they
12 wanted, if it could be done.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So again, it is quite an important
14 point in just establishing what the options were. It
15 was perfectly reasonable to imagine the UK being quite
16 involved in the American operation, but not to the
17 extent that was eventually the case, not with the
18 division, and that would have been considered
19 politically satisfactory --

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That is precisely the import of the
21 letter that we have just been discussing. The letter
22 says the Americans are moving ahead, they are doing
23 their planning, they are assuming we are not going to be
24 involved on the land.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it is also the case that, even

1 after this letter, there still wasn't a final decision
2 taken on --

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think the decision was taken around
4 the 31st, so it was quite soon after.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's something we need to look at.
6 Can I just move to -- because I think you also
7 mentioned before the break -- you referred to operations
8 in the south as being discussed at this time. I was
9 under the impression that we were still very much on the
10 northern option at this time. Is that correct?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. So at what point were you
13 aware that there may be difficulties in Turkey giving us
14 host nation support?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that awareness grew towards
16 the end of 2002. I think Colin Powell had been to
17 Turkey and reported back, probably through Jack Straw,
18 that the Turks were quite reluctant, and specifically
19 that, although the Americans might be able to secure
20 some basing and some transit rights, that they were
21 pretty uncomfortable with us going through there.

22 We may come on to this in a second, but there is
23 a particular history --

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Going back to the Dardanelles?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, it is more the sort of

1 post-First World War settlement that I can explain
2 because I went to Turkey at the beginning of January and
3 had a very rapid history lesson as a result.

4 But -- so we knew that this was going to be
5 a problem. There were other -- I have always -- I have
6 been to Turkey quite a lot and there is the new
7 government there. There were issues about the extent to
8 which this new government was as influenced by the
9 military as previous governments were. They struck
10 me -- and I saw quite a lot of them during this
11 period -- as being much more democratic, much more like
12 us in the way that they responded to issues, and,
13 therefore, the prospect of large numbers of soldiers
14 transiting their country, I could see was going to cause
15 them some problems.

16 So towards the end of the year we were beginning to
17 think that this might be a problem, and, therefore,
18 preparing contingency plans if we could not go in
19 through the north, but, equally, I don't think that
20 decision was actually taken until after my visit to
21 Turkey at the beginning of January. We only -- when
22 I came back from Turkey, I basically formed a view that
23 this wasn't going to happen.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think -- well, I think on the
25 chronology it may have been just before you went.

1 I think it was on about 3 January. I think there was
2 a question of -- we would still need to work with the
3 Turks, even --

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have seen the evidence that you
5 have been given so far on this, and I don't wholly agree
6 with it, if I may say so.

7 We were aware of the difficulties, Colin Powell in
8 particular had alerted us to the likely attitude of
9 Turkey towards the British being in Turkey. I went
10 specifically to determine that, to decide whether or not
11 we would get those transit rights, and Turkey never
12 actually said no. I mean, they never actually said that
13 we cannot go through Turkey, but I came back partly
14 because of the newspapers there. I did a TV interview,
15 the Turkish equivalent, I guess, of Newsnight, something
16 like that, a long interview where all they were talking
17 about was what had happened in the 1920s and Britain
18 could not entirely be trusted, and I formed the view
19 when I came home that we would never get an agreement
20 from Turkey.

21 That was the point at which we took the decision to
22 then go into the south and reorganise our effort.
23 I mean, it is interesting that the United States didn't
24 take that view for quite a long time and the
25 4th Division -- the 4th Infantry Division stayed in the

1 eastern Mediterranean until after the initial invasion
2 for that reason, because the Americans assumed at some
3 stage that Turkey would agree, and they never did.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we will want to check the
5 timing on that. However you look at this, it is quite
6 late in the day to be shifting from one flank to
7 another. All our planning up to this point goes on one
8 basis, and then, all of a sudden, you are now looking
9 and having to explain to other members of the government
10 that we are looking at a completely different sort of
11 option.

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It wasn't all of a sudden. As I said
13 earlier, they were already -- because of the information
14 we had previously received, we were beginning to think
15 about what might be involved in going through the south,
16 and I think we had actually discussed with the Americans
17 that as an alternative.

18 So it wasn't all of a sudden, but the actual
19 decision didn't come until I came back from Turkey.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of things we heard from
21 Jonathan Powell was, if we had gone through the north,
22 that we might have gone as far as Tikrit and taken
23 a responsibility for that part of Iraq. Was that your
24 understanding?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure we ever quite got into

1 the sort of aftermath planning as far as the north was
2 concerned. I remember seeing from General Pigott
3 probably prior to him going to Tampa, and certainly
4 thereafter, the idea, as I think I mentioned earlier,
5 was to essentially to divide whatever force Iraq had
6 between the north and the south, because part of the
7 practical problem of coming in through the south was
8 that, unlike in the first Gulf War, the Kuwaiti border
9 was relatively short with Iraq, and since we couldn't
10 cross the Saudi border, it meant that a lot of soldiers
11 were being funnelled through a relatively narrow area.

12 One of the concerns in particular was that made us
13 very highly vulnerable to weapons of mass destruction,
14 to chemical weapons and biological weapons. So there
15 was a lot of concern about the focus of a significant
16 force coming through a relatively narrow area.

17 The advantage of the northern option was that it
18 divided Iraq's forces, but also gave us far more space
19 in which to operate.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Potentially, though not if you went
21 as far as Tikrit, a more benign area in which to operate
22 afterwards?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, although -- I accept, I'm sure
24 I will be asked in due course, that our anticipation of
25 the level of security was proved inaccurate.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will talk about that later. Just
2 finally on this, there were major logistical issues
3 about going through the south, which could really only
4 be resolved with American help. Is that fair?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, it was always assumed that, if
6 we did go in through the south, we would be dependent on
7 significant logistical help from the US, but the change
8 to the south did not have -- clearly, it meant that
9 things had to move slightly more quickly, but, actually,
10 I don't recall that anyone had actually set off at that
11 stage. I came back from Turkey, I think about
12 9 January. I don't think -- I mean, Ark Royal didn't
13 sail until 16 January. The air assault deployment began
14 on 23 January.

15 So in a sense, they didn't -- they weren't hanging
16 around. There wasn't a delay. There was -- I can't
17 even imagine that the journey was technically longer.
18 They went through the Suez Canal rather than having to
19 make a long land transit across southern Turkey.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But operationally, they were going
21 to be quite different sorts of missions.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes. Well, certainly the relief in
23 place, but, again, I don't recall any particular anxiety
24 on the part of the military that this could not be done
25 partly because the contingency planning was already

1 under way before my visit to Turkey, partly because they
2 are pretty good at making those kinds of adjustments.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We would like to ask some
5 questions now on the legal dimension of the war, noting
6 that you, yourself, are a professional lawyer by
7 background, indeed a constitutional lawyer.

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Not an international lawyer, though.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: That's true.

10 Can we start almost a self-contained thing?
11 In March 2002, your interview with Jonathan Dimbleby,
12 where you stated the view that the United Kingdom would
13 be entitled to use the force without a specific
14 United Nations Resolution and that there was no legal
15 necessity to go back to the UN. This is 2002.

16 We understand, and we now have permission to
17 declassify the exchange of correspondence, the Attorney
18 General writes to you to express concern and his own
19 considerable difficulties in that view, and you respond.

20 I wonder if you would like to take us through that
21 exchange, and to ask initially: were you relying on your
22 own view of the war in what you said to
23 Jonathan Dimbleby or was there any initial MoD legal
24 adviser's advice behind it?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I mean, this was a very wide-ranging

1 interview, to the best of my recollection. It was one
2 of the last programmes that still had long interviews
3 with politicians rather than five or ten-minute
4 interviews. So he was able to ask me quite a lot of
5 questions and pushed me quite hard on legality, and, to
6 the best of my recollection -- and I haven't read the
7 transcript, although I know there is reference in this
8 documentation to a transcript -- I haven't read the
9 transcript, I should say, since writing the letter.

10 I was trying quite hard -- let me put it this way:
11 I was trying quite hard not to answer any questions, and
12 that's quite difficult when there are only two of you
13 having a conversation, and, as I recall -- and I think
14 the documentation supports this -- essentially I gave an
15 example of self-defence as justification that would not
16 require a further UN Resolution. What I was essentially
17 saying was that, if Iraq attacked British forces, we
18 would be entitled legally to respond. I'm not sure
19 I went any further than that. I certainly don't recall
20 giving any kind of detail.

21 Now, the reason why Peter Goldsmith replied I think
22 was not -- I don't think -- I have only more recently
23 re-read the letter that he sent. I don't think he was
24 particularly concerned about the nature of my legal
25 observations, I think he was more concerned that I might

1 be, in effect, boxing him in when he came to write his
2 own opinion on the subject. So what he wanted to avoid
3 was a sense that, out there, I had already pre-judged
4 this matter, legally. But my example, as I think I say
5 in my letter, was really about self-defence.

6 Self-defence wasn't a justification, ultimately,
7 and, therefore, I don't think I particularly trespassed
8 on his area of proper legal responsibility.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: So it shouldn't be understood -- that's to
10 say your Dimpleby interview moment -- that that was
11 a sort of settled and thought-through address to the
12 situation as it was in March 2002 --

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: -- in the real world?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I was trying pretty hard not to
16 answer his questions, in truth.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, let's draw a line for a moment
18 under that and move on a whole year. We are now in
19 2003. The invasion and our participation in it is now
20 imminent and I think it is 7 March that the Attorney
21 General gives advice to, among others, yourself. The
22 key people at the top of government. It is a finely
23 balanced review of the arguments. It indicates the
24 risks. It touches, incidentally, though for you very
25 importantly, I guess, on the risk of prosecution of

1 service personnel.

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: And of politicians, I might add.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Indeed politicians. Did that advice lead you
4 to be any more concerned than the very serious decision
5 anyway to commit British troops or was it something that
6 you, not least as a lawyer, as well as a senior
7 politician, you know, would expect in terms of advice in
8 that situation?

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I read at the time his -- I think
10 what has become called a long legal advice and it is
11 a very -- it is quite complex, quite dense, it raises
12 a number of quite difficult issues. But I was clear
13 that his conclusion was that there was a legal
14 justification for military action based on 1441 reviving
15 the previous Resolution 678, and he said so
16 categorically. I have it in front of me. He said:

17 "I accept that a reasonable case can be made that
18 Resolution 1441 is capable in principle of reviving the
19 authorisation in 678 without a further resolution."

20 That was his conclusion.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask you about the difficulty,
22 or, indeed, just what is needed between a finely argued,
23 extended review of the arguments and an on balance
24 conclusion, which the Attorney General gave in his
25 7 March long version advice, and the military need for

1 the one-liner. Michael Boyce certainly signalled, even
2 in January, that he would need a one-line sign-off
3 certificate.

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We all did. It was no different. We
5 would have been in precisely the same legal position as
6 the military if we had taken unlawful action.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: So after the Attorney's advice on the 7th,
8 there is a meeting on 11 March, where Lord Boyce told us
9 he would need to have a short line or short paragraph in
10 his operational directive to the armed forces, and
11 I think the Cabinet Secretary and Sir Kevin Tebbit would
12 say the same regarding civil servants.

13 He received that assurance in a letter from the
14 Attorney's office to your legal adviser's office in the
15 MoD, 14 March, and can I ask: did you and he have any
16 discussions --

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry, who is the "he"?

18 THE CHAIRMAN: The "he" is the Chief of Defence Staff,
19 Michael Boyce.

20 Did you and he feel a need to sit down together and
21 say, "Is this good enough? Is this it?", or was that
22 already water over the dam?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Mike, quite rightly, had been
24 pressing for some time for this very clear legal
25 judgment and -- as had we all, though. There is no

1 doubt that, had Peter Goldsmith said, "This is unlawful.
2 This is not a basis on which military action can be
3 taken", there would have been no military action, but in
4 a sense, you referred to my legal background, although
5 it is very many years ago, I was perfectly used to
6 seeing legal advice that argued the case but came to
7 a conclusion. Indeed, I recall being told off pretty
8 roundly by my pupil master when I was a pupil barrister
9 that my opinions were too academic and that they argued
10 the case too much. I had been an academic lawyer
11 before. He said, "The client wants an answer", and in
12 a sense this was the answer. This was Peter Goldsmith's
13 conclusion.

14 So the fact that it was, as you say, finely argued,
15 didn't come as any great surprise. You wouldn't need
16 lawyers unless there were arguments, and he came to
17 a view, and it was that view that Mike Boyce,
18 Kevin Tebbit and I were looking for.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. One other dimension to this: you
20 had seen the long Attorney General's advice of 7 March.
21 You were, yourself, a lawyer by training and profession,
22 as were some other of your Cabinet colleagues, including
23 the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, but by no
24 means all of them. Many of your Cabinet colleagues had
25 not seen it, didn't see it and the discussion in Cabinet

1 was based on something much shorter. It was not the
2 one-liner, it was the draft of a Parliamentary answer.

3 Do you think now, or did you think at the time, that
4 Cabinet colleagues would have wished to be led into the
5 detailed, "On the one hand ... on the other",
6 considerations in the Attorney's full advice?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure that it would be
8 appropriate for Cabinet to have that kind of discussion,
9 because, in the end, what you would be inviting people
10 to do was to speculate on the legal judgment that the
11 Attorney General had reached, and it is not the same as
12 having a political discussion about options or policies.

13 This is someone whose decision is that this was
14 lawful, and I can't see how Cabinet could look behind
15 that and have the kind of discussion that you are
16 suggesting. This was not policy advice. This was not,
17 "On the one hand ... and on the other hand, we might
18 take this course of action". What he was saying was
19 that this was lawful in his judgment, and I can't see
20 how we could have had a sensible discussion going behind
21 that.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: One member of the Cabinet, of course,
23 Clare Short, did say she would like to have a full
24 discussion of the legal arguments to and fro, which was
25 not granted and it didn't take place.

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I hope, for the reasons that I have
2 just set out -- I don't see how you can have that kind
3 of discussion. Do you have a vote on whether the legal
4 advice is accepted or not? It doesn't lead anywhere.

5 I can see that you, as we did, had a discussion
6 about whether it is sensible in policy terms to commit
7 British forces, to take the action that we were taking.
8 That's a different matter. But having a debate about
9 a legal opinion doesn't strike me as being very
10 sensible.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: There is one dimension -- I would like to
12 move on to some other legal issues in a moment -- it is
13 the issue of policy, political operational risk which is
14 implicit in the legal advice.

15 That does seem to me, is it not a proper question
16 for the Cabinet to judge? Would they, therefore, have
17 been aware that there were risks lurking behind the
18 legal advice, risks of prosecution, for example?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I can see, further on, and I saw this
20 at the time, that in order to justify the conclusion
21 that the Attorney General came to, it was necessary for
22 there to be -- I think he describes it as strong,
23 factual grounds. So there needs to be a necessary
24 underpinning to support that and we had --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Which he sought from the Prime Minister right

1 at the last moment, didn't he?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Certainly we had those kinds of
3 discussions. Does the factual background support the
4 action that we are taking? Is there sufficient
5 cooperation by Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq?
6 Are they co-operating with UNMOVIC? What are the views
7 of the inspectors, and so on? So that kind of
8 discussion was taking place.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That was, as it were, the big
10 legal question, but there was a great deal of legal
11 surround to operational and military matters, and
12 I would like just to ask a few questions, first about
13 the No Fly Zones.

14 You have given us evidence earlier today about the
15 continuance of the No Fly Zones as part of containment.
16 What about the legal justification for their
17 continuance? It seems clear that it was increasingly
18 felt by initially Lord Goldsmith's predecessor, that
19 this was an increasingly precarious legal base because
20 it had initially rested on humanitarian grounds.

21 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That remained the case. There was
22 not, as far as I'm aware, a specific UN Security Council
23 resolution, this was based on the requirement to
24 prevent -- I think the phrase was an "overwhelming
25 humanitarian disaster".

1 Nevertheless, it did have an underpinning in
2 a series of UN Security Council Resolutions. I have
3 mentioned one already, 678. I think there were others.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: One question that flows from the concerns of
5 successive Attorneys General about the precarious legal
6 base as time went on for the operations in the
7 No Fly Zones --

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Could I -- I hate to quibble, but I'm
9 not sure the legal base changed as things went on. The
10 factual operation of the zones changed and I think
11 I touched on it earlier. The legal justification
12 remained consistent.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Understood, and that's not a quibble, if
14 I may say so, that's important. But one effect of it
15 was that successive Attorneys General had to pay, or
16 wished to pay, closer and tighter attention to the
17 targeting decisions, and so a tension inevitably existed
18 between military need for swiftness of decision and
19 operation and execution, on the one hand, and careful
20 legal scrutiny of things like impact on civilians,
21 et cetera.

22 Can I ask: did you regard that as a sort of stable
23 situation through the operations of the No Fly Zones
24 right up to March 2003?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think we probably touched a little

1 on this at the outset. The Iraqis were becoming much
2 more sophisticated. They were developing radar that
3 could operate from outside the No Fly Zone, but direct
4 from their missiles inside the No Fly Zone.

5 So there were -- I think I follow your argument that
6 there were legal issues that were making it more
7 difficult to justify the action that we were taking:
8 were we entitled as a matter of law? I think we
9 probably were, but I accept that there is a harder
10 judgment to make -- to attack radar facilities based
11 outside the No Fly Zone, even though we judged that they
12 were controlling missiles inside the zone.

13 Equally, what if the -- and the Iraqis did quite
14 a lot of this, they had these mobile launchers that
15 slipped into the zone and slipped out again. How were
16 we to determine whether they were legitimate targets or
17 not?

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt, I imagine that you were
19 looking at a lot of this stuff, I take it, very hard to
20 assess collateral damage when you have got a fast-moving
21 missile launcher.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: They weren't quite that fast.

23 I think five miles an hour is the kind of speed we were
24 talking about, but they were mobile, and rightly --
25 I mean, you are on to the right point, which is that

1 they were often located in centres of population, that
2 there were serious questions about the potential for
3 civilian casualties, and I suspect that there were
4 civilian casualties, but nevertheless, that was
5 a judgment that had to be made in the light of the risk
6 to RAF and USAF personnel.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. What I would like to move on to,
8 as the last sort of segment on the legal surrounds to
9 the whole business is looking ahead initially to the
10 campaign, I'm thinking of February 2003/March 2003,
11 before it starts.

12 We understand that you briefed the Attorney General
13 on the military objectives and there are inevitably
14 concerns for the British Government, legal as well as
15 policy and military, because we are going in
16 a coalition, two countries, somewhat different rules of
17 engagement, somewhat different tolerance levels,
18 frankly.

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: And a different legal basis.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Did you and/or the Attorney identify
21 particular concerns that you felt needed to be addressed
22 at that immediate pre-invasion time?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The reason I mentioned the legal
24 basis, our legal basis was always predicated on the fact
25 that we were disarming Iraq for its use of weapons of

1 mass destruction, and that meant that actions had to be
2 consistent with that legal base.

3 Now, that developed once Iraq had not taken the
4 opportunity of co-operating with the United States, once
5 it was clear that we were entitled, as a matter of law,
6 to remove the regime in order to disarm Iraq but that
7 conditionality had to follow. So the legal decisions
8 were consistent with that in terms of targeting, and
9 that meeting I had with the Attorney General would be
10 very much about how we went about the process of
11 deciding appropriate targets.

12 That, again, was slightly different from some of the
13 targeting that I had done, for example, in relation to
14 Afghanistan, because the American campaign was
15 different. It was very much about creating an effect on
16 the ground and making clear to the Iraqi people that our
17 target was Saddam Hussein and his regime, rather than,
18 if you like, a more conventional military attack on the
19 country as a whole. I don't know whether that
20 distinction is clear, but many of the targets -- well,
21 the justification was that the targets were targets
22 associated with Saddam Hussein and his regime.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Hence shock and awe, not least on Baghdad,
24 but we, of course, shared, as coalition partner,
25 a degree of responsibility for whatever the Americans

1 did as well as what we carefully, when considering
2 targeting and outfall, would decide to do on our own.

3 How much interchange would there be, either at
4 political or, indeed, military level, between ourselves
5 and the United States forces and government, on the
6 matter of targeting, limits, constraints, criteria?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think there was a pretty integrated
8 process because, actually, once we had got to the air
9 campaign as such, it was not - because of modern
10 sophisticated weapons, it was not always known before
11 a plane took off necessarily what its target was going
12 to be, and that has changed dramatically from
13 conventional bombing.

14 So we had a list of targets and -- and, again, the
15 difference probably legally is that I went through them,
16 very often one by one. There was some delegation
17 ultimately, but certainly in the early phase I saw
18 pretty much every target that was going to be attacked.

19 Now, I didn't always know whether we were going to
20 do the actual attack.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: In the event -- and this is speculative -- in
22 the event of some disastrous missed targeting, there
23 would be in the British system an audit trail from
24 authority, legal and political, through military, if
25 necessary by delegation, to the actual event. But we

1 couldn't control the United States' system. Was that
2 a concern?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I mean, that was always going to be
4 a concern and there were some suggestions, I know, in
5 the course of the campaign, I think a missile went
6 astray, or a bomb, and hit a market. There were always
7 those kinds of risks.

8 The advice that I received and my job was to
9 minimise those risks as much as possible, although there
10 is no doubt Saddam Hussein made that as difficult as he
11 possibly could by, for example, co-locating civilian
12 facilities alongside military ones.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You mentioned delegation.
14 I mean, in the course of the actual invasion, you
15 delegated to Air Marshall Burridge, who was our
16 commander on the ground, a degree of delegated authority
17 for targeting decisions. Inevitable, in terms of a live
18 campaign?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, and inevitable as well in terms
20 of the kind of technology that I was describing, where
21 it is possible to have planes in the sky which are then
22 subsequently given targets. So I think the practicality
23 of modern technology means that that is a requirement,
24 yes.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Reminding ourselves this is essentially

1 a lessons learned Inquiry, was there, after the invasion
2 phase, a lessons learned approach to the actual
3 targeting set of issues and how much collateral damage,
4 with hindsight, as a review process? Did that go on?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, it did. Although, actually,
6 I think the lessons learned were -- and I learned
7 lessons, because I think I approached some of the
8 targets initially pretty cautiously. If I was told that
9 there was a civilian facility alongside a military one,
10 we had quite a debate. Saddam Hussein had some -- at
11 least 50 palaces located around the country that he
12 would move from one to the other, and we had quite
13 a debate about, if we hit one of these targets, what
14 about the people who worked there? Were they
15 necessarily part of the regime? So I think initially
16 I was fairly cautious.

17 One of the things that I learned in the course of
18 the air campaign was that modern weapons were
19 increasingly accurate, that it was possible, on
20 occasions, to hit parts of buildings without causing
21 damage to the other part of the building. I think, as
22 it went on, the lessons we learned were about how much
23 more accurate modern weapons are than their
24 predecessors.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: I recall from a visit I paid to Belgrade

1 that, with very accurate targeting, the Chinese embassy
2 in Belgrade was targeted by mistake for a quite
3 different building.

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That missile or bomb, I don't recall
5 which it was, I wasn't involved at the time. It went to
6 where it was directed.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: The point to be made, is it, is that the
8 intelligence and factual information becomes at least as
9 important as the technology?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's absolutely right, and I think
11 the advantage we had in relation to Iraq, compared, for
12 example, to the operations we conducted in Afghanistan,
13 was Iraq was probably one of the most photographed
14 countries in the world.

15 So the long history of operations in and around Iraq
16 meant that we had a huge amount of information about
17 what it was that we were targeting, in stark contrast,
18 I accept, to what was a very limited air campaign in
19 Afghanistan, because we simply did not have the same
20 kind of information.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Thank you very much. I think we will
22 turn the questioning now to Baroness Prashar.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you, Chairman.

24 Mr Hoon, I want to move on to Phase 4 military
25 planning and what I would like to hear, is what was the

1 timetable did you plan for the UK's involvement for
2 troops on the ground?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry, I missed the last part.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: As a timescale, what did you plan
5 for the UK's involvement with troops on the ground, in
6 terms of -- what was the planning?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Right. I think the initial
8 assumption was that, once they had deployed, they could
9 remain there until roughly the end of the summer. It
10 was around six months. So the full divisional
11 capability ought to have been capable of remaining in
12 place until -- I think -- I have got the phrase "the
13 late summer" in my head. I know that's rather
14 imprecise, but I think you can assume around six months
15 from initial deployment.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: On what basis was that assumption
17 based?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: On the basis of the strategic defence
19 review assumptions about the length of time that we
20 could maintain a large-scale deployment.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Did you have any concerns
22 about the Phase 4 planning which you had seen in
23 Whitehall or heard from Washington at the time?

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think, as I have mentioned already,
25 we were concerned that the planning for the aftermath

1 was not as detailed and as comprehensive as we would
2 have liked. Indeed, in a visit to the Pentagon in some
3 time in February, I think relatively early in February,
4 I took with me a list the things that we hoped that the
5 United States would take account of.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What were they?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: They were -- actually, a wide range
8 of things. The question of security, the question of
9 how we would deal with the immediate aftermath. Above
10 all else, at the time, we were very anxious about the
11 extent to which the Iraqi people had been dependent on
12 the Oil For Food programme. I have a recollection of
13 Clare Short telling me more than once that 60 per cent
14 of the Iraqi people depended for their food on the
15 United Nations, and there was a very clear anxiety that,
16 the moment we went in, the UN operation would stop, and
17 I know we spent a lot of time preparing for the prospect
18 of a humanitarian catastrophe.

19 So that meant -- one of the reasons why we were keen
20 to open the port at Um Qasr, why we got a ship in very
21 quickly with grain, why we built a pipeline carrying
22 water from Kuwait towards Basra. I remember the Kuwaiti
23 Defence Minister commenting ironically that one of the
24 driest countries in the world was supplying water to
25 a nearby country that had rivers. He could not quite

1 understand why the water wasn't coming in the other
2 direction.

3 But these were all about making sure that we did not
4 face this kind of humanitarian disaster as a direct
5 consequence of going into Iraq.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you said that you went to the
7 States with a list. What sort of response did you get
8 from them? Because obviously you expressed your
9 concerns and you are planning something. What sort of
10 response did you get from the United States?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: At the time, a very positive one.
12 I think, you know, the view was that, since the Pentagon
13 was given responsibility and the United States were
14 dealing with this phase, they welcomed the suggestions
15 that we were making, but, you know, I accept that not
16 all of those items on my list were followed up and
17 followed up in the timescale that we expected.

18 I mean, one of the issues was -- and it was an issue
19 that went on for some time -- was the requirement for
20 a further UN Security Council Resolution to give
21 legal -- to give a further legal basis for our presence
22 there, and we were very focused on upon that.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That was the Resolution 1483?

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, forgive me, I don't remember the
25 number, but it certainly -- the legal problem otherwise

1 is that we were essentially covered by the
2 Geneva Conventions, and that limited, both what we could
3 do, but, equally -- and the key consideration as far as
4 I was concerned, it limited the ability of a number of
5 other countries to come in and help. They required
6 a further legal justification for their presence in
7 southern Iraq in order to be able to deploy their
8 people, soldiers and others, to assist in the aftermath.

9 So we were, even in February, my letter
10 said we need a UN mandate to legitimise international
11 role to sort out sanctions. So we were very focused on
12 that.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But what were your expectations
14 about the level of likely UN involvement in
15 post-conflict? Focusing on resolutions is one thing,
16 but what were your expectations?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Our expectations were that, although
18 there might be an initial disruption caused by the
19 invasion, in the sense that the UN might not then assist
20 in the delivery of the food, that quite quickly we would
21 have expected to get a Security Council Resolution and
22 that that would then allow the UN, in a sense, pretty
23 seamlessly to carry on, and, of course, until the attack
24 on the UN building, that seemed to be happening.

25 It was the -- it was the appalling attack on the

1 United Nations that stopped all of that. Up until then,
2 that seemed to be a reasonable assumption to make.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But our understanding is the US
4 wasn't so keen on the UN involvement.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's right, that's perfectly fair.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So were you anticipating any
7 conditions from the US or UN? Because you were -- we do
8 know that President Bush used the word "vital" after
9 some pressure in Hillsborough, but did you anticipate
10 any restrictions from the US on UN involvement?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: You are right that there was some
12 significant hesitation on the part of the Pentagon and
13 other parts of the system, but again, perhaps one of the
14 things I should have thought of in answer to
15 Sir Roderic's previous question, it was an example where
16 the Prime Minister did persuade the President of the
17 importance of this particular course of action, and
18 eventually there was such a resolution.

19 From my point of view, I was -- I was anxious that
20 we should get a resolution, because I knew how many
21 European countries in particular could not legally,
22 under their system, send troops without that
23 justification. So we were -- for all the reasons we
24 have discussed, we were looking in the aftermath to be
25 able to draw down our forces in Iraq. We could not do

1 that without other countries coming in. If they could
2 not come in without a further UN Security Council
3 Resolution, we had a problem.

4 So the further resolution was important in practice
5 as well as legally, if I can put it that way.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, Major General Tim Cross was
7 appointed, I think some time in February, to be the UK's
8 post-conflict representative in the Pentagon. What
9 instructions, if any, did you give him?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I know that I saw him in the course
11 of that meeting. I think he was actually present at the
12 meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, where we discussed these
13 issues. So he was involved in that, but I think it is
14 important, when you say what instructions I gave him, he
15 was our representative ultimately in ORHA, although
16 I think, at that stage, it was the office for
17 post-conflict planning or something of the kind.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But he must have been sent there for
19 a reason.

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, he was sent there to help with
21 the process. He was a man I knew pretty well, who, you
22 know, was a brilliant, absolutely brilliant,
23 logistician, and I had met him in his previous position,
24 I think in Telford, where he ran part of the logistics
25 operation, but in terms of -- but his job was to be part

1 of ORHA.

2 When you say "instructions", I wasn't actually in
3 day-to-day contact with him. He was our representative
4 in ORHA. We judged that he had the right abilities and
5 experience to make -- to help make ORHA work.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But he told us that he was passing
7 information back. Was that getting to you?

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I mean, we knew that there was
9 a problem.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: If you knew there was a problem,
11 what steps did you take, or did you alert the
12 Prime Minister? Presumably, the aftermath is quite
13 important. You, yourself, have admitted since that
14 fatal errors in planning were made for the post-war. If
15 you were alerted, did you inform the Prime Minister?
16 Did you take any steps?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Of course. I don't think the
18 Prime Minister needed separately alerting by me.

19 The other point about ORHA -- and I accept that
20 there was a mismatch. In our system, the lead on
21 civilian reconstruction and development would always be
22 with the Foreign Office and the Department for
23 International Development, and that's why, to some
24 extent, there was a mismatch between what was happening
25 in Baghdad and what was happening in the south, in the

1 sense that ORHA's natural counterparts in our system
2 were the Foreign Office and DFID, whereas they were
3 being run out of the Pentagon.

4 So in a sense, General Cross's responses would be as
5 much aimed at the Foreign Office and DFID as they were
6 at the Ministry of Defence. His line of communication
7 wasn't directly through the MoD is really what I'm
8 saying. He was appointed on behalf of the government to
9 do a job inside the office of reconstruction.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: It is fair to recollect from Tim Cross's
11 evidence to this Committee, he was really dismayed and
12 astonished by what he found when he went. He said, "Is
13 that all there is? There must be more".

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That message came back very clearly.
15 Hence the paper, hence the meeting, hence the
16 determination to try and improve that.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I want to move on to the
18 arrangements and communication within the UK Government,
19 but, before that, can I just ask a question about your
20 expectations, about what advice or briefing you were
21 receiving on what UK forces might find in the south when
22 they got there?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I mentioned already, I think
24 our overriding consideration initially was food, water,
25 quite quickly the question of power, electricity

1 supplies. Security, in the south at any rate, was
2 a slightly later concern. I don't mean to minimise that
3 but the initial situation on the ground was pretty good.
4 I went to Iraq in April, after the invasion and I walked
5 around with British soldiers. I walked along the side
6 of the Shatt Al Arab waterway. I talked to people.
7 There were children following the soldiers around. They
8 weren't following me, but they were fascinated by
9 British soldiers. The soldiers were not wearing
10 helmets, they were wearing berets. It was a very
11 relaxed environment initially.

12 That changed, but in the immediate aftermath of the
13 invasion, as I say, you know, I went to different parts
14 of Basra, met people, talked to the local population, it
15 was a very -- there was a very positive feeling
16 initially.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I want to pick up the points you
18 made earlier that Tim Cross was there as a kind of
19 representative of the government. But where was the
20 lead for the aftermath planning within the UK
21 Government?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, as I say, traditionally, it
23 would have been with the Foreign Office, with DFID and
24 with Co-ordination. I think Sir John asked me right at
25 the outset about the differences between the US system

1 and our system, and one of the key differences that
2 I learned over time was that the US departmental
3 arrangements were much more self-contained. They were
4 much more the classic silos. There was not the kind of
5 exchanges that occur routinely between different
6 departments in the British Government.

7 They did not appear to me, lower down at any rate,
8 to have the kind of Cabinet Committee structure that we
9 are used to, where typically ministers from different
10 departments and civil servants from different
11 departments would meet together, and that was
12 a practical problem, because, you know, I knew, I think,
13 probably from Jack Straw, that there was real
14 frustration in the State Department, who had much of
15 this expertise that, they were not given much access to
16 that, and, as far as the UK was concerned, it may well
17 be -- and I saw General Cross's evidence -- that we
18 lacked a single focal point of someone willing to do
19 that.

20 Now, the consequence for the Ministry of Defence --
21 and I can't speak on behalf of other departments, but
22 the consequence for the Ministry of Defence is that we
23 became very heavily involved in reconstruction, frankly,
24 to an extent that eventually I judged was not
25 appropriate, because we were expecting that soldiers

1 would be replaced doing some of these basic
2 administrative jobs by civilians, and, indeed, we had
3 been promised by both the Foreign Office and by DFID
4 that that would happen.

5 I got to the point where I think I actually wrote
6 letters saying, "We cannot allow reservists", because by
7 then we had reservists in, and one of the things that
8 was happening was that we had reservists carrying out,
9 if I can put it this way, their civilian role in Basra
10 and in southern Iraq.

11 So we had -- I remember there was someone from the
12 city who was trying to develop a new currency. There
13 was a teacher who was trying to reorganise the Ministry
14 of Education in the south and, you know, I did get quite
15 frustrated that these people who were there for military
16 reasons and had volunteered to serve as reservists for
17 military reasons were actually being asked to carry out
18 essentially their civilian role.

19 In truth, they probably quite enjoyed it, but that
20 was not why they were there, and I was increasingly
21 frustrated at the failure of other government
22 departments to supply the people who were supposed to
23 come and take over those responsibilities.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You quite rightly say, yes, that in
25 the United States Donald Rumsfeld had the overall

1 responsibility for the US operation and you were
2 expressing frustrations, but in our system -- I mean,
3 there was no ministerial Cabinet Committee before the
4 conflict. Would that have helped, if there had been
5 a Cabinet Committee which would have looked at both the
6 invasion and the aftermath?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: There was one set up pretty quickly
8 afterwards. I can't recall when it was established, but
9 I know the Prime Minister was pretty quickly on to the
10 points that General Cross was making and we had regular
11 meetings of a Cabinet Committee that drew in the
12 different departments, chaired by Jack Straw mostly, and
13 I think occasionally by me, occasionally by, I suppose,
14 initially by Clare Short, and later by Baroness Amos.
15 It went on for a long time, I think, Hilary Benn
16 eventually as well. So that work was put in place.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: There doesn't appear to be a single
18 person within the Cabinet responsible for co-ordinating our
19 approach to the aftermath.

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have seen that criticism, and, with
21 the benefit of hindsight, I think that is probably
22 a fair observation. I'm not retreating from that.

23 All I'm saying is that I was expecting, for all of
24 the reasons that we have discussed, that British forces
25 would take responsibility for the south, that they were

1 good at that transition from war fighting to
2 peacekeeping, that we put in place quite a number of
3 projects and eventually I think we got some money from
4 DFID. They couldn't provide enough people and I think
5 we called them "quick impact projects", but there is
6 probably another name for it, where, essentially,
7 British soldiers, who were very frustrated and very
8 concerned that we weren't in a sense doing the job of
9 winning hearts and minds, that there were a lot of
10 things going wrong with the infrastructure in the south,
11 and they wanted to do something. They wanted to help.
12 So they built bridges. They repaired some of the sewage
13 system. They were constantly trying ensure that the
14 electricity supply was being delivered.

15 So quite a lot of that in the first place was being
16 done by British troops. My concern was that that was
17 going on for rather longer than I had anticipated it
18 should do and I was expecting there to be more help from
19 other departments.

20 Now, you will have to ask other colleagues what the
21 difficulties were.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But the point is, I mean, you,
23 yourself, expressed frustrations, but how would you
24 characterise the relationship between the MoD and DFID
25 in the post-conflict planning phase? I mean, what was

1 the relationship between the two departments?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I mean, I recall that there were

3 certainly letters between Clare Short and myself, you

4 know, offering cooperation, offering to work together,

5 making sure that we thought some of these issues

6 through. I think she had a particular reservation. She

7 didn't believe that soldiers should deliver humanitarian

8 systems, for example. I think she set that out in

9 a letter or meeting which I think, frankly, we found

10 a bit puzzling, but, nevertheless, I worked very closely

11 with her.

12 She was very, very committed to ensuring that there

13 was no humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq and that's why

14 I recall her emphasis on the 60 per cent figure because

15 that was a figure I got from her. So she was really

16 very, very focused on ensuring that the Iraqi people

17 were helped and supported in that early period.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But exchanging letters, working

19 co-operatively at this level is fine, but we heard from

20 Lord Boyce that DFID were particularly unco-operative

21 and that he expressed his concerns to you. What steps

22 did you take to rectify the situation?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think we are going back over what

24 I just said. What I did then was to write very clearly

25 and to discuss specifically why it was that we were not

1 getting the people, the civilians that we had been
2 promised by a certain date to come in and help deliver
3 the administration of southern Iraq, because that was
4 the next stage that had to be developed, because, in
5 a sense, it had collapsed with the ending of the regime.

6 Many of the people, I suspect, had disappeared,
7 because much of that administration would have been in
8 the hands of Sunni technocrats and it probably wasn't
9 a comfortable place for them to be at the time.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you aware that your department
11 were reluctant to involve DFID in detailed military
12 planning because of the concerns about their security
13 clearance?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry?

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you aware that your department
16 was reluctant to involve DFID in detailed planning
17 because of concerns about their security clearance?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No. No, in fact --

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were not aware of that?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: -- I wrote to Clare -- let me have
21 a look. Yes, I wrote to her on 16 January
22 emphasising that there was an invitation to DFID, and
23 I quote:

24 "To be represented at the weekly Iraq stocktake
25 meetings."

1 So essentially, we were saying that DFID should come
2 to what were essentially, at that stage, military
3 planning meetings in order to get the perspective of the
4 DFID on the aftermath planning, and, indeed, the letter
5 goes on to say that:

6 "We would like to attend any equivalent meetings
7 held in your department."

8 So what we were doing in that correspondence was
9 making sure that both departments were operating
10 together in the planning for the aftermath.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you would agree that the
12 aftermath planning, particularly at central government
13 level, wasn't as well co-ordinated as it could have
14 been?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: In the event of the problems that we
16 had to deal with, I would agree with you, but the issue
17 is: did we anticipate the kinds of problems that we
18 ultimately faced, and, if there is any criticism, we
19 didn't sufficiently anticipate the difficulties
20 eventually of security? But that was something that
21 developed.

22 I think actually, in the first place, we probably
23 did anticipate the kinds of problems of the humanitarian
24 kind, of electricity, that we did face. What I think we
25 didn't get right was the extent of those difficulties.

1 Electricity is a good example in the sense that the
2 electricity supply presumably to southern Iraq under
3 Saddam Hussein, had always been intermittent and had always
4 been poor. When we took over, they expected everything
5 to suddenly get better, and it didn't, because we were
6 dealing with a power station that, as I understood it at
7 the time, had been patched and repaired and kept
8 going, and we did some of that as well. We had people
9 doing that.

10 But the local population quite quickly, perhaps
11 understandably, blamed us for the problems that they had
12 suffered for a long time under Saddam, and I'm not -- it
13 is not unreasonable, I can see why. They thought that
14 we were there to help and we weren't making their lives
15 any better as quickly as they expected.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Accepted, but I think you did say
17 earlier that Tim Cross was a representative of
18 government. So his messages were not just coming to
19 you, they were going to the FCO and the Cabinet Office.
20 So the sense one gets is that there was nobody taking
21 charge of that. You were saying, "It was not my
22 problem, it was Tim Cross's, you know, it is
23 government", but no one in central government was
24 actually saying, "These are the issues. There is lack
25 of planning. We need to take charge of this".

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Again, I keep making the point that,
2 by then, Tim Cross is in Baghdad. He is dealing with an
3 American system that -- I'm not avoiding my
4 responsibility for it, but essentially, my focus on
5 behalf of the MoD was in the south. We had a huge job
6 in the south to do many of the things that ORHA was
7 supposed to be doing in and around Baghdad.

8 The security situation in Baghdad deteriorated much
9 more quickly and much more dramatically. So ultimately,
10 the problems were security problems.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: I have got one question which arises out of
12 something interesting you mentioned earlier in the
13 context of targeting. Iraq was probably the most
14 photographed country in the world in terms of overhead
15 imagery.

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Tim Cross, when he gets to Baghdad, as you
18 have mentioned, is astonished, he tells us, by the
19 shattered state of the infrastructure, not by reason of
20 the coalition war damage, just absolutely shattered
21 infrastructure.

22 Again, we have heard other evidence, as you have
23 just been saying, about the condition of the basic
24 infrastructure in the south, with patches and mends and
25 things tied up with shoelaces. Photographic imagery

1 doesn't disclose that kind of quality condition of an
2 infrastructure system? Is that right?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it is -- the wider point you
4 are making, I think I agree with, which is that we did
5 not anticipate the extent of the -- those kinds of
6 practical difficulties that we were going to face.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: That's where I was heading and wondering, it
8 isn't just imagery, all sorts of on the ground
9 intelligence, but that picture, insofar as it was put
10 together, the picture of what we would find turned out
11 to be Dorian Gray's portrait in the youthful state, and
12 not what we actually encountered. There was a mismatch,
13 a disconnect.

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The only thing I would say about the
15 south is I think we were always aware that the Shia did
16 particularly badly. In the distribution of whatever
17 finance the regime had, you could always assume that the
18 south would do a lot worse. The levels of poverty and
19 malnutrition and so on in the south were always much
20 higher amongst the Shia than they were in the centre of
21 the country.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. We are going to come up to a lunch
23 break fairly soon, but I think we just need to cover
24 a few more questions before we get there. So I will
25 turn to Sir Roderic.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would just like to make sure that we
2 are clear about what it was we did anticipate and what
3 we didn't anticipate. When did we actually realise that
4 we were going to be in charge in the south in the
5 post-conflict phase?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: From when we decided -- in -- even
7 before we decided that we would do the third option, the
8 third option carried with it a recognition that we would
9 be responsible for the south. That was part of the
10 plan.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This southern box of four provinces?
12 That was clear?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So that's autumn of 2003?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: If you like, in terms of the planning
16 process, that was part of the assumption, running
17 through all of the preparations, but the decision, yes,
18 towards the end of October.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did we realise, at that stage, that we
20 were going to be the Occupying Power for the south, and,
21 indeed, the co-Occupying Power for the whole of Iraq?
22 Was that an assumption then?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that was accepted. Certainly
24 that was the reason why we were so keen to see a further
25 UN Security Council Resolution, because the legal

1 responsibilities and constraints upon an Occupying Power
2 under general international law were more restrictive
3 than we would expect to enjoy under a further UN
4 Security Council Resolution.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But if we are going back into this sort
6 of late 2002/early 2003 period, at that stage our policy
7 was geared to the assumption that we would get a second
8 resolution before the conflict happened.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Or soon after. Sorry, you are
10 talking about the -- sorry --

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm talking about the failed second
12 resolution.

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We are at cross-purposes.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Back in 2002.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry, there were two debates about
16 a second resolution, in the sense that there was
17 a second resolution, if you like, an operative
18 resolution building on 1441 and a debate about a second
19 resolution about the aftermath.

20 Now, the reason I'm making that point is that we
21 were debating that, or at least it was in my paper going
22 to the Pentagon, by the middle of February. So there
23 were two sorts of second resolution being discussed.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay, so there is a series of
25 resolutions, but if we talk about the resolution that we

1 failed to get in March 2003, our policy had been based,
2 ever since 1441 had been adopted, on the assumption that
3 we would get that resolution, but that resolution would
4 provide UN authority for the action, and that the
5 United Nations could come in straight away after the
6 campaign and take charge of the country. So we were not
7 assuming at this stage that we were going to be the
8 Occupying Power in this planning cycle.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, unless and until we got that
10 support, but I don't think I'm disagreeing with you, in
11 the sense that part of what I was talking about in the
12 middle of February was a requirement to ensure that we
13 did not -- we were not the Occupying Power for too long.
14 Whatever the gap was between going in and assuming
15 responsibilities, we wanted to keep that as short as
16 possible.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You say we assumed we were going to take
18 charge of this southern region from the stage that we
19 decided to put in the land contribution. But it was
20 only in February that we really started seriously to
21 focus on the aftermath. You made a trip to Washington
22 with Tim Cross --

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think he was already there.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But he was with you at the meetings, yes,
25 and it was only in mid-February that the Foreign Office

1 set up the Iraq Planning Unit to actually co-ordinate
2 planning on the aftermath. So why were we so late in
3 focusing on this question, if it had been apparent for
4 so long?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I think the reasons that I have
6 already tried to set out, that British forces --
7 I think, are pretty good at this kind of transition.

8 So, in the first place, the assumption would always
9 have been that we would transit very quickly from war
10 fighting to peacekeeping and to -- it was called nation
11 building, and, indeed, that was happening from the
12 moment that -- the port at Umm Qasr was taken
13 specifically to make sure that we had access for
14 shipping to bring in food supplies.

15 So from the moment that was taken, there was
16 a railhead, that was absolutely -- I don't think it was
17 particularly a military significant target. It was
18 important for our thinking about the aftermath, to make
19 sure that we had access for deep water ships. I think
20 some work was done on clearing the harbour very, very
21 quickly in order to get a ship in and I think -- my
22 recollection is it was the Sir Galahad, but I may be
23 wrong -- got in really quite quickly with supplies.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Obviously, our military did extremely
25 well in what they did, coping with the transition. As

1 you say, this is something they are very good at, but we
2 heard from General Binns, who commanded the first troops
3 across the border, that the moment you take one yard of
4 territory, you then become responsible for
5 post-conflict.

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's right.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So straight away they were into having to
8 administer areas of Iraq. As you said, you didn't want
9 them to be doing that for too long.

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: But I did want them to be doing it.
11 The answer to your question is that we recognised that
12 they would be engaged in these tasks, and, indeed, you
13 are right, I mean, the moment that he arrived in
14 Umm Qasr, there would have been soldiers already engaged
15 in the second -- the further phase of operation, while
16 some were still fighting, and that process was an
17 iterative process that went on until we had taken those
18 four provinces and controlled them.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the picture that has certainly been
20 built up by a succession of military witnesses, and
21 I don't think contradicted by anything you have said
22 today is that, effectively, we had to make this up as we
23 went along, that our military found themselves in charge
24 of the civil administration of the south-east of Iraq
25 for which they had not been prepared, at which they did

1 obviously extremely well in the early phases -- there is
2 no criticism of them -- but it wasn't what they were
3 there for, it hadn't been planned for, the
4 British Government collectively really hadn't
5 anticipated that this was going to happen and we had
6 nothing planned to step in to the place.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's probably the bit that
8 I disagree with, in the sense that we had had something
9 planned. The reason for my writing letters saying,
10 "Where are these people?", is that, to the best of my
11 recollection, there was a date -- I had been given an
12 assurance that people would be available. Those dates
13 were passed and those people were not in Iraq doing the
14 job that I had been told they would be doing.

15 So there was planning. For whatever reason, we did
16 not -- we did not satisfy those targets, those
17 ambitions. We did not have the kinds of people,
18 civilians on the ground, doing the jobs that were being
19 carried out by soldiers, by reservists by and large.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So such planning as there was didn't
21 produce the results?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Didn't deliver, no.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Could that have been because the planning
24 only started very late?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's probably fair.

1 I don't exactly know what the specific problems were.
2 I do know from other conflicts -- a particular problem,
3 for example, in Kosovo, and we had similar difficulties
4 in Afghanistan, that actually it is quite hard to find
5 the right people with the right skills to go into what
6 very recently has been a war zone. So it may be that we
7 did not provide sufficient timelines for identifying
8 those people and getting them into southern Iraq.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That very much corresponds with what
10 others have said to us.

11 Now, you have reflected the fact that you were
12 concerned for a long time about the aftermath. Other
13 ministers likewise. Why, at Cabinet level, did we not
14 take more vigorous action to ensure that the aftermath
15 planning was done properly -- as you say, it is very
16 complicated -- and in sufficient time?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: To the best of my recollection, we
18 did. I think that a lot of work went into -- I'm sorry
19 to repeat myself, but into the humanitarian part, into
20 looking at how we dealt with the infrastructure.
21 I think there was a lot of thought. We had people, for
22 example, that we were going to deploy very quickly, who
23 were experts in oil pumping and delivery, because part
24 of that was concern that the Iraqi regime might sabotage
25 the oil wells as they had in the first Gulf War. We

1 also knew that it was going to be vitally important to
2 Iraq's future that it was able to pump oil and earn
3 money as quickly as possible. So we actually had quite
4 a number of experts in that area, who were deployed and
5 were available to do those sorts of things.

6 I think when things -- things went badly wrong once
7 the security situation started to deteriorate and we
8 weren't able to get -- and it may well be that this was
9 the problem in DFID -- that we weren't able to get
10 people to go there because of their increasing worries
11 about security.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we probably need to take pause at
13 this point and resume after lunch, because I think we
14 are just at the point where planning turns into
15 execution through the invasion happening and the
16 military action being, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock put it
17 "catastrophically successful", but I think the Chairman
18 would like us to resume that after lunch.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, he would. I think Sir Lawrence would
20 like to ask a very short question and then we will
21 break.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I will try and give a short answer.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Probably. We have been focused
24 a lot on Basra and the south in this discussion, and our
25 responsibilities, but the security in Iraq was always

1 going to depend much more on what was happening in
2 Baghdad. Is that fair?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's absolutely right.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was going to be much more of an
5 American responsibility?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We had some people there, but a very
7 small number of highly specialist people, should I say.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have had lots of evidence from
9 you as well about the concerns about how well the
10 Americans were prepared for this and how seriously they
11 took it.

12 It is interesting, was there ever a point where you
13 thought or you discussed with colleagues the possibility
14 that the problems that may well result, whatever the
15 quality of the case on weapons of mass destruction and
16 so forth, meant that the occupation of Iraq would
17 represent just an unacceptable level of risk?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think -- I don't think the case was
19 put quite like that, but clearly I referred earlier,
20 I think, to a note I wrote to the Prime Minister.
21 I think it was in March 2002. I referenced the problem
22 with Iran, and I think in that same letter I pointed out
23 that we had -- we had never successfully identified at
24 that stage someone who might replace Saddam Hussein.

25 There was real concern about what Iraq might look

1 like in the aftermath of his regime being removed, and
2 that -- you know, that debate was a very live debate,
3 and, you know, a lot of discussion about the structure
4 of Iraq. It is perhaps something we will come on to
5 when we talk about the disbandment of the Iraqi army,
6 and certainly in the MoD there was a strong sense that
7 the Iraqi army was a force for stability.

8 Saddam had not allowed the Republican Guard into
9 Baghdad, for example, and it was assumed that that was
10 because he didn't wholly trust what were mostly
11 professional soldiers, and, indeed, in a later phase of
12 the war fighting, we deliberately did not target
13 Republican Guard units because we wanted them to be that
14 force for stability in the aftermath, but then there was
15 a debate, I can recall, about, were we likely to swap
16 one dictator for another dictator? That was clearly
17 a risk.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So as we went into war, there was
19 a debate still going on about what it would lead to?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, because I think by then it was
21 clear that the ambition, particularly, you know, the
22 overt American ambition that we shared, was to have
23 a democratic Iraq, but you asked me about -- prior to
24 that, and certainly there was a lot of discussion.

25 You know -- I can recall people suggesting that Iraq

1 would fall apart, that the three elements would divide,
2 that we would end up with three states rather than one
3 state. So there was a great deal of speculation as to
4 what this might lead to. But by the time the war
5 fighting began, it was clear that we saw a democratic
6 country as being the outcome.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We will break now until 2 o'clock
9 and resume then. Thank you all very much.

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Thank you very much.

11 (12.51 pm)

12 (The short adjournment)

13 (2.00 pm)

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Just before we resume, Sir Martin Gilbert is
15 unable to be with us this afternoon. He has to attend,
16 at short notice, a very close friend's funeral and he
17 sends his apologies to the witness and to the audience.

18 So with that, let's resume the questioning.

19 Sir Roderic?

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would just like to talk fairly briefly
21 about the military campaign itself before, I think,
22 Sir Lawrence wants to go into some more specialised
23 aspects. Basically, the campaign went extraordinarily
24 well, was over much quicker than anticipated. Is that
25 right?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think so, yes. I think an
2 extraordinary combination of very high technology and
3 basic successful soldiering.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was part of the reason it went so fast
5 that the other side put up less of a fight than had been
6 expected?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think the planning for what was
8 described by the Americans as effects-based warfare was
9 very successful. They were able to target, with an
10 astonishing precision, the enemy, to the extent that,
11 quite quickly, large numbers of Iraqi soldiers from
12 various places simply went home.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Had the coalition's military intelligence
14 about the enemy turned out to be accurate?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Not entirely, because I was certainly
16 led to believe that the Republican Guard in particular
17 was a relatively sophisticated and effective military
18 unit, but I think what it demonstrated, perhaps in
19 contrast with the first Gulf War, was the advances in
20 technology, and precision bombing in particular was
21 something that more conventional forces like the Iraqi
22 forces, albeit of much bigger size, simply could not
23 resist.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So by 1 May, we get to a situation where
25 it is declared that the mission has been accomplished.

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, the war fighting phase.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What was your reaction at that point?

3 Did you actually think that the main task was over or

4 still ahead?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think I put the emphasis on

6 one side or the other. You know, I think, as you say,

7 a lot had been achieved very successfully in probably

8 a shorter time than we anticipated, but I think we were

9 always well that were in any conflict the post-conflict

10 period is always going to be longer and more difficult.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: One of the things it did allow, as you

12 were telling us this morning, was for us to plan to draw

13 down quite significant numbers of the troops that we had

14 deployed in the campaign.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What --

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: To about a third, I think was the

18 figure.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, what governed that decision? How

20 quickly you did it and at what point you drew down

21 to...?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think if we go back to the

23 discussion we had before lunch about the size of the

24 force that we could deploy, one of the consequences of

25 deploying force on any operation is that they then have

1 to -- they have to have a period of recuperation, of
2 recovery, they have to get back into their training
3 cycle. It is something that I didn't frankly entirely
4 understand when I first got to the Ministry of Defence.
5 I think we were discussing earlier the No Fly Zones.
6 I assumed, before I went to Kuwait to talk to the people
7 involved, that flying missions over southern Iraq was
8 pretty good training, but, of course, it was only part
9 of their training and it meant that they could not get
10 back to the more encompassing training that was
11 required.

12 Similarly, with forces who had engaged in war
13 fighting, they had got to get back into
14 their normal routine of training and deployment when the
15 time came. So the sooner we got them back from their
16 war fighting role, the sooner they could resume their
17 normal activities.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Down in the south-east, as we discussed
19 this morning, we found ourselves in charge of four
20 provinces and we discussed a bit the way in which this
21 wasn't fully anticipated.

22 Had we actually, in the original military plan,
23 anticipated that British forces would be taking Basra or
24 was it going to be our role to screen it for the
25 American advance?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: We had anticipated that we would be
2 taking responsibility. I think the point I was making
3 was that we -- I certainly had expected that others
4 would come in to assist more quickly than they did, so
5 it wasn't purely a military responsibility, as it proved
6 to be for rather longer than I had expected.

7 Certainly, we were likely to always have been
8 responsible for taking Basra, because the essential
9 American plan was to move as quickly as possible to
10 Baghdad and, if necessary, although it proved not to be,
11 but, if necessary, to bypass some of the cities on the
12 way, because they regarded Baghdad as a key centre
13 psychologically and practically of the regime.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Looking back finally on the successful
15 campaign, what would you, with reflection, have
16 preferred to do differently?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: In the war fighting part?

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure that there was a huge
20 difference, that I would have made. The war
21 fighting part was remarkably successful. We sustained
22 some casualties. But by and large, it was a success.
23 I suspect -- I think Sir John made reference to an
24 observation of Sir Jeremy Greenstock. One of the
25 difficulties of advancing at that speed, in contrast to

1 a more conventional campaign, was that the resistance
2 that was left in the wake of the front line was able to
3 attack, not the front line, not the hard-end combat
4 forces, but some of the people who were not so much in
5 the rear but at the side.

6 So some of the attacks by, I think we called them
7 the Fedayeen at some stage, some of those loyal to
8 Saddam Hussein. I think they took some American
9 prisoners, who were mechanics. I think a chef was taken
10 prisoner. They were able to come into the side
11 of the advance, and perhaps those people were not as
12 well protected as might have been the case, because, in
13 a conventional campaign, essentially the front line
14 would have taken all of the resistance with it.

15 I think that may -- that may have been an issue.
16 I think, though, that actually the real issue was that
17 those who were ultimately loyal to Saddam Hussein were
18 not necessarily wearing uniform. So they were not
19 capable of being dealt with in a conventional military
20 way.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But no big lessons to be learned from the
22 war fighting part of the campaign?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, I think I mentioned some of them.
24 I think the big lessons, by and large, certainly for the
25 Ministry of Defence, were very positive ones and they

1 were to do with the benefits of very sophisticated
2 technology, precision bombing, precision attacks, the
3 way in which modern warfare can be conducted. The war
4 fighting part, with relatively smaller number of
5 soldiers, as against the kind of force that was
6 originally anticipated in the original American plan for
7 invading Iraq.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm going to ask you a few questions
9 on intelligence, weapons of mass destruction dossier,
10 and then go on to the much larger questions in view of
11 possibly of the defence budgets and some equipment
12 issues.

13 So, if we start with weapons of mass destruction and
14 intelligence, now, in the Ministry of Defence you have
15 Defence Intelligence Staff, which is bound to be a major
16 input into the JIC process. Did you get separate
17 briefings from the Defence Intelligence Staff on Iraqi
18 issues, including the issues of weapons of mass
19 destruction?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How regularly were you being updated
22 on them?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure I could put a figure on
24 it, but pretty often. There were regular papers
25 produced by DIS looking at issues like weapons of mass

1 destruction but a range of other issues to do with, for
2 example, military capability. I think at one stage
3 I did ask whether I could be given information about
4 the -- to follow on from Sir Roderic's previous
5 questions about the resilience of the Iraqi armed
6 forces, what kind of capabilities did they have, were
7 they likely to fight, and what was their likely
8 effectiveness? So the DIS were involved not simply in
9 the pure intelligence part, but more in their
10 assessments of military capability.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Exactly. What were your impressions
12 that you had gained from this? Presumably you had
13 a look at JIC about the overall state of Iraqi WMD?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I was in no doubt at all, from the
15 material that I read, that they had those capabilities.
16 They had both chemical and biological capabilities.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And that the nuclear question was
18 some distance off?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, there was a note really to the
20 effect, going back to our earlier discussions this
21 morning, that containment had prevented them from
22 securing fissile material, but that they had pursued to
23 quite an extent the technology required to do everything
24 else, so that they were working hard on missiles, on
25 those capabilities for delivery. They lacked access to

1 fissile material, but the point was made, and I think
2 I repeated this morning, that if they could secure
3 fissile material, then they would be able to move
4 relatively quickly towards securing a nuclear weapon.
5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's a very big "if".
6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Of course, and I conceded that this
7 morning. I said that containment had been successful in
8 that respect.
9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When the question of the dossier
10 came up, were you aware of this process? Did you take
11 much interest in it?
12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I was certainly aware that there was
13 going to be a dossier, and I was also aware that DIS
14 would be consulted in the preparation of that dossier,
15 yes.
16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you aware that there were some
17 concerns within DIS about some of the language that was
18 used in the dossier?
19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I wasn't aware of the detailed points
20 until, I think, the Butler Inquiry. I wasn't aware of
21 the detailed drafting points that were made. I did, at
22 the time of Butler, see the points and obviously
23 I understood the points that were being made at that
24 time.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But this didn't percolate up to you

1 as Secretary of Defence?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, what I did see was a letter from
3 the Policy Director on 20 September 2002. He said:
4 "CDI's staff have been closely associated with the
5 preparation of the detail of the dossier. I understand
6 they are content from a professional DIS point of view
7 with the judgments it contains."
8 So I was given specific advice that DIS was content
9 with the dossier.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. As we know from Hutton and
11 Butler, that was the level at which this issue -- it was
12 decided in DIS not to take it further. So you weren't
13 aware.

14 When the document was published, obviously one of
15 the issues was this 45 minutes question. Were you aware
16 that a rather misleading impression had somehow got out
17 there, that this was related, not just to munitions for
18 battlefield use, but to longer-range missiles?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: First of all, when I saw the draft,
20 the only thing in the draft that -- "surprise" is
21 perhaps too strong a word, but the only thing in the
22 draft that I had not seen before in terms of my
23 familiarity with the intelligence was this 45-minute
24 claim.

25 I think, if I can put it this way, my experience of

1 dealing with intelligence over many years was that, if
2 you saw something new and different, I would ask
3 about it and I asked about what that meant and
4 I think -- I had not been able to find it in any record,
5 but -- almost certainly because of the way it happened.
6 I asked my private office and they got someone from the
7 department, I think from DIS, but I can't be sure about
8 that, to come and explain what that meant, and I had
9 a kind of impromptu meeting in my office to really go
10 through what was meant by a 45-minute claim.

11 The explanation was fairly straightforward; that
12 Saddam had guns that could fire shells containing
13 chemical weapons. He had done that against Iran and
14 could do so again, and that 45 minutes was actually
15 quite a long time for him to be able to order that the
16 shells could be loaded into guns and fired.

17 So that part of it was explained to me and, frankly,
18 it seemed fairly straightforward. I didn't think much
19 more of it.

20 I know that thereafter there was an issue about some
21 newspaper reports. As it turned out, I had not seen
22 those newspaper reports. I didn't actually understand
23 why, until shortly before Lord Hutton reported, when
24 Panorama did a programme about the report and they put
25 on screen the two newspapers that carried, I think,

1 images of missiles and I realised at that stage that
2 I had never seen these newspapers, and, again,
3 I couldn't quite understand why, but we checked my diary
4 the next morning, and I had been in Kiev for a couple of
5 days and --

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So --

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I simply hadn't seen these papers.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you didn't get involved in the
9 issue at the time?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The final question on the dossier is
12 this phrase "beyond doubt" which was in the
13 Prime Minister's foreword. Did you see the foreword?
14 Did you comment on it before --

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I certainly saw the draft. I didn't
16 comment on it because -- I mean, it did reflect my view
17 of the intelligence and the information that I had been
18 given. I first saw intelligence in relation to Iraq
19 when I went to the Foreign Office in May of 1999.
20 I have actually asked to see some of this intelligence
21 and it bears out that the assessments were to the effect
22 that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and those
23 assessments continued throughout my time in the
24 Ministry of Defence. I think I actually asked see some
25 of that material, just to refresh my memory.

1 There was a -- let me -- John Scarlett writing to
2 David Manning on 17 March:

3 "The JIC view is clear: Iraq possesses chemical and
4 biological weapons, the means to deliver them and the
5 capacity to re-establish production. The scale of the
6 holdings is hard to quantify. It is undoubtedly much
7 less than in 1991. Evidence points to a capability that
8 is already militarily significant."

9 There was similarly, 7 March, again, just before the
10 invasion, a DIS paper saying that:

11 "Iraq is assessed to possess stocks of chemical and
12 biological agents and the means to deliver them. These
13 pose a direct threat to the United Kingdom and other
14 forces deployed in the Middle East."

15 It went on to say he had stocks of sulphur, mustard
16 and VX and that he could produce militarily significant
17 quantities of biological agents within days. None of
18 that was qualified.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's very interesting and relevant
20 to the discussion we will be having quite soon on our
21 preparations for that.

22 Just finally on this question, as the armed forces
23 went into Iraq, we have already heard from General Fry
24 about a degree of consternation, shall we say, that
25 nothing was being found. When did you begin to suspect

1 that there was -- those stocks were not there?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I daresay that -- I'm prepared

3 to admit that I was probably one of the last to concede

4 it, in the sense that -- I mean, there was -- let me be

5 clear, there were stocks of chemical weapons, but those

6 stocks dated from the Iran/Iraq war, and so I began to

7 understand after a period how it could have been that

8 those wanting to pass information back to the

9 United States, to the United Kingdom, might have been

10 relying on those stocks.

11 I think some of those shells, for example, were used

12 as improvised explosive devices without any

13 understanding of what was in the shells. Those shells

14 were being used by some of the insurgents in the

15 aftermath of the invasion, as I say, without

16 understanding what they were, and I'm not suggesting for

17 a moment that they were of recent production, but they

18 were there and clearly in store presumably in barracks

19 and armouries that were looted in the immediate

20 aftermath of the invasion.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it took you a while --

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It did.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Until the report of the Survey Group

24 or ...?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I think that was when it began

1 to be clear that this was not the case. But again, one
2 of the issues that I had never quite understood --
3 I think it is a straightforward issue -- is why, if
4 Iraq -- Saddam did not have access to these stocks, did
5 he spend such an enormous amount of time and effort in
6 trying to frustrate the work of the inspectors, and
7 I mean, there isn't an entirely satisfactory answer to
8 that, as far as I am aware, other than I have speculated
9 as to whether, for example, people around Saddam knew
10 that this production had ended and no one dared tell
11 him, whether he wanted to keep up a pretence in order to
12 intimidate his neighbours.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: These are indeed matters for
14 interesting speculation, but I think I would like,
15 because of an awareness of time, to move on.

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Sorry.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, it is fine. It is a fair matter
18 on which to speculate, but we need to get on to
19 questions of budgets and equipment.

20 You inherited a Strategic Defence Review that was
21 published in 1998 and one of its main features was
22 a focus on expeditionary warfare. Is that fair?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, I think a series of
24 White Papers, and during my time we published a couple
25 more, were moving the emphasis of the

1 Ministry of Defence away from the kind of static
2 territorial defence of the Cold War period to a much
3 more flexible, as you say, expeditionary capability.
4 But that sounds quite straightforward to describe. It
5 actually, as you will be better aware than I am,
6 requires massive adjustments in capabilities.

7 Instead of having, for example, a single and
8 relatively relaxed logistics chain, it was necessary to
9 have a series of such support organisations that could
10 move very quickly at very long distance. So instead of
11 having months, if not years, to prepare for the prospect
12 of an attack by Warsaw Pact countries, where it was
13 possible to see those forces building up to the other
14 side of the border and to have a similar amount of time
15 to build up our own capabilities, we needed to be able
16 to move people, as we did, in a weekend, to
17 Sierra Leone.

18 So we took a decision, I think on Friday afternoon,
19 that troops would go to Sierra Leone. They were there
20 on Sunday morning.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But if you are talking about moving
22 a division, say, what were the sort of planning
23 assumptions necessary to prepare a division for a major
24 operation?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think I have mentioned already, the

1 planning assumption was roughly in the order of six
2 months to be able to move a division and put it in
3 place. We had the considerable advantage, before going
4 into Iraq of an exercise called Saif Sareea,
5 Swift Sword, that was conducted in Oman.

6 I visited that exercise and I came away with --
7 everyone rightly praises our armed forces, but
8 I actually came away with a huge appreciation of the
9 ability of logisticians and their ability to move this
10 force from the United Kingdom, to operate in Oman and to
11 move it back again without any obvious other support,
12 other than that which they carried with them. There was
13 no base there that they moved to. They moved to
14 a desert, they set up their camp, they did their
15 training and they went back again, and I think it showed
16 me in a very practical way the requirement for
17 successful logistics, which is not something that is
18 widely praised when people talk about the armed forces,
19 but actually is a fundamental necessity.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Indeed. Also, perhaps this exercise
21 demonstrated the importance of exercises.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It did, because we also learned quite
23 a number of lessons that would have been, frankly,
24 catastrophic, had we have not been aware of -- we had
25 problems with air filters on the tanks, for example,

1 that were clogging up with sand, so we -- I think we
2 purchased some -- I think they were known as "skirts",
3 for want of a better expression, but essentially it was
4 to protect the air inflow, so we learned a huge number
5 of lessons that were relevant then to the operation that
6 was subsequently conducted in Iraq.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You mentioned that the shifts
8 envisaged in the Strategic Defence Review were really
9 quite substantial, and quite a lot. Was the review
10 fully funded, or sufficiently funded?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I can't answer that entirely from my
12 own experience. What I can say is that when I arrived
13 in the Ministry of Defence in October 1999, there was
14 quite a strong feeling that it was not fully funded and
15 that the part of the way in which it was funded was by
16 a commitment to a series of efficiencies in the way in
17 which existing equipment was used in order to release
18 cash, basically, for some of the new acquisitions.
19 I think everyone accepted that that was a pretty
20 challenging target.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In fact, we were told by
22 Sir Kevin Tebbit that the problem was simply that the
23 defence budget was too small and this was the case in
24 the run-up to the war. Was that your --

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Certainly in the subsequent CSR

1 programmes we asked for significantly more money than we
2 eventually received, yes.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In your discussion of the
4 negotiations for the 2002/2003 budget, was the
5 possibility of operations against Iraq a feature in
6 those discussions?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: In the settlement --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think in July 2002. So certainly
10 we were aware of the possibility at any rate. But
11 I think the answer from the Treasury would be that in
12 a sense there was a separate Urgent Operational
13 Requirement process to supplement the overall budget
14 once actual war fighting was imminent.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will come on to that in a second.
16 Was your feeling, when you looked at your budget for
17 2002/2003, that this was still a budget under pressure?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, generally speaking, the
20 Ministry of Defence, does not, as you have indicated,
21 expect to fight wars on the defence budget. There are
22 always going to be special costs of fuel, ammunition,
23 replacement of equipment lost. So the ideas that these
24 would come out of the Treasury Reserve?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That was always the understanding,

1 yes.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This is where the Urgent Operational
3 Requirements come in.

4 But just again, because I think these have been
5 quite complex issues, the degree to which you would need
6 Urgent Operational Requirements, to some extent would
7 reflect the size of the defence budget, because, if you
8 had been able to purchase sufficient stocks beforehand,
9 you are less likely to need Urgent Operational
10 Requirements.

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That must necessarily be right, yes.
12 one of the Urgent Operational Requirements for
13 Iraq were desert combats and desert boots. I assume --
14 I don't know, but I assume that in the first Gulf War,
15 such clothing was kept in store ready and available for
16 operations in the desert. Desert combats were part of
17 the UORs and I know some of the soldiers resented having
18 to wear their green combats rather than their desert
19 combats.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's a particular issue I do want
21 to come on to. I just want to get the background
22 sorted.

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: But if I could put the other side of
24 the case, just for the sake of completeness really: one
25 of the problems with maintaining stores of equipment is

1 that they necessarily deteriorate. So I accept that it
2 is a judgment, but the judgment is how long you keep kit
3 that you don't use, knowing that at some stage it will
4 have to be replaced simply by the passage of time.

5 So the UOR process, whilst it obviously does or can
6 cause difficulty in an urgent situation, nevertheless
7 may be a sensible process in terms of avoiding the
8 replacement of kit that has never actually been used.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Indeed, but it puts a premium on
10 timing.

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Of course.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the questions you have talked
13 about, logistics, is this idea of just in time
14 logistics.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That must be right, yes.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When did you start to have
17 discussions with the Chancellor or Chief Secretary about
18 the likely financial implications of operations against
19 Iraq?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I can't precisely give you a date as
21 to when we actually began the discussions, but I think
22 there were some sort of exploratory exchanges before the
23 summer. The specific question of the list of UORs
24 I think went to the Treasury and was agreed by about
25 4 October. That was -- we had to go through a process.

1 We had to go through a process of identifying what were
2 the Urgent Operational Requirements, then to send that
3 to the Treasury for their approval, and, in a sense,
4 only once the Treasury had approved the list, could we
5 then go out and let the contracts.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How were these discussions handled
7 with the Treasury? Were they questioning the UORs?

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, I don't recall having any
9 difficulties as far as the actual items were concerned,
10 or, indeed, the overall amount of money. I think there
11 were later some -- one of the problems which I think you
12 are alluding to is, once you acquire a piece of
13 equipment, it has to be supported and maintained. There
14 has to be training. I think there were some discussions
15 with the Treasury about whether the budget could be
16 increased to allow for that maintenance cost, and that
17 was an area of difficulty.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it has a long-term implication
19 for the future defence budget?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly. I think one of the pieces
21 of equipment we acquired was some machine guns, and --
22 because they lay down a heavier rate of fire, and
23 maintaining them, providing the training for the
24 soldiers and so on was a continuing cost over and above
25 simply the cost of acquisition of the machine guns in

1 the first place.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What sort of estimates did you talk
3 about in terms of money? What was the likely projected
4 cost of the --

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think I have that figure to
6 hand.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It would have been in the region of
8 about, between half a billion and a billion.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's probably not far out.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So just to clarify where we are, the
11 position is that you have a Strategic Defence Review
12 which has set in motion some significant changes in the
13 way that we organise our forces. You haven't quite --
14 significantly got all the money you would like for that
15 so there is a limit to what you can do with existing
16 stocks in 2002/2003. Therefore, you said you have this
17 process of UORs and that this requires time.

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, it requires different amounts
19 of time depending on the equipment that you are trying
20 to acquire.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you have already mentioned that
22 you were expected to require six months to get
23 a division --

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Overall, yes.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So what general sense did you have?

1 I agree different items have different timelines
2 associated with them. What sense did you have of how
3 long you were going to need to get our forces ready for
4 Iraq?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I mean, I don't think -- I think we
6 were working to this six-month timescale, roughly
7 speaking. That was -- it might have been, give or take,
8 a few weeks on either side. I think Saif Sareea was one
9 of the reasons why it was possible to do this slightly
10 more quickly than would otherwise have been the case,
11 but I think six months was the timescale we were working
12 to, and the reason I can say that is because part of the
13 problem we were discussing before the lunch break was,
14 at what point were we actually going to make the
15 decision in relation to option 3?

16 In a sense it always worked backwards from when we
17 thought the invasion was actually going to begin. When
18 we thought the invasion was actually going to begin
19 in January, working six months back means we are already
20 more than at risk of missing the start date, and,
21 therefore, there was no point in offering option 3
22 because we couldn't get it there in time, but as
23 American planning assumptions began to slip, which
24 I think most people in the MoD anticipated it would,
25 that they wouldn't be in any better position to fix

1 a date and that they were bound to find, for both
2 military and political reasons, that the date would move
3 backwards, that that then allowed us to anticipate
4 planning that would get us there in time.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But if your start date is March,
6 middle of March, and six months back takes you to middle
7 of September and no decisions have been taken --

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's precisely why. That's why
9 I was referring to the conversations. That's why we
10 were saying it was a matter of urgency -- and I say,
11 "we", Mike Boyce and I were saying on behalf of the
12 Ministry of Defence, "Look, you have got to start taking
13 this decision, because, otherwise, we will miss the time
14 date in any event, because we simply can't be ready".

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Lord Boyce told us that he was
16 forbidden to talk to the Chief of Defence (Logistics)
17 because the government was not prepared to move forward
18 on this. Is that correct?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have tried hard to find out whether
20 that was strictly the case. I think perhaps he was
21 describing the general atmosphere. I certainly -- I did
22 not give a specific instruction of that kind.

23 What was happening during that period, though, was
24 that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, in
25 particular, were fully involved in negotiating

1 a Security Council Resolution, and their ambition, which
2 I clearly shared, was that we should secure such
3 a resolution and resolve this matter peacefully.

4 Therefore, the emphasis on the diplomatic process
5 in September was paramount.

6 At the same time, I and Lord Boyce were saying, but
7 if you are going to make a decision in time, you have
8 got to get on with it. So the two things, I accept,
9 were at odds with each other, and, as a result, when we
10 both went to meetings in Downing Street saying, "Look,
11 you have got to get on with this", equally we were told
12 in a sense, "Calm down, we can't get on with it whilst
13 the diplomatic process is underway" --

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you accept that argument?

15 Because part of the claim was that one of the advantages
16 of an apparent readiness to go to military action was
17 that it would affect the readiness of Saddam to comply.
18 It wasn't necessarily at odds to be shown to be ready to
19 act.

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's absolutely right in relation
21 to Saddam, but the issue in relation to the resolution
22 was other countries in the United Nations and on the
23 Security Council willingness to support a last effort to
24 persuade Saddam to co-operate, and the argument that
25 I was given very clearly from the Prime Minister and the

1 Foreign Secretary was that, if we were overtly seen to
2 be preparing for war, that would affect our ability to
3 secure that resolution.

4 This was a diplomatic process. It was not Saddam
5 that we were trying to influence by the combination of
6 diplomatic and military action, it was the countries on
7 the Security Council that had to vote for this
8 resolution, and, of course, that approach did prove
9 right, because all of them, or 15 of them, voted for
10 1441.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the Americans didn't seem to
12 suffer the same inhibitions in their planning, and a lot
13 would depend on them.

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: All I know is that Mike and I went to
15 meetings in September, where we argued the case and that
16 we were both made very well aware of the attitude in
17 Downing Street towards the requirement for minimising
18 publicity and for avoiding the visibility of
19 preparations. We were both there at these meetings. So
20 there was no doubt of the fact that we could not go out,
21 either of us, and overtly prepare, which is why we had
22 to approach some of the UORs in a particular way.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a sense covert rather than overt?

24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think the judgment that I had to
25 make and he had to make was the extent to which we could

1 go on with preparations without affecting that
2 diplomatic process in the United Nations.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you make the Prime Minister and
4 his other advisers aware of the risks that this entailed
5 in terms of readiness, should our forces be called --

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That was central to what we were
7 saying about the need to get on with preparations, and
8 I think I referred already this morning to the letters
9 that we sent in October pointing out that, because we
10 hadn't agreed to option 3, the Americans were assuming
11 that we wouldn't be there.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So nonetheless, at this point, the
13 view from Downing Street was that the political gain of
14 the UN Resolution should not be put in jeopardy by overt
15 military preparations?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Let me be clear, that was also a view
17 of a significant part of the US administration as well.
18 I went to -- in 2002, I went to the United States for
19 the anniversary of 9/11, when the Pentagon was -- I'm
20 not quite sure of the right expression, but restored
21 within the year, and I obviously had meetings with
22 Donald Rumsfeld but I also had meetings with Armitage,
23 and I think Colin Powell dropped by, in the American
24 phrase, and the State Department were completely focused
25 on the need to get a further resolution and for the

1 President to go the UN track, as they said. But they
2 were not clear on the 9th as to whether or not he was
3 going to do so, and I think his speech was the next day
4 and the United Nations on the 10th. So even the
5 US administration wasn't wholly clear, or parts of it,
6 as to what was going to be the outcome.

7 Again, back to Sir Roderic's question this morning,
8 perhaps the best example of all of the Prime Minister
9 influencing the President of the United States into
10 a particular course of action, because I doubt that
11 without his advocacy of that resolution that the
12 President would have agreed to it. There was clear,
13 real doubt, inside the US administration as to whether
14 he would, even the day before.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have asked this question of
16 another witness -- it is not quite the line of this
17 question, but it is an interesting one -- as to whether
18 you think that the British Government would have been
19 able to take this matter any further if there had not
20 been a move to take this back to the UN Security
21 Council.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: To take it further?

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: To move along the path that we did
24 follow in terms of military action, if, at this stage,
25 the President hadn't agreed to go back to the Security

1 Council.

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: So your hypothetical is if --

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, we know it was a last-minute

4 decision --

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: If there was no 1441.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- if there was no 1441.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Looking at -- I have given some

8 thought to that. Looking at the Attorney General's

9 legal opinion, he refers specifically to 1441 and had

10 expressed some previous doubts about the lawfulness of

11 action without a further resolution. So I assume that

12 I'm bound to agree with you that, without 1441, there

13 might not have been the ability to bring back into play

14 678.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, I want to get back to the

16 question of readiness for the conflict. As I understand

17 the sequence, and we dealt with this a bit before lunch,

18 you mentioned this meeting in late October, I think my

19 understanding is that was largely to offer in principle

20 a division to the United States and that the question of

21 UORs was not decided until mid-November?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's not quite right. I need to

23 just check --

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We want to get this right.

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: -- the timing of this. I think, as

1 I understand it, the original request from within the
2 Ministry of Defence for UORs came on around 13 September
3 and there were a long list. Unfortunately, I don't know
4 exactly how many.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think about 190 in the end.

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, and they were divided into
7 priorities, first, second and so on. There was also
8 some indication -- because of the conversations that we
9 had been having with Downing Street as to their
10 visibility in terms of how much publicity this was
11 likely to provoke -- once we had the approval from the
12 Treasury, as I say, I think on 4 October, the
13 overwhelming majority of those UORs were approved.

14 So the actual work was undertaken quite quickly in
15 the timescale. Some of them, partly for reasons of
16 visibility, but also -- I'm sure we will get on to
17 enhanced combat body armour in a second, but in relation
18 to that there was also another issue about how much we
19 already had in stock and how much we actually needed,
20 but nevertheless, only a small number were held back.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I clarify this, because
22 General Reith has told us that he discussed with you
23 in November/early December, the need to get ships taken
24 up from trade, mobilisation of reserves, et cetera. So
25 were these ones that were just later down the line?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think this was a slightly separate
2 issue. The UORs list in September were the kind of
3 things that we were discussing earlier, the enhancements
4 to existing equipment that were required to operate the
5 kind of operations anticipated in Iraq. The question of
6 reserves of securing shipping, I mean, once you get to
7 the stage of booking space on ships to transport tanks
8 and other heavy equipment, it is pretty clear what you
9 are up to.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you saw that as even more
11 politically sensitive --

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly, but that was a separate
13 issue.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it has some of the same
15 issues --

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Of course, but the timing -- in
17 a sense the timing was much less acute, but what we are
18 talking about in relation to some of these UORs is the
19 time taken to manufacture them as opposed to hire
20 a ship.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So ideally, how long would you like
22 to mobilise -- for mobilisation of reserves?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Again, I think that will depend a lot
24 on the kinds of people that we were concerned about, but
25 I think up to six months, ideally, from my recollection,

1 but it can be done more quickly than that.

2 Without being too technical, there are, these days,
3 different kinds of reserves. There are people who
4 actually are engaged in their daytime regular job, but
5 increasingly there are a fair number of people who are
6 almost full-time reserves, who are available for
7 operations and can move really very quickly.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But quite a lot can't?

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Quite a lot can't.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So the overall situation is that
11 this is getting quite tight?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That -- and you have told us before
14 lunch that the actual decisions were only taken in the
15 start of January, about going to the south, sending the
16 division and so on. I think these were -- they made
17 announcements to Parliament not long after that. So in
18 terms of the planning assumptions by the Ministry of
19 Defence, we were inevitably going to be in the area of
20 having to cut corners and push things faster than we
21 would like.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure I accept the phrase
23 "cutting corners". That was a process for getting the
24 equipment that was required into place. That equipment
25 was prioritised. Some of these UORs were not

1 necessarily for war fighting. Some of them were for the
2 aftermath. So there is a range of equipment and the
3 time taken for making it available is dependent on
4 whether there was some in store somewhere with
5 a manufacturer, or whether the manufacturer had to begin
6 from scratch. I think some of the desert combats were
7 made. Some got to theatre in time, some did not.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So undoubtedly this was a shorter
9 timetable at the very least. We heard yesterday from
10 Jonathan Powell that the government was seeking, at one
11 point, nine weeks' extra time for diplomatic purposes.
12 Would you have found that helpful for military purposes
13 as well?

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Undoubtedly.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How concerned were you about the
16 issue that has been raised about delays meaning that
17 troops had to sort of hang around in uncomfortable
18 conditions?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I asked about that on a fairly
20 regular basis. I was always told that, although it
21 would be uncomfortable, in a sense that was the benefit
22 of a relatively late deployment, because the six months
23 timescale would take us, as I said earlier, into the
24 summer. So the answer was always that they would be
25 able to wait until the time to go.

1 Obviously there were considerations about heat and
2 about delay, but they were not -- they were not central
3 factors. Had there have been a nine-week delay, I am
4 sure it would have been helpful, but that was not
5 a factor -- sorry, their readiness or preparation was
6 not a factor affecting whether or not we went on
7 a certain day in March.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What sort of reassurances did you
9 seek in March 2003 that our forces were ready, in a fit
10 state to fight?

11 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: There was a very detailed process,
12 which I believe to be bottom-up but, in the sense that
13 each unit, each organisation, up the chain, would have
14 to indicate that it was ready for the kind of tasks that
15 had been allocated to it, and ultimately, rather
16 parallel in the sense to the legal certification, the
17 Chief of the Defence Staff had to give me a certificate
18 to say that they had achieved what is known as Full
19 Operational Capability, which is that they have the
20 capability of conducting the operation as described to
21 them. That was achieved, I think, for all units two
22 days or so before the invasion began.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, when you hear the phrase
24 "Full Operational Capability", how do you understand it
25 in terms of tolerances, margins for error within that?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Inevitably, I accept that there are
2 going to be tolerances within that, but the way
3 I understand it -- and this is very clear and I think
4 very important -- is that this is a military judgment,
5 a military decision by those who are expert in the
6 field, that they are ready to conduct the operations
7 that have been specified, and I played no part in making
8 that assessment. That was entirely a matter for the
9 military chain. As I say, not simply at the top, but,
10 as I understood the process, working from the bottom-up,
11 giving an indication at every level that those military
12 units and organisations were ready to do the job that
13 had been assigned to them.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As the senior political figure in
15 the Ministry of Defence, if they were being
16 over-optimistic, you would be the one who would still
17 have to explain what had happened.

18 Were you confident that the military were not
19 encouraging you to believe this because they couldn't --
20 the alternative was that the Americans would go without
21 them?

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I add a postscript? Looking at the
23 psychology of military commanders at every level from
24 unit upwards, battalion, battle group and so on up the
25 line, it is going to take a lot of moral courage to say

1 to your superior commander, "I'm sorry, I'm not ready.
2 I will not go, even though the rest of you do."
3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I accept that the great strength of
4 the armed forces is a "can do" attitude, that they will
5 go and do things, but, in the end, the alternative is --
6 and I'm sure, if we were investigating something in
7 a different way, it would not at all be appropriate for
8 a politician to substitute his or her judgment for the
9 military professional judgment of people who were long
10 experienced in the field.
11 So I accept that there is that risk, and, I mean, we
12 spent a lot of time on ensuring that we could deliver
13 this equipment in time. If anyone had said, "Look, we
14 have some doubts about whether we are ready", and --
15 then that would have been absolutely a show stopper.
16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We heard a number of our generals
17 who have given evidence that the reason they were
18 confident that they were ready was because they were
19 fighting Iraqi troops in the condition that they were in
20 after all those years since 1991 with the degradation
21 they had faced. So that against a different army they
22 would not necessarily have felt so ready. Is that fair?
23 Is that your understanding?
24 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think in a sense I have described
25 that. There was a process for determining the nature of

1 the task for each of the units involved. They had to
2 certify that they were fully ready for those tasks. So
3 necessarily, I assume in a professional judgment they
4 would take account of the enemy that they were likely to
5 confront, but, at the same time, these are hugely
6 experienced, very successful, professional soldiers who
7 are making professional judgments, and, you know, back
8 to the three-legged stool, I relied upon their
9 professional judgment as to their military capability
10 and I don't think the Inquiry or anyone would be happy
11 for, you know, a lapsed lawyer to come along and say,
12 "Actually, I disagree with your professional military
13 judgment".

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, I think it is a question of
15 understanding what the risks were that were being taken
16 at the time, and, as we have already heard, the actual
17 operation itself justified the confidence of the armed
18 forces. But in terms of the readiness of individuals to
19 fight, it may have seemed like a different story, that
20 the soldiers being put into battle may not have felt
21 that they were personally quite so ready as the unit as
22 a whole. Is that fair?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: There were certainly some complaints
24 about -- and I have mentioned already desert combats.
25 Quite a lot of the soldiers went into action in green

1 combats and they didn't like that. I understood from
2 some of the lessons learned processes afterwards that
3 judgments were made by senior officers that that did not
4 affect their military capability. It may have affected
5 to some extent morale and a sense of being valued and
6 appreciated, but it didn't actually affect their ability
7 to fight.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But I mean, if we just look at this
9 question of clothing, we can look at boots as well,
10 which was a related issue. I think the figure was that
11 only 40 per cent of what was needed with the extra that
12 had been ordered was available in theatre by 13 April.
13 So almost as the conflict --

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: 40 per cent of what?

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Of the extra boots and clothing.

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't --

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think this comes from the NAO
18 report.

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: What I don't know is -- boots were
20 more important than clothing in the sense that
21 I recognise that in hot conditions having appropriate
22 kind of desert boots is important. I have conceded
23 already that the clothing wasn't always available to the
24 extent that the soldiers would have liked. What I don't
25 know is what proportion of that 40 per cent were boots

1 as opposed to clothing.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think it was quite similar because

3 stocks were available for about 9,000 prior -- and this

4 goes back to our earlier discussion, that's why it is

5 relevant. Stocks were available for about 9,000,

6 I think orders were put in for about 30,000 boots and

7 similar numbers of uniform, except you have to multiply

8 by three because they need extras.

9 So I think the numbers are the same. Obviously, as

10 you say, boots were the cause -- always are a cause of

11 particular irritation, but if your boots melt in the

12 sun, it is not a small matter.

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, I think -- I think -- I think we

14 actually looked at that particular illustration.

15 I think there was one soldier who -- I think he may

16 actually have been in the Royal Air Force, but I can't

17 quite recall, who took with him the wrong boots but, you

18 know, there were not -- there were not widespread

19 problems of boots melting in the sun.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But they weren't the right boots for

21 the conditions in which --

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Some soldiers, I'm sure, did not have

23 the right boots.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Body armour. You have already

25 mentioned this. What was the problem with body armour,

1 as you understood it?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well -- we need to

3 distinguish something. Soldiers, for some years prior

4 to Iraq, had had body armour, a system of protecting

5 their upper bodies. The difficulty that arose was in

6 relation to something -- a new system called enhanced

7 combat body armour which basically consists of a vest

8 with a slot in the front and the back for a metal plate

9 or Kevlar plate actually, that protects your vital

10 organs. That was a relatively recent innovation.

11 Indeed, I think prior to the conflict, I don't think it

12 actually was mandatory. It was something that was

13 thought to be desirable, and, indeed, we had -- we knew

14 we had stocks of around 30,000 plates so up to 15,000

15 sets of enhanced combat armour prior to the UOR process.

16 The -- one of the issues that arose as we went

17 through this list was a suggestion that actually we had

18 more than the 15,000 sets, but they weren't in stock,

19 they actually had already been distributed.

20 So that is one of the reasons why I asked for

21 further advice in relation to enhanced combat body

22 armour, but, equally, in my mind also was the question

23 about visibility and what this would say because this

24 kind of equipment can only really be explained in the

25 context of war fighting. So it is not the kind of

1 equipment which, up until then, had been routinely
2 issued to British soldiers. It was available for -- and
3 I think the documentation makes this clear -- for the
4 fighting echelons, for those who were likely to be in
5 the front line and the advice that I got in the course
6 of September was that we had enough enhanced combat body
7 armour for the fighting echelon.

8 The question was whether we needed more for all of
9 the forces who were likely to be deployed, and the
10 request that we should. I asked for further advice
11 partly out of concerns about visibility, partly because
12 of the suggestion that we had more already.

13 Once we got the agreement of the Treasury to proceed
14 with the UORs on 4 October, we then sent out a further
15 request, basically saying in the interim, "I trust that
16 you will submit for any particularly urgent
17 requirements". So my private office asked that, if
18 there was anything at all in the list that had by then
19 been approved, that was an urgent, a particularly urgent
20 requirement, then we should be told.

21 Not too long after that we were told that this was
22 a tranche 2 requirement, so that this was a requirement
23 that was described as being of lower priority.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sorry, who was this by?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, unfortunately, my notes don't

1 say that, but it would have been from the -- it would be
2 from the logistics team, who were preparing the UORs.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So tranche 1 is absolutely urgent,
4 tranche 2 less urgent?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Carry on.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: What I understood that to mean at the
8 time was that we had enough in stock for the front line,
9 for those who were going to be fighting. It was
10 desirable, clearly, to have more available, but that the
11 military judged this to be of a lesser priority and did
12 not necessarily say at that stage, as they could have
13 done, that we had to get this equipment available
14 straight away.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Is that in terms of spending the
16 money that the Treasury has already allocated?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It means going to the manufacturer
18 and saying, "Please produce another 15 or so thousand
19 sets of this equipment".

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So when was it decided that you
21 should?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think eventually it was decided
23 in November, once the UNSCR had been approved. The rest
24 of the items were then agreed to, including extra
25 combat -- enhanced combat body armour.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So we are back to this question of
2 the political impressions being created, because this
3 was seen to be much more relevant to offensive
4 operations and because it wasn't first priority within
5 defence logistics, the relevant decisions were delayed?

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, well, essentially, what they
7 were saying to me was that, "We have", as I say, "15,000
8 sets in store. We can use those for the front line, for
9 the fighting echelons. We would like ideally more, but
10 that is a lesser priority than some of the other
11 equipment that we require". They were asked about that
12 and that was confirmed in correspondence, and,
13 therefore, as soon as the approval for the UN Resolution
14 was agreed, the rest of those items -- I suspect not
15 very many by then -- were agreed to.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What were then the problems with the
17 body armour in terms of getting it to the people who
18 needed it?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think by then -- I'm not quite sure
20 of the figures, but I think something like 36,000 sets
21 were shipped to Iraq. Again, from the lessons learned
22 process afterwards, one of the problems was that there
23 was not a very effective tracking system once the --
24 once the containers were unloaded, and I suspect
25 probably what happened was that some units ended up with

1 two lots of everything and some units ended up with
2 nothing. So the distribution on the ground in Iraq was
3 not satisfactory.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This question of tracking and
5 distribution, it had been an issue in 1991 as well. So
6 it is a bit disappointing that it hadn't been resolved
7 a bit further by 2003.

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I agree with that and over the years
9 we spent quite a bit of time looking at the kinds of
10 solutions that particularly the private sector adopted.
11 I don't know whether it is -- I left the
12 Ministry of Defence some years ago, but one of the ideas
13 was to embed a chip or something in each piece of
14 equipment that allowed you to say where it was in store,
15 how it was being transported and where it was going, but
16 a relatively expensive solution. But perhaps, as the
17 cost of that reduces, that might be a sensible way of
18 proceeding.

19 Otherwise, the tracking necessarily is a manual
20 process with people ticking pieces of paper, which, in
21 the circumstances probably was unrealistic.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the consequences of this
23 problem was that in key places there weren't enough of
24 the relevant body armour, so local commanders had to
25 make their own priorities about who should get what,

1 which, as we know, in at least one case led to a tragic
2 outcome.

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: To the death of Sergeant Roberts.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I understood the process in
6 theatre, commanding officers essentially made judgments,
7 consistent, I think, with what I have been saying, that
8 the front line, the fighting forces, would have the
9 enhanced combat body armour, that they would then make
10 judgments about the level of protection available to
11 other soldiers. They already had body armour as such
12 and the distribution was made on the basis of who was
13 most at risk.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In the nature of the sort of
15 operation which we found ourselves, the dividing line
16 between front and rear became rather blurred?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's absolutely right and
18 it was a point I made earlier about the rapid advance of
19 the front line, and Sergeant Roberts' death was an
20 incident that I think perfectly demonstrates your point.
21 They were being stoned by a man who was throwing stones
22 at them. As I understand it, he refused to stop doing
23 that. Sergeant Roberts' gun jammed, the machine -- the
24 machine gunner fired a machine gun, and I think I'm
25 right in saying that that was what killed

1 Sergeant Roberts, because the machine gunner did not
2 entirely appreciate that his machine gun was not
3 accurate at close quarters. All I'm saying is it was
4 a series --

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Obviously, how an individual dies is
6 going to be a very particular set of circumstances.
7 What we were trying to establish is that part of the
8 story which explains why he didn't have proper body
9 armour. I'm conscious of time. So there is just one
10 more question about personal equipment and I think
11 probably that would be a good time for me to stop,
12 although there are some other equipment issues to get
13 into, and that's simply the question of protection
14 against chemical and biological warfare, and the extent
15 to which you had intelligence that warned that Saddam
16 might have these stocks and might use them, were you
17 concerned at the difficulties in getting the adequate
18 equipment to the troops?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I understood it, everybody was
20 equipped with appropriate clothing to protect them, and,
21 indeed, one of the complaints I received was the fact
22 that they every so often had to train to get into and
23 out of these suits and did so on a regular basis, even
24 though in the end they did not have to wear them. We
25 were very, very conscious of the threat and people were

1 trained and expected to use the clothing to --

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think one of the concerns was

3 a lot of the kit was out of date. They had kit, but it

4 was out-of-date kit.

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't -- I don't recall any

6 suggestion that any of this kit was ineffective.

7 I don't know --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Fortunately, it was never tested.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't know whether there was

10 a sell-by date on the kit. There may well have been,

11 but as far as I am aware, whenever this was tested, this

12 equipment was fit for its purpose --

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is just Lord Boyce told us that:

14 "The biggest difficulty we had with these issues was

15 actually the NBC protection."

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have to say I have not come across

17 anything specific to suggest that NBC protection was not

18 available to every soldier who needed it, and, indeed,

19 as I say, the most frequent complaint I received was

20 a number of occasions on which they had to stop

21 everything and get into this kit, which wasn't entirely

22 a straightforward process, but nevertheless they were

23 made to do it and it was part of the instruction that

24 came down the chain of command.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I don't want to go on about this,

1 but this was also a point raised by the Committee on
2 Public Accounts:
3 "The troops at the front line did not receive
4 sufficient supplies of a range of important equipment,
5 including enhanced combat body armour and nuclear,
6 biological and chemical protection systems."
7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have seen, obviously, the criticism
8 in relation to enhanced combat body armour. I'm not
9 aware that there was serious criticism about a lack of
10 protective clothing for those who needed it.
11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.
12 THE CHAIRMAN: This is definitely time for a break, I think.
13 We will break for a quarter of an hour and come back
14 then.
15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Thank you.
16 (3.10 pm)
17 (Short break)
18 (3.25 pm)
19 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we come to the final quarter of the day
20 and I'll ask Sir Roderic to pick up the questions.
21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to take a little break from
22 equipment issues, although I daresay they may reappear,
23 but to look at another very important issue, which was
24 how the coalition handled the security sector from the
25 time after the campaign had been completed until the

1 time that you left your post as Secretary of State for
2 Defence in 2005; so 2003 to 2005.

3 This was obviously a period in which problems, quite
4 serious problems, began to arise. If we go back near
5 the beginning, after the campaign had finished, there
6 was a brief ORHA period, and then ORHA was dismissed and
7 Mr Jerry Bremer arrived at the head of the Coalition
8 Provisional Authority, with a British senior diplomat,
9 first John Sawers, and then Sir Jeremy Greenstock
10 working with him. Jeremy wasn't officially his
11 number 2, as he explained.

12 Bremer finds that already the security situation is
13 beginning to get fragile, that the governance is very
14 fragile, insofar as it existed at all, and in his first
15 week he takes some very big decisions on things like
16 de-Ba'athification, which we have discussed with
17 a number of other witnesses and on disbanding the army.
18 Now, the army had largely dissolved but it hadn't been
19 formally disbanded, and there is a question as to
20 whether it was necessary to do so, or, if you had
21 actually offered pay to people who returned to their
22 posts, vetted them, you couldn't have had an army to
23 work with, to deal with your security problems.

24 What view did you take of these decisions by Bremer
25 which, as we have heard from Sir John Sawers, had been

1 agreed in Washington before he arrived? The impression
2 I have, unless you wish to correct this, is that we had
3 barely been consulted on them at all.

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I referred earlier to the paper
5 that I gave to Donald Rumsfeld on a visit to the
6 Pentagon in February and implicit in that paper,
7 certainly as far as de-Ba'athification was concerned,
8 although the phrase doesn't appear, was that we
9 wanted -- I think we described them as Iraqi technocrats
10 who may have gone along with the regime to be available
11 to continue to administer the system.

12 As I understood it, belonging to the Ba'ath Party
13 was a pre-condition of certain jobs in Saddam's Iraq.
14 We thought -- and the paper that I gave him emphasised
15 this -- that there would be people who had joined the
16 Ba'ath Party because they want, for example, to be civil
17 servants, not because they necessarily were enthusiastic
18 supporters of Saddam Hussein, and we felt that there
19 ought to be a distinction between those who were
20 enthusiastic supporters of Saddam Hussein and those who
21 simply joined the party in order to gain position, not
22 least because we anticipated that some of difficulties
23 that ensued in administering Iraq in the aftermath --
24 and I think a similar argument arises in relation to the
25 army. We, as I mentioned earlier, saw the army as

1 a force for stability.

2 We had not attacked it in certain places
3 specifically to try and preserve its coherence, but, as
4 you rightly say, many of the people went home, but it
5 could have been reconstituted relatively quickly, and
6 I think some of the security difficulties, particularly
7 in and around Baghdad were the result of disaffected
8 people, no longer receiving their salary, joining the
9 insurgency and, indeed, putting their expertise to use
10 in the sense that there was a clear suggestion to me
11 that some of the attacks became more sophisticated as
12 some military people became involved, or former military
13 people, I should say.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So these decisions, not to put too fine
15 a point on it, were mistakes?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think they were, I think that it
17 would have been better to have that stability in that
18 immediate aftermath and I think that, to some extent,
19 disbanding the army fuelled the insurgency in a way that
20 made it much harder to contain.

21 Having said that -- and at some stage I did have
22 a discussion about some of these issues and I think the
23 Americans were very focused on the fact that someone
24 loyal to Saddam Hussein could not be entirely relied
25 upon, and, therefore, they felt that a fresh start from

1 scratch was a better way forward. I'm not saying the
2 arguments were all one way.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, but should we have been given more of
4 a chance to participate in the debate, influence the
5 decisions, before they were taken --

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm sure in due course the Inquiry
7 will look at the paper I submitted and it demonstrates
8 beyond doubt that those two points that I have said
9 already were matters in our mind at the time.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You could even envisage using the
11 Republican Guard in a sort of sanitised capacity because
12 it was an effective body of people?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The sense I had about the
14 Republican Guard was that they were largely composed of
15 professional soldiers. Saddam was supposedly an admirer
16 of Stalin and he had certainly political -- the
17 equivalent of political commissars in place.

18 At one stage, I think in the fighting one division
19 surrendered -- or at least the commanding officer
20 surrendered. He then suddenly went back to fighting
21 partly, I understood, because his family were being held
22 and he was told in no uncertain terms what would happen.
23 So there was that element of political involvement in
24 the Republican Guard, but nevertheless our judgment was
25 that by and large it was more important they were

1 soldiers than it was that they were supporters of
2 Saddam Hussein. So hence the argument that they were
3 a force for stability.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If we take the area that we were in
5 charge of, the south-eastern box, initially things were
6 very good, you could wander around Basra in April, but
7 they started turning nasty fairly quickly. There were
8 riots in August, and then, as you go through to the
9 spring of 2004, you really start to get a big rise in
10 the level of violence and the beginnings of the Shia
11 insurgency there.

12 Now, how did we react to this? Was there a question
13 of sending more forces in to reinforce the troops which
14 we had there, which we had drawn down to a large extent?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, there was certainly
16 a discussion about that. There was also a discussion
17 about getting more contribution from more countries.
18 I think overall there were something like 30 countries
19 involved in the post-conflict phase. As you will be
20 aware, they were distributed in different areas of the
21 south, with each country taking responsibility for its
22 part of the operation.

23 So it wasn't simply for us to determine that in the
24 south; it was work that we did in coalition.

25 I think, equally, it is important that the -- the

1 problems that have developed in security terms were not
2 all of one kind. The criminality -- I recall someone
3 blaming some of that, initially, at any rate, on the
4 fact that Saddam released all of his prisoners prior to
5 the invasion. Some of the looting was clearly directed
6 against institutions associated with Saddam. So some of
7 the public buildings that were looted were looted, I was
8 told, because this was a way of some of the population
9 getting back at Saddam and his regime.

10 Equally, there were some tensions between Sunnis and
11 Shia in the south, but not on the scale, obviously, of
12 further north. As you mentioned, there was real tension
13 within the Shia community, Badr Al Sadr, I assume making
14 a bid for control and power, probably under some Iranian
15 influence as well.

16 So there was a range of different causes for the
17 problems and I think the challenge for us really was how
18 did we -- how do we deal with that in security terms?

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What was the answer?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, ultimately, the answer was to
21 train and equip Iraqis to do both the policing and the
22 military part because, equally, at a certain stage --
23 I don't think it is possible to say precisely when, but
24 I recall warning of this.

25 At a certain stage, foreign soldiers are perceived

1 to be occupiers, even if they are initially seen as
2 liberators. That attitude does not last for that long
3 and particularly one of the reasons why Iraq did not
4 split into three smaller countries was that there is
5 a sense of Iraqi nationalism. It has taken hold. There
6 is a sense in which people are Iraqis first and Shia and
7 Sunni second.

8 That focus eventually, inevitably, turns against
9 foreign soldiers. So --

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the ultimate solution is to train the
11 Iraqi security forces, but that takes time?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It does.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So in this period, when the security is
14 deteriorating really increasingly and quite rapidly, and
15 we are waiting for an ultimate period when we have got
16 Iraqi security forces to do the job, what did you feel
17 we should be doing about it?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, we needed to maintain our
19 ability to deal with the outbreaks of violence, which
20 I think we did very successfully, and to go on with the
21 kinds of training, police, soldiers, the reconstruction,
22 the rebuilding, because ultimately this is about hearts
23 and minds, about the attitude of the Iraqi people.

24 There was not a complete breakdown in law and order.
25 There were some pretty nasty incidents, some where

1 British soldiers died, but nevertheless, these were
2 outbreaks, this was not a persistent disorder, and,
3 therefore, the task of British and other soldiers was to
4 contain those outbreaks, but at the same time to move
5 forward in terms of reconstruction and training.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But by 2005, wasn't there a situation in
7 the area where we led in which there was a feeling that
8 this was slipping out of our control, that we weren't
9 actually being successful in containing what had become
10 a pretty high level of attacks, although it got worse
11 later?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I would still say that it was
13 important at that stage to accept that there were some
14 deliberately targeting foreign soldiers, deliberately --
15 there were some elements of Al-Qaeda in the south, not
16 as much as further north, foreign fighters who were
17 trying to provoke violence both within and between the
18 Shia and Sunni community, and car bombs in Najaf,
19 attacks on people at prayer and so on.

20 Actually -- and I don't think that he has ever been
21 given sufficient credit -- during that period
22 I developed a huge admiration -- I have never met him --
23 for a man called Sistani, who was their spiritual
24 leader. I think without him and without his influence,
25 his ability to restrain the Shias from retaliating to

1 appalling provocation and, moreover, his ability to calm
2 Badr Al Sadr's people, I think we would have got to that
3 stage, but he was an immense restraining influence and
4 I developed an enormous admiration for him simply
5 because, whenever these problems began, he seemed to be
6 able to calm everybody down during a period when --
7 I wouldn't say it was understandable that people
8 resorted to violence, but some of the incidents around
9 the mosque, some of the attacks on Shias at prayer were
10 deliberately designed to try to inflame the situation.
11 He simply accepted that this was provocation and people
12 should not retaliate.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: One of the problems was we couldn't
14 really do the hearts and minds work when the security
15 situation got bad. As we have heard from many
16 witnesses, this is a vicious circle, and if the security
17 is bad, you can't win the consent of the population by
18 doing reconstruction projects and so on. So a lot of
19 our quick impact work, a lot of our development work,
20 became impossible because the security situation was
21 slipping out of control.

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I wouldn't say that was a consistent
23 picture across the whole of the south. There were
24 places where it was extremely difficult and places where
25 perhaps the work did not -- equally, during those

1 periods there was still reconstruction work going on
2 elsewhere.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If we turn to the training of security
4 forces, this fell into two parts; the police and the
5 army.

6 Did you feel that the targets that, in the early
7 stages of this operation, we were setting, approved at
8 the highest levels in Whitehall, for numbers to be
9 trained were realistic or were they over-ambitious?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I certainly thought at the time that
11 we were not getting -- we, the Ministry of Defence, were
12 not getting the kind of help that we had expected,
13 particularly so far as police training was concerned.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: From?

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Again, part of the plan was that
16 there would be police from the United Kingdom seconded
17 to provide that training. Some went, but not nearly
18 enough, and I don't think we had the capability to
19 provide that kind of training to the extent that we
20 wanted.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were in the lead on police training
22 at this stage.

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was your ministry the right ministry to
25 lead work on police training?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Probably not, but, on the other hand,
2 we were in the best place to at least co-ordinate that
3 work involving others, but we didn't get as many people
4 in to do the training as we had been promised.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were the British the right people to be
6 training Iraqi policemen?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think so. I suspect being an Iraqi
8 policeman is probably rather different from being
9 a British policeman.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's what a lot of witnesses have said,
11 that the whole structure and style of policing there is
12 so different.

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: But having said that -- and this may
14 sound over-ambitious, but the ambition was to produce
15 a very different kind of society than had examined
16 hitherto. So trying to develop police officers who were
17 not subject to financial or tribal or other pressures,
18 I think was a laudable ambition, even if difficult to
19 realise in practice.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: At what point do you remember the message
21 getting back to you from the theatre that the police
22 training really wasn't working?

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: The message that came back was the
24 one that I have given to you already. The message came
25 back really that, "Without more help from those who are

1 more expert in this field, we are not the right people
2 to do this job".

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the army training, although slow,
4 inevitably was going better?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, and I visited both a police
6 training unit, and, on several occasions, army training
7 and -- you know, I had seen some of that before because
8 we did similar sorts of things in Sierra Leone and, to
9 some extent, Afghanistan.

10 But I mean, there are several stages involved in
11 this process. There are some very basic, almost raw
12 recruit training that began almost straight away, and
13 that was no more than trying to give people a sense of
14 coherence and discipline. They were -- I remember they
15 were presented with uniforms at one stage and that was
16 a tremendous sort of sign to the men involved that they
17 had made certain progress.

18 After that, there needs to be further training in
19 terms of responsibility, how you organise yourself --

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Creating a new officer corps because
21 Bremer had disbanded the old one?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Absolutely, and that is a much
23 tougher process, because before you can -- and this
24 obviously was the plan. Before you can hand over an
25 area or province to Iraqi control, it isn't just enough

1 to have soldiers who have been trained in the basics.
2 You can train a basic soldier relatively quickly, but
3 you have got to have leadership, you have got to have
4 command, you have got to have people who can take
5 decisions where necessary, and sometimes in quite
6 difficult circumstances, and that does take time.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to turn to some questions about
9 the balance between the UK military objectives, very
10 much focused in the south-east after the invasion, and
11 our overall Iraq strategy. You started our day with
12 a three-legged stool.

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm sorry about that.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: There is in a sense a two-legged stool --
15 they are not equal legs -- between our very direct
16 responsibility for the Basra box and those four
17 provinces and our shared responsibility, indeed
18 accountability, for the whole of Iraq, very much centred
19 on Baghdad and the Americans. We have a senior British
20 military representative, who is nominally a deputy in
21 the chain of overall command, but, frankly, given the
22 disproportion between the American forces and ours, not
23 with the authority that that might suggest.

24 So there are several decisions that you had to make
25 or endorse, about, sometimes, an American wish to pull

1 up British forces from the south-east, either for
2 a particular need or general reinforcement, and
3 I wondered if you would like to say a bit about the
4 factors that you had to take into account when you are
5 judging, for example a US approach to send our 16 Air
6 Assault Brigade to Baghdad, which you turned down,
7 I think. What was in your mind? How did you judge it?

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think there was a balance and
9 I think to some extent I would have to recognise in
10 a number of questions today that my focus was very much
11 Basra and the south, because that essentially is where
12 British troops were and where they were mostly engaged.

13 I'm not avoiding my responsibility as part of the
14 government for what was taking place in Baghdad and
15 beyond, but I wasn't in the same way directly
16 responsible for that in the way that responsibilities
17 were allocated.

18 But nevertheless, as far as the military part was
19 concerned, when those requests came, I had to make
20 a judgment, I hope consistent with the answers I gave to
21 Sir Roderic a moment ago, between, what did we need to
22 do in the south and what was our primary focus there,
23 and what contribution did we need to make as a good
24 ally, as part of the coalition, to operations further
25 north.

1 I think that was not the only operation I turned
2 down, simply because I felt that perhaps our priorities
3 still remained in the south and that we had played our
4 part.

5 Eventually, we did decide that, because the
6 Americans were conducting a major, a very significant
7 operation, in and around Fallujah, that we would relieve
8 them of some duties -- I think it was in an area known
9 as North Babil.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: You sent the Black Watch up for a limited
11 period?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Again, it would help us understand the kind
14 of factors you had to take into account in making that
15 judgment: the political impact in Iraq, and, indeed, in
16 the Shia south, about our being seen to be more part of
17 the American presence, things like that.

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think I have probably outlined
19 already the main factors. What impact did that have on
20 our ability to conduct operations in the south? What
21 were the risks? What were the dangers? What were the
22 consequences if we didn't do it for our relationship
23 with the United States, given that we had made a great
24 play of our working in coalition, and indeed had,
25 I think it is fair to say, been disappointed in the

1 attitude of some other countries who hadn't been
2 prepared to participate.

3 So the sense was, having turned at least a couple of
4 these things down, that we had to really look very hard
5 at this further request, given that -- and I think this
6 did turn out to be the case, that the -- that the --
7 clearing Fallujah was a huge turning point in the
8 American operation. By dealing with Fallujah, they
9 actually were able, I think, then to make some real
10 progress.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: There had been a failed attempt much earlier
12 that year --

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: -- so it was essential that it was a success.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly, and, therefore, the argument
16 about them putting huge resources into this operation
17 and us providing them with some cover elsewhere, was
18 quite a powerful one.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Still thinking of the two-legged stool which
20 always rocks about a bit, but the unplannable impact of
21 events about disclosures about Abu Ghraib, for example,
22 or Fallujah itself actually, having an impact inside our
23 area of operations in terms of public opinion and
24 attitudes?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Again, in terms of the answers I gave

1 to Sir Roderic a moment ago, those kinds of revelations
2 simply demonstrated that we were perceived by still more
3 of the population as being occupiers, as being foreign,
4 as being the enemy, and that necessarily made it harder
5 to keep people on side in terms of hearts and minds.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: We have discussed fairly recently in this
7 evidence session, the deteriorating security situation,
8 quite rapidly, April through August, et cetera.

9 At the same time there was a British ambition --
10 a government ambition, that our conduct of affairs in
11 the south-east should be -- "exemplary" is the word that
12 is often used. At some point, that aspiration, noble in
13 itself, has to give way to the deteriorating reality.

14 Was that something that was consciously managed or
15 was it simply a passive reaction to worsening events as
16 we scaled down our exploration?

17 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think one of the factors that led
18 to the deteriorating situation undoubtedly, and I have
19 seen regular reports about this, was the sense that we
20 were not delivering, we were not providing the kind of
21 support that people in and around Basra expected. They
22 thought things would change very quickly and we just
23 couldn't make those big changes in time.

24 I think we did a lot of good work on a small scale
25 and that undoubtedly helped, but -- I mean, I referred

1 earlier to electricity. It was clear very quickly that
2 the power station serving Basra could not be repaired
3 indefinitely. We could do what we could, but we
4 couldn't guarantee that it would keep going and,
5 therefore, there had to be a new power station, and that
6 was a long and frustrating saga of getting the money
7 approved, of deciding which company would do it. There
8 was quite a debate about whether it should be an
9 American company or a British company, and the money, in
10 any event, wasn't coming through for it.

11 So that kind of delay I think frustrated -- it not
12 only frustrated the population, it certainly frustrated
13 the guys on the ground who were having to deal with the
14 consequences.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: I have got one other question. It is very
16 much about looking to the future and lessons to be
17 learned, but it would be interesting to hear from you
18 about throughout your time as Secretary of State and
19 particularly during and since the invasion -- there is
20 a military phrase "situational awareness". How was your
21 situational awareness formed? Regular briefings,
22 situational reports, haul-down reports from generals
23 as they cycled through. Can you say a bit about that?
24 Every now and again you had to take a big decision.

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think there is a single

1 process. It may depend on the individual who is doing
2 the job at the time, but it is necessarily a mixture of
3 expert advice from the people who have experience,
4 whether they be soldiers or civil servants in the MoD or
5 beyond. I think there is a certain -- I always felt
6 there was a lot to be gained by going myself, looking,
7 asking questions, focus on what was going on at the
8 time, and I made -- I'm not sure how many times I went
9 to Iraq, but quite a number of occasions in the time
10 that we were there.

11 I think there is some context to this. I think
12 I was fortunate, if that's the right word, that this
13 particular operation came after Afghanistan and came
14 after Sierra Leone and came after our involvement in
15 Kosovo, because I think some of the decisions that had
16 to be taken in relation to Iraq were really very, very
17 difficult in terms of a risk to lives, deploying
18 fighting soldiers into a potentially very dangerous
19 conflict.

20 So you know, I do think that it is a mixture of all
21 of those things that allow you then to have some
22 confidence in the decisions that you take.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: The Ministry of Defence and the British
24 military, they are very big beasts indeed
25 organisationally and numerically. It would be very easy

1 to have the whole of one's situational awareness formed
2 by their inputs. Were you thinking of your role as
3 a Cabinet minister as well as Defence Secretary at
4 getting enough from outside that world of these two very
5 big beasts on reconstruction, for example, on the
6 diplomatic, as it unfolded, politics inside of Iraq?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have always seen the position of
8 any Secretary of State as being in a sense the
9 department's voice in the Cabinet, but equally, the
10 Cabinet's voice in the department. So it is a two-way
11 process and we have discussed resources. It is always
12 quite a balance to be loyal both to a government trying
13 to set an overall financial position, as well as to be
14 loyal to a department that necessarily wants to spend
15 more money, and that, I think, applies to a whole range
16 of issues and it is completely relevant to your
17 question, because there would be times when I would be
18 saying to the Ministry of Defence, "Look, actually, the
19 right people to deal with this are DFID", or, "We need
20 to rely on the Foreign Office", and I think to that
21 extent -- I made the comparison earlier to some extent
22 with the Americans. What the Americans are not so good
23 at is this sort of low-level cooperation between
24 departments, where I think the United Kingdom government
25 is extremely good.

1 I came to the view actually that what the Americans
2 are quite good at -- and I think there are all sorts of
3 constitutional reasons why they are better at it than we
4 are, is -- is the kind of top level clearing of
5 decisions, in the sense that they have fairly regular
6 meetings of principals, where the Secretary of State,
7 the Defence Secretary, the Vice-President, the
8 President, the security adviser, or combinations of
9 those people will get together and they will simply work
10 through the various difficulties that have arisen
11 between departments and solve them, and once they have
12 reached a view, that's it, and things move on.

13 I think our constitutional arrangements led me to
14 the view that it was much harder for Cabinet Ministers
15 who were also Members of Parliament, who have,
16 therefore, responsibilities, not just in their
17 constituency but actually to Parliament in terms of
18 debates and question time and so on, trying to get
19 people together on a more regular basis is actually
20 quite challenge.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard quite a lot of evidence, a lot
22 of it from military sources, that they did not feel that
23 the top hamper of British Government was on a war
24 footing. Is that in some sense a reflection of what you
25 have been saying?

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I say, I think in practice it is
2 much harder to say -- I can recall the frustration
3 sometimes where people would say, "You need to sit down
4 with the Prime Minister, and Jack Straw, and perhaps
5 Clare", whoever was there afterwards, "and sort this
6 out". The Americans did that at a moment's notice.
7 I can recall being in Donald's office, the phone goes,
8 the President wants to see him, he goes, whereas there
9 were always some constraints on our ability to do that,
10 plus -- but I accept this is equally true for the US,
11 there are lots of other things going on at the same
12 time.

13 So -- although, we are understandably and rightly
14 focused on Iraq for the purposes of this Inquiry, at the
15 same time we are still conducting operations in
16 Afghanistan, there are a whole range, I'm sure, of
17 issues for the Foreign Office, for DFID, which are
18 absolutely nothing to do with Iraq, but nevertheless
19 people are still having to conduct daily meetings, do
20 the work that is necessary to keep those activities
21 underway.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sorry, if I can just interrupt, there was
24 a Cabinet Committee which was very much the equivalent
25 of the Committee of Principals, the DOP, the Defence and

1 Overseas Policy Committee, but the problem was that it
2 just didn't meet in the run-up to the war for two years.

3 So -- and then, after the campaign, actually a lot
4 of meetings happened and we had the equivalent
5 structure. So why was it possible to do it after the
6 campaign, but not before the campaign?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think the meetings you are
8 describing -- they were, in effect, meetings of
9 principals. I'm not suggesting that the Prime Minister,
10 Jack Straw, myself, CDS, did not --

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Clare Short?

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: From time to time, but certainly in
13 wider meetings as well. The meetings that you describe
14 afterwards were -- they were big meetings.
15 There were large numbers of people present from not only
16 the departments that you by implication have already
17 mentioned, but whatever the business department was
18 called at the time. I remember Patricia Hewitt was
19 represented and a whole range of other people. The Home
20 Office were there, so it was quite a big
21 Cabinet Committee looking at the contribution that
22 different departments could make to reconstruction.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think Baroness Prashar would
24 like to pick up this theme.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Indeed. Can I just come back to --

1 you have painted a picture that things were obviously
2 getting better and there were meetings and so on, but
3 successive witnesses have said to us that the military
4 and the civilian departments, in particular DFID, failed
5 to deliver what was required of them.

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think I have said that as well.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, indeed. Now, what was done to
8 actually deal with that? Because, in a way, the
9 invasion itself was successful. You found the situation
10 on the ground not as you anticipated, and the forces and
11 the civilians, they were doing their best, so they were
12 looking for support from the centre.

13 So what mechanisms did you put in place to make sure
14 that these got better, I mean in terms of the
15 relationships and so on? What steps did you take?
16 Meetings are one thing, but it is the practicality I'm
17 interested in.

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I played my part, but essentially the
19 Prime Minister, recognising that there is a risk of what
20 I think was described at one stage of strategic failure,
21 ensured that there were the kinds of meetings that we
22 have just been discussing, where government was put on
23 a war footing, although I think that's something of an
24 exaggeration, frankly, but nevertheless, there was
25 a sense in which we had to solve this problem, otherwise

1 we risked wasting the progress that had been made
2 hitherto.

3 So -- and he took a day-to-day interest in making
4 sure that when people said that they were going to do
5 something, it actually happened.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Let me just read to you what
7 Keith MacKiggan, who was one of the officials with DFID
8 said, and it is a very interesting point. I would like
9 your observations on that. He said:

10 "The organisational cultural differences between
11 different departments made me wonder whether there isn't
12 still a need for some kind of hybrid civil military
13 capacity in Whitehall which we don't yet have."

14 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that's not an unreasonable
15 observation, and if I may to some extent suggest
16 a lesson that I certainly learned, one of the things
17 that the military have rightly emphasised, and in
18 a modern world the Ministry of Defence have rightly
19 emphasised, is the importance of getting quickly into
20 a situation. I gave the example of Sierra Leone over
21 a weekend. One of the problems we faced in a series of
22 conflicts in the aftermath is getting civilian
23 capability there in anything like the same timescale.

24 If you think of Kosovo, essentially an
25 administration conducted by Serbs, who left, to some

1 extent Sunnis left the south and certainly abandoned
2 their positions. Even if they didn't go north, they
3 went home. So you have got a vacuum, not of a military
4 kind, but of an administrative kind, and I think there
5 is actually a role for some kind of what I would
6 describe as civilian reservists, the counterparts of
7 military reservists. People who are not going to wear
8 uniforms, but they are perhaps trained, give up
9 a weekend or two weeks or something, so that they --
10 their commitment would be that they would be ready to go
11 into a situation as and when needed, so that, you know,
12 they would be people who would expect to be called
13 upon in precisely this kind of situation, because the
14 real problem is that -- I think all --

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But that is something DFID could do.

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly. All departments of defence,
17 in a sense are used to the concept that you have got to
18 get people quickly into a conflict, even if some of the
19 countries that I can think of can't do it quite as well
20 as we can, that is part of the modern thinking, but then
21 there is a sort of gap, certainly, that I have seen,
22 where we are looking around for someone to fill that
23 gap.

24 Now, I have described the military -- the military
25 reservists filling that gap in the south in Iraq, but

1 that is not an ideal solution. You actually need
2 civilian expertise who can stay and do some quite
3 important but nevertheless civilian jobs.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about these cultural
5 differences? Because I think part of the tension was
6 the military wanting sort of short impact projects
7 whereas DFID was looking at more sustainable projects.

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure I'd characterise it in
9 that way, because, actually, the money that was being
10 spent on quick impact projects was coming from DFID, as
11 I recall.

12 What we were -- what, ultimately, I was looking for
13 was people from DFID on the ground, not only offering
14 the money, but helping to deliver it. The real
15 distinction was not between the kinds of culture in the
16 different departments, the real distinction was between
17 short and long-term. I think I have alluded already to
18 the question of the power station. The real problem was
19 that we could do so much on the ground with these kinds
20 of projects. I went to see some of them. Bridge
21 building, sorting out footpaths, lighting for people in
22 the dark, and so on. Very basic things that certainly
23 helped smaller communities, but what we weren't sorting
24 out were the big things, the big infrastructure
25 projects.

1 I don't think that was a cultural difference. It
2 was simply getting these decisions made and getting the
3 money, and the money was supposed to come from ORHA --
4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I -- sorry.
5 THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard from a number of GOCs from
6 MND (South East), saying that, looking to quick impact
7 projects, they could not draw on much in the way of
8 funding from UK resources, but that the American
9 military had quite large stores that were under military
10 control, and sometimes we managed to feed off those, but
11 it was a different system. Comparative merits,
12 I wonder?
13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I say, I think quite a lot of the
14 money did come from DFID directly or indirectly in the
15 first place. There was certainly real frustration about
16 some of these bigger projects as to where the money was
17 going to come from, in the sense that the assumption was
18 that it would come through ORHA and --
19 THE CHAIRMAN: The congress had voted US\$18 billion.
20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Exactly. But getting it actually
21 spent, getting hold of it was just enormously difficult.
22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I come back to the impact of
23 this on your own department, the MoD? Because, given
24 the fact you were there for the long haul, was there
25 a corresponding uplift in effort and resources that you

1 were allocating within the department or was it business
2 as usual for the MoD?

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: You mean in terms of the overall size
4 of the budget?

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Budget, but also the effort in terms
6 of how much effort in terms of people and in terms of
7 the support you wanted to give. How did you manage the
8 MoD? Did you raise your game to actually support the
9 military long haul?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think that is well understood in
11 the Ministry of Defence. There is always a planning
12 cycle, when people are deployed, that allows them to
13 recuperate and to get back into their regular training,
14 and that's part of the judgment that has to be made in
15 relation to how long units can stay in a particular
16 theatre.

17 So I think that that is probably better understood
18 in the MoD than in most places, simply because that's
19 part of what they do on a pretty regular basis and
20 planning assumptions are made in terms of how long it is
21 possible for different units to remain in a theatre.

22 Nevertheless, it does have consequences,
23 particularly, as we discussed earlier, fire strike,
24 anything that adds to that burden, if you are operating
25 at or near full stretch, is then very difficult.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But because the planning
2 post-invasion was inadequate earlier on, one gets the
3 sense that you were always behind the planning cycle;
4 you were planning as the events unfolded. Did we ever
5 regain the initiative? Did we ever get ahead of the
6 problems we were facing or were we always kind of
7 responding as they arose?

8 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it is probably almost
9 inevitable that the Ministry of Defence do that, because
10 they are always reacting to events. I don't think in
11 this particular -- in this particular conflict --
12 I wasn't aware in my time that this was causing huge
13 difficulty, although I am aware of precisely what you
14 are describing, because when I first arrived in the MoD
15 in October 1999, we were simultaneously deployed in both
16 Bosnia and Kosovo and many, many particular support
17 staff were simply being rotated from one to the other
18 and we lost a lot of people during that period because
19 they just said, "Look, I'm not doing that. It is the
20 same thing over and over again".

21 Actually Iraq and Afghanistan, certainly the war
22 fighting part, actually is -- "popular" is not quite the
23 right word, I suspect, but that's what a lot of people
24 join up to do.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But are you then saying there are no

1 opportunities to learn any lessons?

2 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, I think there was quite

3 a detailed -- as there always is after any operation,

4 a detailed lessons learned process inside the

5 Ministry of Defence.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You identified those, but were these

7 lessons actually learned during the course of the time

8 you were there?

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think those are probably

10 longer-term considerations. I left in 2005, but I'm

11 sure that work would have fed into and continued to feed

12 into the kinds of judgments that are being made.

13 I think it is clear that there is going to be some sort

14 of defence review after the next election and I'm sure

15 these kinds of issues will be part of that process.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did you personally attach any

17 importance to actually making sure the lessons were

18 learned as you went along.

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Of course, yes.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What sort of initiatives did you

21 take?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think I have given some examples.

23 At the very sophisticated equipment level I was in no

24 doubt of the importance of very sophisticated technology

25 because I think that that is going to be the difference

1 in war fighting for the future, which means that it is
2 necessary to equip our forces with battle-winning
3 technology if we are going to send them into conflict.
4 I think that feeds through in all sorts of other
5 respects, in terms of logistics support.

6 I have talked about multiple chains of support for
7 front line forces. It is a very different kind of world
8 from the one that, in a sense, influenced thinking up to
9 the end of the Cold War, where far more territorial
10 defence was in mind.

11 So I think each of the conflicts that I was involved
12 in, I think demonstrated the importance of relatively
13 speedy response, of having multiple logistics chains,
14 support chains, being able to operate at a significant
15 distance away from home base, having smart weapons and
16 having the kind of technology that allows us to work
17 alongside the United States. I mean, that's a small
18 list, I can make a longer list of the kinds of
19 challenges the MoD will have to deal with when it goes
20 into this defence review.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: We are coming towards the end of a long day.

22 I think we ought to take a short break just for a few
23 minutes, then Sir Lawrence has a couple of questions on
24 resources and then that will be it. If we can come back
25 in no more than ten minutes.

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Thank you.

2 (4.15 pm)

3 (Short break)

4 (4.25 pm)

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, to restart, Sir Lawrence?

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Back to budgets. We went into

7 a campaign with a certain set of assumptions

8 in March 2003. We were there for six years. You

9 obviously weren't Secretary of Defence for all that

10 period, but you were there for a significant period

11 afterwards.

12 How did you find that -- you had continuing

13 discussions presumably with the Chancellor about how you

14 managed the budgetary position, created by Iraq. How

15 did you manage that process?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it is right to say that we

17 did not have any difficulty at all in securing the extra

18 spending specifically for the operations. The Treasury,

19 I think, by then were used to the process that we had

20 been through in relation to Afghanistan, Sierra Leone,

21 I guess prior to that in the Balkans. So the extra

22 money for operational capability was available.

23 I indicated earlier some difficulties over how you

24 sustain some of this equipment thereafter.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in terms of the extra funding

1 for the actual operations, what we discussed earlier,
2 the relationship between the general defence budget and
3 what is necessary for specific operations, what about
4 that side of the equation? How successful were you in
5 maintaining a defence budget to provide the core, the
6 foundation, for any future operations.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I indicated, when I arrived in the
8 Ministry of Defence, there was a strong sense that the
9 Ministry of Defence had been underfunded. I do not
10 believe that that began in 1997. There was a strong
11 sense that perhaps the so-called peace dividend had
12 eaten too deeply into defence resources over a longer
13 period of time, and that, in a sense, a Strategic
14 Defence Review was part of the process of trying to
15 recover some ground, but albeit not as well funded as it
16 could have been.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this is a continuing position you
18 found yourself in. Were you able to improve the
19 situation?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Certainly defence spending increased
21 in the time that I was there. I daresay others in the
22 department would question the extent to which it
23 increased in the way that other departments' budgets
24 increased, but nevertheless that there were -- there
25 were -- there was extra spending available.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think there was a particular
2 disagreement with the Treasury in September 2003. Do
3 you recall that?

4 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I do.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Perhaps you could explain what it
6 was about.

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'll try.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is complicated.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: It goes back actually to the
10 settlement in July, I think it was, 2002. This is the
11 complicated part. The Treasury were moving towards
12 a system of resource account budgeting which in
13 a simplistic way meant that departments had to pay for
14 existing equipment as well as new equipment, so that
15 there was an amount allocated for what you already held.
16 Now, for most departments, I suspect the two that were
17 particularly affected by this were defence more than any
18 other, but transport probably as well. But most
19 departments this was a means of -- adopted from the
20 private sector of bearing down on historic costs using
21 existing resources more efficiently and more
22 effectively.

23 What I think the Treasury probably overlooked in
24 their settlement letter in July 2002 is that, because of
25 a large amount of equipment that the MoD held, it was

1 much easier for them to bear down on those costs and did
2 so. It is one of the reasons why we judged the 2002
3 settlement, as presented to us, was very favourable
4 because we would be able to use our asset base far more
5 efficiently and effectively to release cash for other
6 spending.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So essentially, what this meant was
8 you could take the non-cash parts of the budget and
9 transfer it across to the cash part --

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Only subject to finding efficiencies.
11 That means using the existing equipment more efficiently
12 and therefore at a lower cost.

13 That was the whole point of resource account
14 budgeting adopted from the private sector. It was to put
15 pressure on departments to look much harder at their
16 equipment, and if they had, for example, equipment that
17 was no longer really fit for its purpose, to get rid of
18 it, and, if they had older equipment that was expensive
19 and tying up a lot of maintenance, time and money, make
20 a tough decision as to whether you really needed it.

21 But I think what the Treasury overlooked was that
22 this gave enormous flexibility to the MoD to do
23 precisely what you have just described, and about
24 15 months later I think the Treasury realised that we
25 were spending rather more than they thought we should

1 because of this flexibility, and the flexibility was
2 written into the settlement letter. I have read about
3 this in the newspapers. I don't actually have a copy of
4 the settlement letter, Sir John. I did ask for one, but
5 it is not actually available.

6 But nevertheless, I think it was clear what was
7 happening. We were given this flexibility, the Treasury
8 didn't like the fact that we were using the flexibility,
9 and probably around 15 months later, they -- well,
10 I don't think they put the brakes on, they told us we
11 had to stop. Now that caused quite a lot of problems,
12 because we had been spending at this higher rate, and
13 moreover, we had quite a lot of plans for this future
14 equipment based on the flexibility, because obviously
15 this was something that would go forward as well as
16 retrospectively, and we then --

17 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm so sorry, slow down a bit.

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: My apologies. We then had to look
19 hard at our budget and make some rather difficult cuts
20 in the future equipment programme as a result.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How was this argument played out?

22 Because it did -- it was quite a challenge, not only to
23 the budget, but to your role as the chief accounting
24 officer?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I mean, there were -- there was

1 a fair amount of correspondence, I think it is fair to
2 say, in the immediate aftermath. I don't think this
3 issue was resolved for quite a long time because we were
4 clear as to what the settlement letter meant, that was
5 one of the reasons why I had welcomed the settlement
6 because I thought that this opportunity was going to be
7 available to us. The Treasury insisted that we should
8 have some independent assessment of both the rules and
9 of our spending. Probably Sir Kevin Tebbit is a better
10 person to ask about this, but I'm pretty confident that
11 we were vindicated that the accountants brought in to
12 look at this said that this was wholly consistent, both
13 with private sector practice, and, indeed, with the
14 rules that the Treasury had established.

15 As I say, I think in their enthusiasm for applying
16 these rules across the government, I think they slightly
17 overlooked the benefit this brought to the MoD.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, lest this appear as a side
19 issue, but part of one of the issues that was raised was
20 whether the cuts or the deduction in your budget that
21 would be expected of you would have any consequences for
22 Iraq, for our capabilities in Iraq.

23 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think that is the
24 case, in fact. The forward equipment programme was
25 affected, but I doubt that that would have had immediate

1 consequences for Iraq, because this was -- this was --
2 we produced a White Paper in the interim on -- I'm sorry
3 about the expression, but network-centric capability and
4 about ensuring that we could do all of the things that
5 I was describing before the break to the Baroness, that
6 we could operate at distance, that we had technology
7 that we could rapidly deploy our forces. So this was
8 about transforming our forces again to this kind of, not
9 just expeditionary warfare but high technology warfare.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But given that we are in a conflict
11 that seems to be lasting for longer than might have been
12 anticipated, it is relevant in terms of, for example,
13 helicopters and looking forward to what you would be
14 able to provide our forces in the future.

15 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, again, I don't want to
16 overstate the position. I don't believe that it was
17 relevant to helicopters in Iraq. No doubt -- this is
18 going back to 2002/2003/2004. I suppose it is
19 reasonable to assume that by now, had that budget have
20 been spent in the way that we thought we should spend
21 it, then those helicopters would probably be coming into
22 service any time now.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So your budget was still under
24 a severe constraint?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that was the basic point, in
2 terms of --

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: To some extent more so because of the
4 way we had interpreted the rules.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That, I guess, was the point I was
6 making.

7 Now, can we just look at these particular questions
8 of helicopters? It is a critical resource. Every
9 military commander always says they want more. The
10 numbers were drawn down in Iraq after the initial combat
11 operations. Was there pressure to keep them there, to
12 find more?

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As you say, it is always a scarce
14 resource. We didn't face the kinds of problems in Iraq,
15 at least to the same extent -- the kind of problems
16 currently faced by British soldiers in Helmand and in
17 other places, although there were some IEDs, but there
18 wasn't quite the same pressure.

19 I think that military commanders on the ground,
20 rightly, and understandably, always want more equipment
21 and I don't think anybody would doubt that. It is part
22 of the balance that has to be struck, particularly when
23 you are conducting more than one operation
24 simultaneously.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the lack of helicopters meant

1 that it was -- the forces were much more dependent on
2 using the roads.

3 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, you have mentioned that the IED
5 problem was not --

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I have simply said it wasn't as
7 great. I'm not minimising it.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It grew, I think was the point. So
9 although we said we were not going to go into the detail
10 of Snatch Land Rovers, this is one reason why the forces
11 were so reliant on Snatch Land Rovers.

12 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: That's right, yes, but again, I mean,
13 bear in mind as well -- overall the security of British
14 forces, British soldiers has to be of paramount concern,
15 but also bear in mind that part of the ethos and a more
16 recent tradition of the British army is to get out
17 amongst the local population, to interact with them, to
18 be seen, not to be hidden in very heavily protected
19 vehicles. So trying to get that balance right,
20 is an extremely difficult one, and I don't envy those
21 who are having to take those decisions today in relation
22 to Afghanistan.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, the consequence of relying
24 on Snatch Land Rovers, because there wasn't really much
25 else that could be used, was that -- as a single source

1 of British deaths, this is one of the most substantial,
2 the vulnerabilities of these two developments and IEDs.
3 Were you aware of -- was this concern brought to your
4 attention?

5 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think it was beginning to develop
6 at the time that I left the department, yes.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But no provision had been made for
8 an alternative, or it was going to take time for the
9 alternatives to come along?

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I'm not sure that is entirely true.
11 There was a programme for a range of armoured vehicles
12 and I think included in that was a sort of more heavily
13 protected comparable vehicle.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If we -- are there other areas in
15 which you started to see -- actual resources possibly
16 being needed in Iraq, rather than sort of the steady
17 drawdown? You have obviously talked about a very
18 specific episode, but in terms of the general provisions
19 for security for afterwards?

20 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I mean, I have already said
21 that as far as the sort of day-to-day operations were
22 concerned, we never had any difficulty in securing
23 funding from the Treasury. If you are asking a wider
24 question about what would I have looked to see in the
25 general budget for the Ministry of Defence, I probably

1 could give you quite a long list. But that probably
2 would be true of every Secretary of State of every
3 government department at any time in history.

4 I mean, there were specific things that, you know,
5 we would hope to have procured, but, for financial
6 reasons, that was not possible.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is also a question of troop
8 levels as well.

9 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Yes, although I think the emphasis,
10 which is often misunderstood, is -- was on specialists,
11 on people involved in signals, communications generally,
12 logisticians, those were the -- always the sort of
13 shortage trades in the army, because most of the time
14 their skills were very attractive to the private sector.
15 If you can put in a mobile phone system in a place where
16 previously none existed, possibly in insecure
17 circumstances, you are very attractive to a mobile phone
18 company back in the United Kingdom. So by and large it
19 was those kinds of highly skilled people that we were
20 short of.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And remain short of?

22 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: And remain short of -- well, as far
23 as I am aware, yes.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just my last couple of questions.
25 When we started talking about the budgets and we

1 referred to the Strategic Defence Review, that had
2 a planning assumption that there was a medium operation
3 of an enduring nature and you might be able to do other
4 things as well, but there wasn't much provision for two
5 operations.

6 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think one large, two medium was the
7 kind of formula --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is a question of what one means
9 by large and medium. Iraq would presumably --

10 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: One large or, not both.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, in July 2004, the
12 Prime Minister announced the intention to deploy the
13 ARRC, headquarters ARRC, to Afghanistan. Did you envisage
14 that this would mean a significant commitment for UK
15 forces at that time?

16 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: At that time, I didn't agree to it.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would you like to say more?

18 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I believed that it was necessary to
19 reduce our commitment in Iraq before taking on what was
20 a NATO mission and I felt that, at that time, given our
21 commitments in Iraq, it was probably better to allow
22 other countries to participate in that particular
23 mission until we were in a better position to do so, and
24 I felt personally that -- I mean largely influenced,
25 I think, by the experience I had had in the first part

1 of my period in the MoD when trying to conduct two
2 operations in both Kosovo and Bosnia, that it would lead
3 to significant losses of our armed forces as people were
4 simply being rotated from one theatre to another.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how was it that the
6 Prime Minister was able to make that announcement?

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think the decision was
8 actually taken until after the election in 2005, to the
9 best of my recollection.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was the substantial deployment,
11 but things were being set in motion. What was the
12 military --

13 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I think my agreement to it was, as
14 I say, conditional. It was not, "Let's go and do this
15 tomorrow". It was, "We can do this once we are in
16 a position to draw down on our numbers in Iraq".

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was the military advice you
18 were getting at the time on this?

19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: Well, I think -- to the best of my
20 recollection, it was consistent with what I said, that
21 they wanted -- they wanted to be clear that they weren't
22 going to be involved in two substantial operations
23 simultaneously.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yet in practice that's what
25 happened.

1 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: As I say, after I had left the
2 Ministry of Defence.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So just to be clear, to conclude,
4 your advice while you were still Secretary of State, was
5 that it would be unwise, until we had got out of Iraq or
6 reduced our levels to a small number --

7 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: I don't think I would have used the
8 word "unwise". What I was concerned about was the
9 impact on our forces of trying to conduct those two
10 operations simultaneously. I don't think I would have
11 ever said it was unwise. These were always judgments
12 that had to be made. But I felt it would have been
13 better to draw down numbers in Iraq before committing
14 ourselves to a NATO operation in the south of
15 Afghanistan.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Quite a long day. I think I'll just ask if
18 any of my colleagues have any final follow-up questions
19 Usha? No. Roderic? No.

20 In that case, could I ask you and, indeed, give you
21 the opportunity to say, are there any high level lessons
22 learned, and, indeed, are there final comments that you
23 would have liked to have had a chance to make and now
24 can?

25 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON: No, I don't think so. I have been

1 grateful for the opportunity of setting out my thoughts
2 and grateful to the Inquiry for the care with which they
3 have approached them.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: In that case, our thanks to you, our witness,
5 and to everyone who has been here through the day, some
6 of you throughout the day, I know.

7 With that, I'll close the session, but noting that
8 at 2.00 pm tomorrow we resume hearings with
9 Mark Lyall Grant, who was Political Director in the FCO
10 at the relevant time, and after that in the afternoon
11 with Sir David Omand, the intelligence security
12 coordinator. With that, I'll close the proceedings.

13 Thank you.

14 (4.40 pm)

15 (The Inquiry adjourned until 2.00 pm the following day)

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19 RT HON GEOFFREY HOON1

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