

1 (2.00 pm)

2 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD, SIR JOHN SAWERS and MR DESMOND BOWEN

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon.

4 This afternoon we welcome Sir Nigel Sheinwald,  
5 Sir John Sawers and Desmond Bowen, and we will be asking  
6 them about the period between 2003 and 2007/2008. For  
7 much of this time, these three witnesses were the senior  
8 civil servants in Number 10, the FCO and MoD responsible  
9 for policy on Iraq.

10 Their times in post were not exactly the same, but  
11 substantial overlap, and it is right to emphasise  
12 that each of them had, of course, many other  
13 responsibilities in this time, although Iraq was a major  
14 responsibility for all of you but by no means the  
15 only one.

16 We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence  
17 based on their recollection of events, and we are  
18 checking them against the papers to which we have  
19 access, which are still coming in. I remind all  
20 witnesses that they will be asked to sign a transcript  
21 of the evidence they have given to the effect that the  
22 evidence they have given was truthful, fair and  
23 accurate.

24 There was one point arising from last week's  
25 session, with Sir John Sawers, I don't know if you want

1 to say something?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The issue that was raised by  
3 Sir Roderic Lyne was about the involvement of the  
4 Department for International Development in the policy  
5 review taking place in the first half of 2001. I have  
6 reminded myself of the documentation at that time.

7 It is true to say, I think, that the Department of  
8 International Development was not substantially involved  
9 in the development of Iraq policy at that time. They  
10 played a role in terms of providing about £20 million  
11 a year to the UN and to various agencies to assist  
12 humanitarian work in Iraq.

13  
14 They weren't involved on the ground and the main policy  
15 deliberations in London were between the Foreign Office,  
16 the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet Office and  
17 Number 10. So they weren't deeply involved.

18 It is true to say that the letter with an outline  
19 paper was not copied to DFID. It is also true to say  
20 that a lot of other documents on Iraq policy at that  
21 time were also not copied to that department, but they  
22 were involved in the discussions after the paper issued.  
23 They took part in a Cabinet Office meeting. I think it  
24 is their participation in that meeting that may have  
25 triggered a letter asking for them to be more fully

1           involved in it, and I think they were.

2   THE CHAIRMAN:   Thank you very much.

3           Let's start the questions for this afternoon.

4           Roderic, you first.

5   SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Can I just comment on what Sir John has

6           said. I think that's very helpful. This is a subject

7           that we are going to have to explore further, because we

8           heard, for example, this morning from General Fry that

9           he felt that DFID had been far too detached -- he used

10          a rather stronger term than that -- from the making of

11          an execution of policy over Iraq.

12          We have heard a complaint from Sir Suma Chakrabarti

13          about this. We will be obviously talking to officials

14          from this department again tomorrow. We will be talking

15          to the Secretary of State responsible in due course.

16          And the whole course of events in which this bit of

17          the British Government was not joined up right through

18          to the point at which its leader resigned I think is an

19          important part of this story, but it is not this

20          afternoon's story. It is very helpful. Thank you for

21          what you have just said.

22          On our subject for this afternoon, perhaps I could

23          start with Sir Nigel Sheinwald because we have not seen

24          you here before. In September 2003 --

25   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   End of August.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: End of August 2003 you took over the post  
2 as the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser from  
3 Sir David Manning and, simultaneously, the  
4 chairmanship -- sorry, you became the head of the  
5 Defence and Overseas Policy Secretariat in the  
6 Cabinet Office, all of which meant that from then on for  
7 a long period you were the senior official in Whitehall  
8 dealing with Iraq. Not only with Iraq -- I want to ask  
9 you about that in a second.

10 Did you have previous experience of Iraq or of the  
11 Middle Eastern region before you took up the job?

12 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Not directly; as part of other jobs in  
13 the Foreign Office, but I have never worked specifically  
14 on the Middle East. I knew from January 2003 that I was  
15 going to be moving into the job in Number 10, the  
16 Cabinet Office, so I think observing events of the day,  
17 I had spent a bit of time preparing myself for it.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What sort of preparation did you do?

19 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Trying to see everyone in the  
20 Whitehall and military hierarchy, getting my head around  
21 the issues of the day, not just Iraq.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you able to visit Iraq before you  
23 took up the job?

24 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I wasn't, no.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: When did you first go there?

1 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: November 2003.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We heard from one of the generals who has  
3 given evidence that he felt strongly that there was  
4 a need for more professionalism at the highest levels of  
5 policy-making in Whitehall, and he made clear that he  
6 was referring both to ministers and to senior officials.

7 Do you think from your own experience of arriving in  
8 this job with no background in the region, not having  
9 been to Iraq, a bit of time for meeting people but not  
10 much more than that, is one lesson to be learned from  
11 that that would have been useful? Do you feel it would  
12 have been useful to have more grounding on the subject  
13 before you took it over?

14 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I'm sure it would have been  
15 useful. I think all of us who started jobs in the  
16 summer of that year were conscious that we were arriving  
17 after the train had left the station and with an  
18 unfolding drama which was intensifying in Iraq itself.

19 But I applied myself to the job pretty diligently.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir John came back to be a political  
21 director at the same time, but having been in Cairo,  
22 having spent his three months in Baghdad in the summer,  
23 so obviously he did have that first-hand knowledge.

24 In your post, as Sir John Chilcot said already, you  
25 weren't just dealing with Iraq. Can you give us some

1       feel for the wider context, the sort of subjects that  
2       were high on your agenda and the Prime Minister's in the  
3       period throughout the period in which you did this job?  
4       Was Iraq constantly the top priority. How much of your  
5       time did it take up, and the Prime Minister's?

6       SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I think it was the biggest of the  
7       issues on the actual scene that the Prime Minister and I  
8       were dealing with, and I think -- I recall a meeting  
9       chaired actually by the Foreign Secretary in the autumn  
10      of 2003 which said explicitly -- which agreed explicitly  
11      that Iraq was the top strategic priority for the UK and  
12      that failure there would affect our interests more  
13      widely.

14       There were lots of other things, as you have said,  
15      Sir Roderic, going on. For the Prime Minister and for  
16      his team, the other big things were Afghanistan, the  
17      Middle East peace process, Iran, Libya -- as I started,  
18      we were in the final stages of discussion with Libya  
19      leading up to their declaration in December of that year  
20      on renunciation of weapons of mass destruction --  
21      a whole range of other things connected with our G8  
22      presidency in 2005, climate change, development, Africa,  
23      the aftermath of the bombings on 7 July 2005 took up  
24      a great deal of time, developing relationships with  
25      India and Pakistan, handling developments in Russia.

1           So there were lots of things on the international  
2           agenda. I would think something approaching two fifths  
3           or a half of the time probably went on Iraq over the  
4           whole period.

5   SIR RODERIC LYNE: How difficult was it for you to stretch  
6           yourself across this huge range? Would it have been  
7           better if one person at your very elevated level had  
8           been able to focus solely on Iraq?

9   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: There would have been some  
10          disadvantages in not seeing the other parts of the  
11          picture, the linkages. It would have been a lot more  
12          difficult dealing with opposite numbers outside  
13          government. And within government, where I had had  
14          a lot of experience in my previous positions -- within  
15          government it undoubtedly helped that you were dealing  
16          with the whole waterfront of our international  
17          relations.

18   SIR RODERIC LYNE: I know Sir John wants to ask you about  
19          how all of this was structured, but just before he does,  
20          can you give us your first impressions? You arrive in  
21          Number 10 at end of August 2003 and you are in charge of  
22          this pretty difficult situation. What did it look like  
23          to you at that time?

24   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It looked pretty worrying, and it was  
25          a situation which even in the weeks that I was taking

1 over, deteriorated very, very sharply with the bombing  
2 of the UN on 19 August 2003, in my first week was the  
3 massive bomb attack on the mosque in Najaf. I think  
4 that was 29 August, my first week. So it was obvious  
5 that we were dealing with a fundamentally different  
6 security situation from the one I think that Whitehall  
7 left in July.

8 It was moving very, very rapidly and more quickly  
9 than our understanding and appreciation of events.

10 And also, as a result of John Sawers's reports from  
11 Baghdad and the reports we were getting from  
12 Hilary Synnott in Basra, the scale of the gap in terms  
13 of what we were doing on services and the economy was  
14 also becoming apparent.

15 So I think, you know, there was a sense of (a)  
16 a need for a heightened sense of urgency in Whitehall.  
17 I think the Prime Minister used the -- used that sort of  
18 term when he reviewed things with his colleagues at the  
19 beginning of September, the need to get back on to  
20 a crisis or a war rhythm to deal with the urgency of  
21 events, but also (b) just the scale of what confronted us in  
22 terms of the decline of the Iraqi economy and the state  
23 of Iraqi politics, and the declining security situation.  
24 So it was a huge job from that point.

25 And a very sombre analysis that was put to ministers



1           and accepted by ministers.

2   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. That's a very useful starting  
3           point, and I think Sir John would like to discuss the  
4           mechanisms for handling this in Whitehall.

5   THE CHAIRMAN: Mechanisms and processes. I am afraid this  
6           does take me back to the Butler Committee, which I sat  
7           on. We published a report in 2004 which, among many  
8           other observations, drew attention to two changes that  
9           had happened in the central machinery. One was taking  
10          the Cabinet Secretary out of the loop for intelligence  
11          and security matters directly -- by the appointment of a  
12          security intelligence coordinator, but the other was  
13          meshing together the two posts of Foreign Affairs  
14          Adviser to the Prime Minister and head of the Defence  
15          and Overseas Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

16           I just wonder how you found the structures working  
17          in your time, and I know it is quite a long time?

18   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, I tried as much as I could to  
19          bring the two sides of the equation together so that the  
20          teams in Number 10 and the Cabinet Office worked as  
21          closely as possible together, so that the advice that  
22          went to the Prime Minister was not just the personal  
23          advice of his team, but was the best advice that  
24          Whitehall, both civilian and military, could offer at  
25          the time.

1           That was the advantage of the system, that there was  
2           a -- that there was a unity of effort at the top of the  
3           Number 10/Cabinet Office system, below the  
4           Cabinet Secretary.

5   THE CHAIRMAN:   The Butler Committee observed that the thing  
6           was actually thought to be working pretty well, although  
7           there was this potential structural difference.   But  
8           what the Butler Committee did draw attention to was that  
9           the concentration between -- in a very few minds,  
10          including your own on the witness table, meant that  
11          there were actually fewer minds within the ring of  
12          knowledge who were acting on key matters such as Iraq  
13          policy, and that this had a wider effect because of the  
14          process behind Cabinet discussion of Iraq, namely that  
15          apart from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary  
16          and, to some degree perhaps, the Defence Secretary,  
17          there was less information available through the  
18          Cabinet Office machinery for other members of the  
19          Cabinet.

20                Is that, do you think, fair reflection, looking  
21          back?

22   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   I don't think so, Chairman, and maybe  
23           it just would be worth pausing for a moment on what the  
24           machinery actually was during the period -- and we are  
25           talking about today -- the period after the actual

1 conflict in 2003. I don't think one should -- pause on  
2 the pre-war structure or lack of it.

3 From the summer of 2003 onwards, it was absolutely  
4 necessary to get the whole of Whitehall involved, and  
5 there was a lot of structured ministerial and official  
6 level discussion involving all the departments,  
7 certainly the three key departments -- the  
8 Foreign Office, DFID and MoD -- but involving the other  
9 departments as well like the Treasury, but many others  
10 as well who were involved in different aspects of this.

11 At ministerial level, in addition to what was  
12 happening in Cabinet, and there were regular discussions  
13 in Cabinet,

14 could I just go through the committee structure?  
15 Would it be useful to do that? Apart from Cabinet where  
16 it was discussed regularly, sometimes an update by the  
17 Prime Minister, sometimes more of a discussion, at the  
18 committee level there was discussion in DOP, the main --  
19 the senior committee in the international relations  
20 field.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: And discussion based on circulated papers?

22 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Discussion based on circulated papers.

23 DOP, chaired by the Prime Minister. That met on  
24 a number of occasions in 2004 and they met once on Iraq  
25 in the summer of that year. It met again, for example,

1 twice at the end of 2006 and, again, early in 2007 to  
2 look at the issue of transition and military strategy.  
3 Underneath DOP, the day-to-day, week-to-week work on  
4 Iraq was handled by something called an Ad Hoc  
5 Ministerial Group on Iraq Rehabilitation.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: It is worth pausing on that term, isn't it,  
7 because in Cabinet Office language, it is not little  
8 'a', little 'h' ad hoc, it is a form of Cabinet  
9 Committee within the structure.

10 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It is a misleading term, because it  
11 lasted all the way from April 2003 to early 2005, but it  
12 was a fully structured committee, serviced by the  
13 Secretariat with papers, fully minuted and so on, and  
14 a wide ministerial membership, usually chaired by the  
15 Foreign Secretary, but other ministers occasionally took  
16 the chair.

17 In addition to that, and briefly, another ad hoc  
18 ministerial group was set up in the autumn of 2004 to  
19 give extra urgency to Whitehall work ahead of the Iraqi  
20 elections. All that obviously was very complicated and  
21 that was why immediately after the  
22 election in 2005, that was simplified and a new  
23 committee, DOP Iraq, was set up with the Prime Minister  
24 as its chair and with the Foreign Secretary as his  
25 deputy, and that carried on meeting all the way through

1       into 2007. And, again, a fully constituted Cabinet  
2       Committee.

3               So through this period there was a great deal -- and  
4       I can give you the numbers of meetings, if you like, of  
5       the Ad Hoc Committee -- there were very, very regular  
6       meetings, some involving the Prime Minister, some  
7       involving the Foreign Secretary within the classical  
8       Cabinet Office structure. And in addition there were  
9       informal meetings involving the Prime Minister,  
10      involving the Chief of Defence Staff, involving others,  
11      also minuted and with the records sent out to  
12      colleagues.

13   THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard a good deal from witnesses,  
14      particularly witnesses in the field, that they perceived  
15      there to be a lack of central drive, direction and  
16      energy across Whitehall at ministerial and political and  
17      official level. But from your description that's not  
18      a correct perception even though they clearly formed it,  
19      but that there was a strong central drive, would you  
20      say, through this set of structures and processes?

21   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I would say there definitely was  
22      a strong drive among ministers, and certainly a strong  
23      central drive by the Prime Minister himself.

24   THE CHAIRMAN: One other question on this, and you mentioned  
25      the DOP, the senior committee, meeting not very often,

1 but was this a committee that met at key points when  
2 either events or a turn of policy was coming up, or a  
3 decision?

4 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It was used on Iraq probably more  
5 towards the end of the period we are talking about,  
6 2006/2007, when we were discussing the really big issues  
7 of transition and our force deployments and drawdown.

8 I think it was in 2004 it was more of a convenient  
9 moment. We had reasonably regular meetings of DOP, the  
10 agenda for that was often recommended by the  
11 Secretariat, but sometimes the turn of events themselves  
12 pushed things on to the agenda and we discussed a very,  
13 very wide range of issues, including some of the lessons  
14 of Iraq.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just to invite your observation  
16 on one last point, again, from a number of witnesses we  
17 have been told that they did not feel, believe,  
18 perceive, that the nation with all its potential  
19 capabilities was being put on a war footing for the  
20 purpose of the Iraq invasion, but more particularly the  
21 aftermath.

22 And, again, from where you sat -- and, indeed,  
23 others on the witness table may have their own views --  
24 that would not be a fair reflection of the reality?

25 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Certainly a crisis footing. I

1       hesitate to use the word "war footing", but certainly  
2       there was a repeated and persistent effort to try to get  
3       our input right, our input on strategy, policy and on  
4       some operational -- and on the operational end of this.

5           But, of course, for the nation as a whole, there is  
6       an issue as to whether the nation felt at war and  
7       whether the whole resources of the country were, you  
8       know, genuinely being put into it. Plainly not in terms  
9       of the amounts that were going into the non-military  
10      side of the endeavour.

11   THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know whether you, Sir John, or  
12       Desmond Bowen want to comment?

13   SIR JOHN SAWERS: If I could just comment. I endorse  
14       entirely what Nigel said.

15           In terms of strong central drive, we certainly had  
16       that in Whitehall, led by the Prime Minister personally,  
17       led by Nigel at top official level, and I think it was  
18       much greater because of the structure of having brought  
19       together the chief Foreign Policy Adviser in Number 10  
20       and the Head of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in  
21       the Cabinet Office, brought those two roles into one  
22       person.

23           I was the last occupant of the old-style job in  
24       Number 10, which was at two-star level, where I was  
25       essentially a private secretary for foreign affairs and

1       defence matters to the Prime Minister, the same job that  
2       Sir Roderic did in the mid 1990s with John Major. And  
3       the dislocation between Number 10 and the Cabinet Office  
4       was a cause of problems, and the Cabinet Office  
5       interdepartmental machinery was not as directly  
6       connected with the Prime Minister as it needed to be and  
7       as it is, for example,  
8       in Washington, in Paris and in Berlin,  
9       our nearest counterparts. And raising the job to  
10      four-star level with the appointment first of all of David Manning  
11      and his successor, Nigel Sheinwald, and combining our two roles  
12      really strengthened the ability to drive the Whitehall machine  
13      on foreign policy issues. So that's one point I would  
14      make.

15           The second is that I agree that for most of this  
16      period Iraq was the biggest single foreign policy issue  
17      that the Government faced. There were periods, for  
18      example, I was closely involved in the negotiations on  
19      Iran, we had occasional issues with Russia, we had the Balkans,  
20      we had the 7/7 terrorist attacks and these took over as the  
21      dominant issues at various points. But Iraq was the  
22      abiding crisis that we had to deal with and we dealt  
23      with it as a crisis. And in the Foreign Office the  
24      first thing I did when I got back from Iraq and took  
25      over the job of Political Director was to strengthen the



1 structures inside the Foreign Office so that we had  
2 a full-time, two-star director who dealt with nothing  
3 but Iraq.

4 So we had a permanent person at that level who  
5 worked to me to deal with Iraq with a structure beneath  
6 him which enabled us to cover all the various  
7 responsibilities that the Foreign Office was carrying on  
8 the subject.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr Bowen?

10 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Chairman, could I just say something  
11 about Whitehall? It is a very broad term and, you know,  
12 there has been lots of criticism of it and, indeed, at  
13 the time there was criticism that questions were asked  
14 and people didn't get answers.

15 Some of that, of course, is because the answers  
16 weren't so easy to give, but it may be helpful to think  
17 about Whitehall in three distinct elements. There is  
18 a sort of central, absolutely central  
19 Cabinet Office/Number 10 strategic role. There is  
20 a role within each of the departments to give force to  
21 decisions made centrally, and then at a third level  
22 there is the actual delivery, sometimes of nuts and  
23 bolts, you know, whether it is communications equipment  
24 or vehicles or something else. But sometimes lumping  
25 Whitehall together I don't think helps us to understand

1           some of the things that did and didn't work.

2   THE CHAIRMAN:  I suppose one question, given that there were  
3           these perceptions and criticisms particularly from  
4           people in the field, whether military or other, whether  
5           the gear train between this central direction with lots  
6           of energy and effort going into it and machinery at  
7           ministerial and senior official level, whether that did  
8           connect up both down into departments and into delivery  
9           systems.  Otherwise why would there be this array of  
10          criticism which we have heard?

11  MR DESMOND BOWEN:  I think it did take us collectively a bit  
12          of time to reinforce the structures that make sure that  
13          people -- John says there are things that he did early on when  
14          he arrived.

15                I think it did take us to understand that this  
16          wasn't just a short-term crisis, this was an enduring  
17          crisis and we were going to need to staff ourselves to  
18          do it.

19  THE CHAIRMAN:  Okay.  Roderic?

20  SIR RODERIC LYNE:  Just one more process question and then  
21          I'd like to take some time going through the story.

22                Sir Nigel, we heard from your predecessor Sir David  
23          Manning about his intensive contacts with Dr Rice and  
24          the Prime Minister's intensive contacts with  
25          President Bush leading up to the period of the conflict.

1           In your time, how closely were we interacting with  
2           the administration in Washington, obviously  
3           personalities changed, not only you but people on the  
4           other side? Were we in alignment with the Americans or  
5           were we differing over some important strategic points  
6           with them in our handling of Iraq in your time?

7   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, the contacts continued at  
8           a pretty frequent level. The Prime Minister and the  
9           President, if anything, after the conflict regularised  
10          their contacts and they had what turned into a video  
11          conference, a confidential video conference, about every  
12          fortnight. Sometimes it was once a week, sometimes  
13          a bit less frequently, I would say over my period it was  
14          roughly fortnightly. And that would be for anything  
15          between half an hour to an hour. So they were in pretty  
16          regular personal contact, and I had a sort of very  
17          regular contact, sometimes once a day, sometimes a few  
18          times a week, with the American national security  
19          adviser, first Condoleezza Rice and then Steve Hadley.  
20          And I will say Iraq, certainly in the first couple of  
21          years of my time in Number 10, was the dominant issue.

22          And there was a constant interchange with the  
23          Americans because, of course, we didn't see things  
24          exactly the same way and the Prime Minister wanted to  
25          ensure that we did have the same appreciation of the --

1 we shared the same appreciation of the insurgency.  
2 Initially there were many in the American system who  
3 didn't see it the same way as we did and were reluctant  
4 to see the gravity of the threat that we faced. That  
5 changed over time, but he was on to it very quickly and  
6 wanted to share his understanding of it with  
7 President Bush.

8 The remedies for that in terms of putting effort  
9 into Iraqi-isation of security, putting effort into  
10 public utilities and services, getting the machine  
11 working, because it was ultimately the American machine  
12 which had to work and had the scale of effort needed to  
13 deal with the problems we faced. That was also a big  
14 priority for the Prime Minister and there was --  
15 eventually a response, but it was a slow one because the  
16 American machine, as you have heard -- the American  
17 machine initially was itself slow and cumbersome and  
18 directed from the Department of Defense, which made  
19 coordination with the rest of us, and internally in the  
20 US system, very difficult.

21 There were other things that we were talking about.  
22 The political process, where the UK -- I think  
23 Jeremy Greenstock said this yesterday -- had a success  
24 in getting over to the Americans our view of the way to  
25 handle the political process in Iraq. The political

1 process was hugely complicated by the violence which  
2 surrounded it and almost went off the rails as  
3 a result of the violence, but amazingly stayed on the  
4 rails throughout this period that we are talking about.  
5 And the UK had a lot to do -- the Foreign Office in  
6 particular, but others had a lot to do with shaping that  
7 political process within Iraq, sticking to the  
8 timetable, handling the Sunni outreach part of this,  
9 which you have heard about, and which Number 10 and the  
10 Foreign Office were very much involved with.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you were taking up, at central level  
12 between Number 10 and the White House, some of the  
13 concerns that first Sir John and then Jeremy Greenstock  
14 had on the ground about the way that the process was  
15 being driven by Jerry Bremer?

16 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Explicitly so, and that was just going  
17 back to a meeting I know you have discussed here, when  
18 the Prime Minister got back to Number 10 after the  
19 summer break at the end of -- the end of August 2003,  
20 had his meeting with the Foreign Secretary and  
21 Defence Secretary and others at the beginning of  
22 September 2003. What he said was, "I want a discussion  
23 here and then I want to take the issues that we have  
24 discussed to my next conversation with President Bush",  
25 and that's indeed what he did at the end that of week.

1           So there was a constant interplay between what was  
2           being aired in Whitehall, aired from Baghdad and Basra,  
3           between that and the dialogue between the UK and the US.

4           And just coming back to something that Jeremy  
5           Greenstock said yesterday, the Prime Minister and  
6           I think those of us involved centrally in London were  
7           absolutely clear that the fate of Iraq depended on what  
8           was happening in and around Baghdad. Of course, we had  
9           our responsibilities in Basra, but our preoccupation was  
10          with the central issues of the political, economic and  
11          security processes in and around Baghdad.

12   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's get back to that meeting in two  
13          seconds, but before we do, where was the locus of  
14          decision-making? Was it with the commanders on the  
15          ground, both civilian and military, or was it in  
16          Washington and London? To what extent could decisions  
17          be taken in Washington and London about the things that  
18          really mattered in Iraq at this stage?

19   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Some decisions could be made about our  
20          contribution, but the biggest decisions were ones that  
21          ultimately the Americans came to, we hoped with  
22          significant input from the UK.

23   SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Americans on the ground or the  
24          Americans in Washington?

25   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It varied. It varied over time and

1 I think a shifting pattern. Certainly Bremer had a lot  
2 of power, but he was reporting direct to the  
3 Defense Secretary in Washington. Later on both  
4 General Casey and then General Petraeus had a great deal  
5 of local independence of action, as did  
6 Ambassador Crocker when he was there, and  
7 Ambassador Khalilzad.

8 So there was a mixture. Increasingly, I think it is  
9 true to say, in the period that we are talking about,  
10 the President of the United States increasingly took  
11 personal control of this. As the situation got worse,  
12 particularly as the sectarian violence increased with  
13 a huge impact on American domestic opinion in 2005  
14 and 2006, this was gripped from the centre in Washington  
15 and he ran this personally with his people on the  
16 ground.

17 That was not the model that was used early on,  
18 at the beginning of the period that we are  
19 talking about. It was very much the Department of  
20 Defense in Washington dealing directly with their people  
21 in Baghdad. John, you were there and I wasn't.

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Could I just add, I think  
23 Ambassador Bremer was given a great deal of  
24 responsibility and authority early on, and as Nigel has  
25 said, as the crisis grew through the autumn, the

1 White House and other bits of the US administration  
2 became increasingly concerned, and I think the onus of  
3 decision-making was taken back by Washington.

4 So I would say that by the end of the year there was  
5 much greater direction from Washington rather than  
6 initiative and decisions being taken on the ground,  
7 which was the case in September 2003.

8 And again, as Nigel says, when new people arrived,  
9 I think during the Negroponte era as ambassador, most  
10 decisions were being taken in Washington, but when  
11 Khalilzad and then later Crocker became ambassadors in  
12 Baghdad and their military counterparts, Generals Casey  
13 and Petraeus, then again, there was more of a balance  
14 between the two.

15 But certainly in this period it started with the  
16 decision-making power resting primarily in Baghdad with  
17 Ambassador Bremer and then gradually reverting to  
18 Washington as the autumn and the violence in the  
19 insurgency increased, going back to Washington.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. Let's now come to the  
21 Prime Minister's meeting in September 2003.

22 By this stage, as General Fry told us this morning,  
23 we were facing a very different situation to the one we  
24 had gone into. As he said, we embarked on this conflict  
25 to deal with WMD, but then found ourselves in



1 a situation of trying to stick Iraq back to together  
2 again. And presumably that was the situation that you  
3 found when you came in, that the Prime Minister was  
4 addressing in the meeting in the autumn of 2003. So how  
5 had our strategy evolved at this point? What sort of  
6 decisions were we having to take at that meeting for the  
7 period ahead? Where were we pointing the machine from  
8 then on?

9 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I think we were pointing the machine  
10 at the need for a term which has become very familiar in  
11 Afghanistan, but which started in Iraq in 2003, which is  
12 the need for a comprehensive approach and to do a number  
13 of things concurrently, to work on all three strands of  
14 the campaign -- political, economic and security -- and  
15 to approach this with the United States, both from the  
16 point of view of trying to get a shared understanding of  
17 the scale of the problem and then to get them behind the  
18 specific operational inputs which were needed.

19 So in the end the Prime Minister's meeting was  
20 partly a sit rep on where we were, particularly in terms  
21 of security, given the tragic incidents which had taken  
22 place in recent weeks.

23 But then it moved on very specifically to talk about  
24 what could be done by the UK in almost all cases in  
25 conjunction with our coalition partners in a number of

1 areas: building up the Iraqi security forces, in  
2 particular the police, building up an Iraqi intelligence  
3 capability, working on utilities. He gave very strong  
4 support to Hilary Synnott's proposals for what was going  
5 on in --

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the Synnott package --

7 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- was endorsed at that point?

9 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Was endorsed by him at that point.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And on the security sector, what sort of  
11 targets were being set at that meeting?

12 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: They were very initial discussions and  
13 this was a first time of gathering people  
14 together after the summer break. But we were talking  
15 about training packages which were, I think, something  
16 like six or eight weeks for basic police training. So  
17 the Prime Minister was asking: what can be achieved in  
18 three months? What can be achieved by the end of the  
19 year? I don't think he believed for a moment you can  
20 train an Iraqi police force in that time, but he wanted  
21 to know what could be achieved given that he realised it  
22 was a race against time in terms of the advance of the  
23 insurgency, the need to repair the sense of helplessness  
24 within the Iraqi system and build up their  
25 self-confidence and self-esteem.

1           So he was asking questions about how quickly it can  
2       be done and they were questions to his experts, to the  
3       ministers, to the intelligence --

4   SIR RODERIC LYNE: But following on from that meeting, you  
5       then had further meetings. So in the course of the  
6       autumn of 2003 a new strategy begins to evolve, and that  
7       includes fairly specific objectives for what we can  
8       achieve in areas like security service reform?

9   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes.

10   SIR RODERIC LYNE: And, indeed, as we heard this morning,  
11       there was a sort of general idea of trying to achieve  
12       stabilisation by the end of 2003 and recovery by the end  
13       of 2004 and normalisation in 2005. That was the sort of  
14       theme of this process.

15       To what extent was this based on what was really  
16       achievable on the ground? We have heard a succession of  
17       witnesses who were actually in charge of bits of the  
18       military operation on the ground, emphasising to us how  
19       slow these processes were, how long they take, how  
20       completely rotten at the core the Iraqi police force  
21       was, how you were starting, as General Fry again told us  
22       this morning, to rebuild the army from zero.

23       Was there a disjunction between the view from  
24       Whitehall and the view on the ground?

25   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Desmond --

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm addressing this to you collectively.

2 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Sure. Desmond does want to say  
3 a word.

4 I don't think so in that timeframe. And these dates  
5 that were talked about were, of course, rapidly  
6 overtaken, even during the course of that autumn, by the  
7 knowledge that the political timetable itself was going  
8 to take us into 2005/early 2006. That was the elongated  
9 compromise that eventually emerged.

10 So it may be the case people were talking about an  
11 earlier timetable that was already subject to political  
12 change, and if you are looking back to the early period  
13 of the autumn of 2003, I don't think we did realise at  
14 that stage how corrupt the Iraqi police would be, that  
15 it was wrong to put so much of an emphasis on that, that  
16 the emphasis on the Iraqi army as the prime source of  
17 our Iraqi-isation came a little bit later and the  
18 structures on the Iraqi side did change during the  
19 course of 2003 and 2004.

20 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I add to that? I think in  
21 September 2003, I don't think we thought we were in an  
22 insurgency, particularly down in the Basra area. We  
23 were thinking about security, how we could improve  
24 security, and the emphasis was very much on local  
25 security mechanisms.

1           So -- and there was a visit, I think, by one of our  
2           Chief Constables, Chief Constable Kernaghan, who went out  
3           and did a report for us for the FCO, I think. And the  
4           result of that was an agreed security package to be put  
5           forward with an emphasis on police training and a police  
6           training arrangement that would be done in part in and  
7           around Basra but in part in Jordan.

8           But there was also emphasis on the British military  
9           taking charge of some training of what was called the  
10          Iraqi Civil Defence Corps, who were -- it was an armed  
11          body of people who could do guarding, convoying, some of  
12          the things the British army needed, to have an Iraqi  
13          partner to try to make sure that security was  
14          maintained. And that business of building up the Civil  
15          Defence Corps went on for quite some time. I mean, that  
16          was the main body partner of the British armed forces  
17          right the way through into 2004. And in due course it  
18          became -- it was transformed into the National Guard and  
19          it became part of -- or belonged to the  
20          Ministry of Defence.

21          But that was very much the focus, that and the  
22          police. And the idea of building up the Iraqi national  
23          army was something that came later. And at that stage  
24          I think the thinking was that you needed an army to deal  
25          with external threats, not an army that would deal with

1 internal security.

2 The other thing I would just mention is there were  
3 various other bodies. There was a border protection  
4 agency or something of that sort, and there was  
5 something called the Facilities Protection Agency,  
6 a body that was designed to look after pylons and power  
7 stations and other things. Because of the understanding  
8 of looting and destruction that had gone on, there was  
9 a desire for a range of different organisms that were  
10 Iraqi based which the British army helped to train.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: By this stage, in the autumn of 2003, we  
12 have drawn down the number of operational brigades that  
13 we have on the ground in the south-east of Iraq from  
14 three to one. Was there a debate in Whitehall about  
15 troop numbers, whether it was sufficient, were there  
16 different pressures from different departments on this  
17 subject?

18 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I would need to check, but my  
19 recollection was that there was actually an increase in  
20 the autumn of 2003 of about 1,000 troops recommended by  
21 General Lamb and agreed by the chiefs and by ministers,  
22 and that did go ahead.

23 I can't remember how long it lasted for because we  
24 probably did go back again to 9,000 or thereabouts  
25 in 2004, but temporarily at least there was an increase.

1 I don't know if Desmond remembers that or not.

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: There was certainly an increase to help  
3 with training the Civil Defence Corps, but there was  
4 also the fact that there were other nations that were  
5 coming in who were enthusiastic about working with the  
6 British and whom we wanted to engage fully: Danes,  
7 Italians, Australians and some Japanese engineers in due  
8 course. So there was quite an effort to balance out  
9 some of the withdrawals that we had by new arrivals from  
10 elsewhere.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I mean, broadly speaking, the numbers  
12 that we have been given just in overall numbers are that  
13 at the end of August 2003 we were down to 9,500  
14 altogether from our peak. That figure doesn't change in  
15 a very radical way: You go 8,600 in 2004; 8,000 in  
16 2005 -- it goes up a little bit -- 2006 you are around  
17 6,000. There isn't a big change until you get to 2007,  
18 but within this we essentially have one operational  
19 brigade, although some additional units do at times get  
20 added into it. So there was never a big change in the  
21 forces level throughout this period.

22 Can you now just take us through, because we have  
23 got a long period to cover --

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just comment on that? When I was  
25 before the Committee a week or so ago, I mentioned that

1 the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces in  
2 particular had been keen to reduce the number of British  
3 forces on the ground. The plan was to get it down to  
4 about 40 per cent of the conflict levels rapidly. Then  
5 that had to be slowed down, in part because of the  
6 deteriorating security situation in places like Amarah.

7 So the reduction, I don't think, went as far as was  
8 originally planned by the chiefs. I don't recollect in  
9 that period proposals, before the ones we received from  
10 Graeme Lamb in the autumn, for substantial increases in  
11 the force levels, and as Desmond says, we were receiving  
12 quite significant packages of forces from the Italians  
13 and the Danes and one or two other smaller countries  
14 which were taking responsibility for specific areas of  
15 the four provinces that we were in charge of in the  
16 south.

17 So overall I would say that the response was to slow  
18 down the rate at which we reduced our forces and to make  
19 good uses of the other contingents that were coming in  
20 at the time.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There was the proposal for 3 Para to  
22 go to Baghdad.

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: There was. I covered that in my  
24 earlier appearance, but that was a battalion and that was actually,  
25 as I said before, turned down on the advice of the



1 chiefs who decided not to recommend it.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, we discussed that this morning with  
3 General Fry.

4 Can we move forward through 2004/2005. Give us  
5 a sort of broad description of how the situation  
6 developed, deteriorated, how we responded to that at  
7 strategic level from Whitehall and, indeed, you know,  
8 what specific decisions we made to react to this?

9 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, there are a number of stories,  
10 a number of interlocking stories over quite an important  
11 period.

12 The political story is actually one of sticking to  
13 the political timetable. It was of getting UN authority  
14 for that in June 2004, Resolution 1546, agreeing with  
15 the Americans that that resolution should specify a full  
16 and tangible transfer of sovereignty.

17 There was a debate about that in Washington and we  
18 influenced that in the right direction by being  
19 unambiguous about the change that was to take place at  
20 the end of June 2004.

21 Equally, in the resolution there was a lot of debate  
22 about the role of the Iraqi security forces and their  
23 relationship with the multinational force. Again, the  
24 UK had views on that, wanted to make clear that the  
25 Iraqis had their own control of their security forces

1 and that had to be clearly expressed. There was  
2 a debate on that with Washington, which we were  
3 influential in.

4 So that resolution was very important in laying  
5 a new foundation for Iraq after the handover, and then  
6 it was a question of sticking to this very complicated  
7 political timetable of elections, constitution  
8 discussion and so on. I'm taking you through to the end  
9 of 2005?

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Where was the debate about whether the  
11 elections should precede constitution or it should be  
12 the other way round?

13 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: That began probably in John Sawers's  
14 time in Baghdad.

15 There was a definitive agreement in November  
16 of 2003, which set out this lengthy timetable. And then  
17 other details were added later on, for  
18 example, the nature of the consultative council, which  
19 existed briefly during the period of the interim  
20 government under Prime Minister Allawi.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is where Sir Jeremy Greenstock's two  
22 chickens and two eggs helped to swing it in a viable  
23 direction.

24 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes, I think so. And throughout that  
25 process the UK was in favour of sticking to the

1 timetable despite a lot of debate about whether things  
2 should be postponed or not because of security. We said  
3 they should stick to it. We tried throughout the period  
4 to get the Sunnis to come in. Part of that was to  
5 ensure that the political settlement was on as broad  
6 a basis as possible for the future unity of Iraq, but  
7 part of it was our understanding of the insurgency and  
8 the need to peel away from the insurgency at least some  
9 of those who might join mainstream politics. And that  
10 was a very slow process, it is arguably continuing to  
11 this day.

12 But if you look at the participation of the Sunni  
13 community in the December 2005 elections, it was very  
14 significantly ahead of where we had been  
15 in the elections a year before.

16 So that was another area of success enabling them to  
17 play a much bigger role in Iraqi governance today.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And emphasis on the security side in this  
19 period was on Iraqi-isation?

20 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Absolutely. John?

21 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just say, you asked about what  
22 happened in 2004 and 2005. What we saw was  
23 a deterioration of the  
24 security situation because of a number of factors.

25 In the months after the fall of Saddam, we saw the

1 re-emergence of former elements of the regime, Ba'athist  
2 groups, former members of the special forces and so on,  
3 who started to organise and cause difficulties. We saw,  
4 with the assassination of Sergio de Mello, the arrival  
5 of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and their growing presence.

6 What we saw during 2004 and 2005 were both these  
7 forces becoming more prominent, both the former regime  
8 elements and the Jihadists under the broad umbrella of  
9 Al-Qaeda, and they were becoming more potent, more  
10 violent and it was sometimes difficult to tell which was  
11 responsible for which atrocity or which attack, but they  
12 were both clearly present.

13 And on the Shia side there was also growing militia  
14 capability led primarily by supporters of  
15 Moqtadr Al Sadr, the radical young Shia cleric, who were  
16 both vying for dominance within the Shia community and  
17 were the main vehicle for responding to sectarian  
18 attacks launched by the overwhelmingly Sunni former  
19 regime elements and Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

20 So we saw these three various elements combining to  
21 aggravate and worsen the security situation, and our  
22 response to that was a series of military steps that  
23 were taken by the military command and the initiative  
24 led by General Petraeus from the summer of 2004, as you  
25 say, to accelerate and achieve a higher level of Iraqi

1 security capability, primarily in the army but also  
2 in the police and other agencies.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Which we were strongly in favour of.

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: We were strongly in favour of. There were  
5 always plans, but those plans were always shown to be  
6 inadequate because of the growing strength of the  
7 insurgency. Petraeus was the first one who started  
8 getting on top of the issues in summer 2004, but even  
9 then his level of ambition had to be raised and the  
10 effort required to train up Iraqi forces was  
11 greater than envisaged.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Essentially you are describing  
13 a situation in 2004/2005 in which the security situation  
14 on the ground is deteriorating, it is becoming more and  
15 more alarming and depressing, casualties on all sides,  
16 high Iraqi civilian casualties among others, and our  
17 room for manoeuvre is presumably very limited.

18 You are sticking to the same political strategy, we  
19 are trying to hold the ring in security terms while we  
20 wait for the time when Iraqi security forces could have  
21 been built up to the point where they can make a real  
22 contribution to this.

23 Did the government have any options? Was there any  
24 alternative strategy, or did one just have to grit your  
25 teeth and stick to it?

1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I remember weekly meetings with Nigel and  
2 Desmond and others in Whitehall where we asked ourselves  
3 all these questions, and one conclusion we came to was  
4 that to retain the confidence of the great majority of  
5 the Iraqi people it was essential to stick to the plan  
6 for the political process.

7 It was taking longer than we had originally  
8 envisaged, but that was an Iraqi decision for it to take  
9 longer. Instead of being a fairly smooth and speedy  
10 transition from CPA rule to elections to handing  
11 over sovereignty to an elected Iraqi Government under an  
12 agreed constitution, we had to go through a number of  
13 more steps as described by Jeremy Greenstock in his  
14 evidence a couple of days ago.

15 But we concluded, and this was very much my view  
16 and I don't think any others seriously  
17 disagreed, certainly Nigel didn't, certainly  
18 Jeremy Greenstock didn't on the ground, that it  
19 was really important to stick to the political timetable  
20 in order to maintain the level of the confidence and  
21 support above all from the Shia community. Had we lost  
22 the Shia community and their support, we would have lost  
23 the political process.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But what were your concerns about the  
25 coalition's performance on the ground, particularly in

1 terms of getting the consent of not only the Shia but  
2 also the Sunni community? How were we doing there?  
3 Were we worried that things weren't being done as well  
4 as they should have been done?

5 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I think we heard a bit about that from  
6 General Fry and others. We were concerned obviously  
7 about the impact of -- early on, 2003/2004, particularly  
8 the Fallujah period in 2004. We were concerned about  
9 the impact of the American military tactics on political  
10 and social attitudes and alienation in the Sunni  
11 community in particular. But, of course, in the spring  
12 of 2004 there was a flare-up on the Shia side as well.  
13 That was one of our most difficult and worst moments in  
14 April of 2004.

15 But I think that one of the other areas where we  
16 adjusted was not just in reaffirming the political  
17 timetable, but realising that it was only by the Iraqis  
18 being seen to take political control that we could over  
19 time improve the situation. And we were, therefore, in  
20 favour of something that they wanted themselves, which  
21 is to look as though they were in charge of security  
22 themselves. Both Ja'afari and particularly Maliki have  
23 wanted to control security for themselves and be  
24 seen to.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was the coalition getting this message

1 across to the people? Was it good at public  
2 communications?

3 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I am afraid not, and as you know, one  
4 of our concerns from the start was that not only was the  
5 coalition not good at doing that, but that the structure  
6 of the Iraqi media in the post-Saddam period really left  
7 an open field for Al Jazeera and others presenting their  
8 narrative of what was going on in Iraq.

9 So that was a worry for us as a government, and  
10 I think over time for the Americans too because there  
11 wasn't a broad-based choice of media available in Iraq.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can we just step forward to the autumn  
13 of 2005, because by then it becomes obvious that the  
14 Americans are conducting some form of review of their  
15 own strategy. Some publications have come out that tell  
16 us that something called the Red Team has been set up by  
17 Ambassador Khalilzad that was at least suggesting quite  
18 a sharp change of American policy. There was an article  
19 that was later published about this.

20 To what extent -- you were in contact with the  
21 Americans the whole time -- were you conscious that this  
22 was happening in the autumn of 2005, and what was the  
23 British Government's view of this?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: We had a person on the Red Team. Nick Beadle  
25 was on the team.



1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would you like to tell us about the team,  
2 the Red Team? What was this all about?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I wouldn't describe it as a major review.  
4 The major review of US policy was conducted by  
5 Baker-Hamilton, the Baker-Hamilton Commission a year  
6 later, and although President Bush didn't accept their  
7 recommendations, that was the real turning point in  
8 strategy, I think.

9 The review set up by Ambassador Khalilzad was to  
10 look at the various alternative options and he invited  
11 us to take part in that team. We seconded a full-time  
12 member with good Iraq experience, including on the  
13 security side, to that particular team and he kept us  
14 informed of the thinking and let us have the Red Team's  
15 report early on with the full consent of the Americans.

16 It was an exercise which I don't personally recall  
17 leading to significant changes, but it was a good way of  
18 examining alternative approaches.

19 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I think maybe what it did encapsulate  
20 was the greater readiness of the American system to  
21 approach this on a counter-insurgency basis and to  
22 understand the nature of what we were dealing with, to  
23 subjugate the military approach to political ends. And  
24 it combined with Ambassador Khalilzad's own outreach to  
25 the Sunni community and so on, and that was in

1 a critical moment in the run-up to the December 2005  
2 elections. And we ourselves were engaging in various  
3 outreach events to the Sunni community during that  
4 period, both at ministerial and official level.

5 So I think if there was an encapsulation, it was  
6 that we were adopting a more politically sophisticated  
7 approach both to security and to politics in that  
8 critical period, or were trying to.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Finally, just to carry the story forward  
10 to the period at which you effectively left it,  
11 2007-ish, you say that the major change came a bit later  
12 than that. This was one of a number of processes that  
13 began to lead to a change of approach in 2006 and 2007,  
14 and as part of that we began to look for a timetable  
15 with conditions for withdrawal of our forces by then and  
16 handing over provinces for which we were responsible to  
17 Iraqi control, dealing with problems in Basra, in one  
18 way or another, so that we could eventually get out of  
19 there.

20 If you could just describe that to us and then  
21 perhaps, I think Sir Lawrence and Sir John have got one  
22 or two more questions we would like to ask before we  
23 take a little break.

24 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just say something? I'm not sure  
25 I'm quite answering this question, but this business of

1 transition was alive and well in 2004.  
2 General Petraeus, when he was put in charge of the  
3 training effort in relation to Iraqi forces but also  
4 Iraqi police, was called the Multi National Security  
5 Transition Command Iraq, helpfully contracted to  
6 MNSTICI. But the word "transition" was in there and  
7 that notion that this was what we were trying to do  
8 collectively was to transition to Iraqi forces being in  
9 charge of their own security space -- was, you know,  
10 alive and well very early on and, of course, that went  
11 with developments on the political and economic side as  
12 well.

13 And by the following summer -- when the new  
14 Prime Minister, Prime Minister Ja'afari, was in charge,  
15 very rapidly there was the formation of the joint  
16 committee, which was to deal with transition, which led  
17 to the process of handing back provinces according to  
18 four criteria that had to be judged not only by the  
19 British and the Americans, the coalition, but also by  
20 the Iraqis as well.

21 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Just going back to what I was saying  
22 before, I think that with each successive  
23 Iraqi government that we have dealt with, with the  
24 interim government, the transition government, now the  
25 definitive government after elections, they wanted to

1 control their own security and they wanted to have  
2 a process for drawdown and ultimately withdrawal of  
3 coalition forces. And that was always going to be  
4 conditions-based.

5 Desmond has referred to the four criteria which were  
6 used essentially in Baghdad for the determination, but  
7 it was important to us also in Basra that it should be  
8 that way, that we should be seen to be leaving having  
9 achieved the minimum requirements of transfer, which are  
10 that the Iraqis are self-sufficient themselves in  
11 security terms and have a basic level of political and  
12 economic governance. Those are the things that we felt  
13 were needed before we could hand over.

14 But these were things which were in the Iraqi body  
15 politic as well as being things that, you know, we had  
16 planned for and wanted ourselves for our own reasons.  
17 Increasingly in the 2005/2006/2007 period, of course for  
18 us, as I think you have discussed before, the military  
19 issue of balancing our forces between Afghanistan and  
20 Iraq became a very important one. That wasn't so much  
21 of a factor, it wasn't a factor at all really in the  
22 early period, but did come up later.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. I think we have now very  
24 usefully sketched out the wide picture and I think in  
25 the remainder of this session before and after the break

1           there are a number of points of detail that we will all  
2           want to come back on.

3   THE CHAIRMAN:   Not just detail.

4   SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Not just detail.

5   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   Can I pick up some of the points of  
6           detail.   First, a very small point of detail.   You  
7           mentioned some discussion in machinery, whether or not  
8           there was a need for a particular person to have charge  
9           of Iraq policy.   The Americans did appoint somebody, I  
10          believe, Ambassador Blackwill.   That wasn't seen as  
11          a model for us to follow.   How did we deal with the  
12          particular role Blackwell had taken on in the American  
13          system?

14   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   John might have a particular comment  
15          on this, but my recollection is that he was one of  
16          a number of people in the NSC who had responsibilities  
17          for different parts of the Iraq story, and his  
18          particular area was the area of political development  
19          and he was used extensively on that, particularly in the  
20          early months of 2004.

21          What we tried to do was match the NSC team on our  
22          side.   So Dr Rice and I would have regular conversations  
23          on that set of issues, and then we had named individuals  
24          working within our systems who would deal with the  
25          different aspects.   She had Gary Edson, for example,

1 one of the deputy national security advisers working on  
2 economic issues. We had a number of our Treasury and  
3 DFID people matched to work alongside Gary Edson, and  
4 John Sawers was the person who worked with Bob Blackwill  
5 particularly closely from London during that period on  
6 the political issues.

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, I had known Bob Blackwill for some  
8 ten years and when he was appointed to the White House  
9 during, I think, the summer of 2003, he was clearly  
10 going to be one of the driving forces on developing the  
11 political process in Iraq.

12 We didn't have a formal division of  
13 responsibilities in Whitehall, but the Foreign Office and  
14 I personally were more involved on the political side  
15 than I was on the military or security side. So Ambassador  
16 Blackwill and I would regularly meet. We would talk on the phone  
17 regularly and several times we were in Baghdad at the  
18 same time and we concerted there as well.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A more substantial point: the  
20 relationship between Baghdad and Basra. You have  
21 indicated your belief, and we have had it from a number  
22 of other witnesses, that the future of Iraq would really  
23 depend on what was happening in Baghdad, yet our main  
24 practical focus was in Basra. Did this in a sense take  
25 us out of the American loop? Did it limit our ability

1 to be able to influence American policies?

2 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I don't think so. But, again, it is  
3 a question of maybe just a little bit of rebalancing.

4 Of course, our major military effort was in Basra  
5 and it was accompanied by an effort which got going in  
6 the autumn of 2003 and continued, on infrastructure and  
7 development and capacity building and police training  
8 and so on.

9 But many of those things were happening in Baghdad  
10 as well. I have the figure in my mind -- it needs to be  
11 checked -- that about 10 per cent of the CPA staff were  
12 British. During the course of 2003/2004 we had people  
13 attached to the Prime Minister's office in Baghdad, we  
14 had a team of people out there working on broader issues  
15 of public administration and governance, we had experts  
16 in the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Finance,  
17 a number of the other ministries, human rights and so  
18 on. We had money going into the -- and experts going  
19 into the Iraqi Special Tribunal, we had forensic  
20 experts. We had a really a plethora of people from all  
21 walks of public life here going into Iraq and trying to  
22 make -- and trying to make a difference.

23 That was both during the CPA  
24 period and in the period afterwards, when we were  
25 running it through embassies. So it wasn't just Basra.

1 Of course, that was a particular preoccupation for the  
2 Chiefs of Staff and their weekly meetings did spend  
3 a lot of time focused on the situation there for obvious  
4 reasons, but it wasn't, I think, the thing which  
5 ministers in the various committees or in Cabinet or we  
6 officials spent all our time on.

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: On the contrary, I would say I probably  
8 spent about 90 per cent of my time on Iraq dealing with  
9 the national issues and what was happening in Baghdad.

10 My team in the Iraq directorate were spending more  
11 time on the details of the Basra issues because it was  
12 about delivery, providing support. But at a strategic  
13 level, our focus was very much on what was happening  
14 nationally in Iraq and at the centre.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think we might have more  
16 strategic clout if we had not taken this box, as it has  
17 been called, for ourselves but concentrated all of our  
18 effort on a sort of more of an Iraq-wide basis and with  
19 a particular focus on Baghdad?

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That's an interesting question and as you  
21 know, Sir Lawrence, I was one of those who was  
22 interested in the idea of us providing a contingent of  
23 forces for Baghdad in its early stages.

24 You can argue it both ways. Desmond may want to  
25 comment, but I think the military were much more



1 comfortable having that patch and doing it the British  
2 way on our patch than they were  
3 being integrated and being part of a US force and being  
4 expected to do things the American way.

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I think it is absolutely right, and there  
6 is a whole issue to do with logistics and maintaining  
7 the line of supply and so forth, which actually argues  
8 from the military point of view of having  
9 a concentration of forces and something which can you  
10 can support and logistically deal with fairly  
11 straightforwardly. And there is no doubt that although  
12 the Americans and we may have had some similarities in  
13 the way we operated and the equipment we have, in fact  
14 different armies do things in different ways.

15 I would make the point though that although the  
16 military were, as it were, operating to a British design  
17 in the south-east, the CPA, of course, was still an  
18 Iraqi-wide project in which we had a number of people,  
19 but it wasn't exclusively British even in the south.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But as we heard from Sir Jeremy  
21 yesterday, one of the difficulties of the CPA, although  
22 it was a Coalition Provisional Authority and although  
23 under the UN Resolution we were joint occupying powers,  
24 as you described it, this was very much an American plan  
25 and, in its leadership, very American?

1 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Absolutely. And the sums of money  
2 involved were ones that only America or, you know, a  
3 country with a much bigger economy than ours could  
4 possibly have afforded, the sums of money which we  
5 debated for Basra. And we got some money very quickly  
6 to Basra and other parts of the budget took longer to  
7 get agreed. But the sums of money were tiny compared  
8 with, I think, in 2004, the 3 billion that the Americans  
9 were putting in, the 1.5 billion that the Japanese were  
10 putting in. This was the scale of investment that was  
11 necessary and that we would have found difficult to  
12 achieve at any cost.

13 And there are a couple of other things.  
14 First of all, as I think you have heard already,  
15 what influence are we trying to  
16 achieve here? Mainly the one of trying to get the  
17 overall American political and security approach better  
18 to mirror ours, the way we thought it would best be  
19 done. And we knew that in the case of the approach of  
20 the American army, this was going to take time.

21 There were conversations going on -- Rob Fry  
22 mentioned this to you this morning -- but that is not  
23 something in terms of doctrine and the actual approach  
24 on the ground which can possibly change overnight.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask you couple of more

1        questions because I know others want to get in.

2            You mentioned Fallujah in April 2004. Was this the  
3        time when these issues came to a head in terms of the  
4        American approach and our concerns that what was  
5        considered to be at one point possible, which was  
6        marines going in all guns blazing, as it were, into  
7        a populated city -- was that the point where we really  
8        had to decide on putting pressure on the Americans to  
9        hold back?

10    SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, it was a double problem. It  
11        wasn't just that we were worried about the  
12        proportionality of the tactics that were used or about  
13        the perception in the international media and Iraqi  
14        media of what went on. It was also that it happened at  
15        the same time as American action on the Shia side to  
16        which the Shia reacted very violently with the events in  
17        Najaf and elsewhere in the south.

18            So we were faced, I think without anyone thinking  
19        about it a lot in advance -- we were faced with  
20        a concurrent insurgency in the centre and the south and  
21        both were eventually defused. But our people,  
22        General McColl in Baghdad, all of us on the political  
23        side were counselling care in the way that we tried to  
24        step back from what looked like a very, very threatening  
25        situation in strategic terms because, as I think John

1           was saying earlier, ultimately the strategic threat was  
2           a loss of Shia consent.

3   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did the Prime Minister play a role  
4           in that?

5   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Absolutely, and that was one of the  
6           key things in his discussion was President Bush in the  
7           middle of April 2004.

8   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just lastly on this period, a pretty  
9           awful month was Abu Ghraib. Did you have any  
10          anticipation of this as an issue, and how did you  
11          respond when the revelations came out?

12   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I didn't. John?

13   SIR JOHN SAWERS: We knew of difficulties in the conditions  
14          for detainees dating back to June/July of 2003. We  
15          knew that the Americans had taken a more direct, more  
16          activist approach to ensuring the facilities were secure  
17          and met ICRC standards, but we also understood that  
18          there were difficulties.

19                The US army called for  
20          a review of the detainee arrangements in January of 2004  
21          and it reported with a number of recommendations  
22          privately. I'm not aware that we saw a copy that of  
23          review. But the revelations at Abu Ghraib were  
24          definitely a shock to us, as they were to everybody on  
25          the American side as well as across the world. When they

1       came out they were way beyond anything that we had  
2       envisaged that might be going wrong. We thought the  
3       basic problems were about poor conditions and possibly  
4       unnecessary violence, but Abu Ghraib was an extra  
5       dimension.

6           I would just say that that spring of 2004, March,  
7       April, May, was one of the low points in managing Iraq  
8       policy at the London end. We had, as Nigel says, the  
9       crises in Fallujah first, in March, and then again at  
10      the end of April/the beginning of May. We had the  
11      crisis in Najaf. We had the Abu Ghraib facilities.

12          I remember visiting Iraq then. I used to go regularly;  
13      I went three times in 2004. I visited Iraq in early May  
14      and it was the gloomiest and most downbeat visit that  
15      I paid throughout my four years of working on Iraq  
16      policy. And I think it was then that we realised the  
17      scale of the task that was ahead of us and the need to  
18      really put our heads down and be in it for the longer  
19      term, because the insurgency and the violence was  
20      clearly not at a peak and it was clearly going to get  
21      worse at that stage. And the Abu Ghraib issues just  
22      added another nasty twist to the difficulties that we  
23      faced.

24   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

25   THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. Sir Nigel, you talked  
2 about the term "comprehensive approach" that you coined  
3 in relation to what happened in Iraq. What did that  
4 actually mean in practice? How would that be translated  
5 in practice? What were the components of comprehensive  
6 approach?

7 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I think the three main components were  
8 security, political and economic. By economic, mainly  
9 the development and capacity building effort, but there  
10 were other economic elements, for example, the issue of  
11 debt relief, for example, the successful introduction of the  
12 new Iraqi currency in the autumn of 2003. So there were  
13 a number of things there.

14 Realising that one had an impact on the other,  
15 I think we would all say that the destructiveness of  
16 Iraqi society during this period is another point we  
17 have got to bear in mind, the unleashing of passions  
18 after the Saddam period and the self-destructiveness of  
19 Iraqi society was extreme. So I think that sense that  
20 we were always contending with a level of violence which  
21 any even well-constructed nation building effort would  
22 find difficult to contend with, that pervaded this  
23 period. So we would always say get the security right  
24 first, stabilise the situation first, otherwise your  
25 political and economic efforts become infinitely more

1       difficult.

2               So the security element came first, but then the  
3       political elements that we have talked about, the  
4       timetable, the support for the political process and  
5       then trying to help, in the ways that we have talked  
6       about, the infrastructure and other aspects of capacity  
7       building. And we would, at all the meetings, whether  
8       they are ministerial meetings or the meetings which  
9       I and my colleagues in the Secretariat chaired involving  
10      the whole of Whitehall, we tried to see it in that way  
11      across the different areas, across the waterfront, and  
12      progress chase, and we had the usual tools of the trade  
13      to do that in terms of matrices showing exactly when  
14      things should come on stream and so on.

15             And it is difficult to know with some of this stuff  
16      whether you should see the glass half full or half  
17      empty. I know that when Hilary Synnott's successor  
18      arrived in Basra in February 2004, he said that he had  
19      an almost full complement of specialist experts by that  
20      stage.

21             So, of course, they had taken some months to arrive,  
22      but most of them did eventually get there. So it was  
23      slow and painful in Whitehall. We will certainly look  
24      at the processes on funding, but what we tried to do was  
25      look across the waterfront.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you adjust your approach in  
2 relation to when you were getting feedback from Iraq and  
3 what was happening on the ground? Did you actually  
4 consult with departments and on the operational side,  
5 any adjustments were made to the machine of government  
6 here in response to what was going on or in terms of  
7 resources and practice?

8 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: In terms of the machinery of  
9 government, the whole time. We adapted our system  
10 pretty much constantly during that period. It  
11 eventually resolved itself into a strategy group that  
12 was trying to look at the big political, security and  
13 economic issues and then there was another meeting with  
14 senior officials looking at the more operational issues,  
15 all trying to feed into the ministerial discussions  
16 which were taking place. And a number of individual  
17 branch line discussions on particular areas like  
18 detainees, we were just talking about, like aspects of  
19 the economic situation.

20 But I would want to stress one thing, which was that  
21 there was constant dialogue with Baghdad and with Basra.  
22 They were on the videolink the whole time, when people  
23 were back in the UK for breathers, they were always part  
24 of our meetings, always brought in to see ministers so  
25 that they could express themselves directly to the



1 Prime Minister and others.

2 So we were always trying to adjust to what they were  
3 saying to us, Jeremy, Hilary and all the others and the  
4 ambassadors who followed.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: At the meeting in September with the  
6 Prime Minister to work out this strategy was an  
7 assessment made of the level of resources that were  
8 required? What were the risks of not achieving this  
9 strategy? Or it was just that the strategy was laid  
10 down with no real assessment or whether you had the  
11 tools to let you deliver?

12 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It was an opening meeting at the  
13 beginning of the autumn period, and that was precisely  
14 you know -- that series of questions, one of the  
15 questions you were asking at the end of meeting - what  
16 would be required, how are we going to do this? Later  
17 in October there was a Whitehall-wide strategy on Iraq  
18 which was agreed by the ministerial group, which did  
19 indeed look at the risks involved for the UK in a series  
20 of categories. So we did try to assess the risks at the  
21 same time.

22 But I have to say our main desire that autumn was to  
23 get the show on the road and to try to respond to the  
24 insistent requirement from our military commanders, from  
25 Hilary Synnott and from others, to begin this programme

1           on services.

2   SIR JOHN SAWERS:  If I can just come in, Lady Prashar, on  
3           the question of resources.  The military had access to  
4           the reserve for funding their operations in Iraq.  Other  
5           government departments did not, but that didn't mean  
6           that we didn't reorganise our resources.  We did, and we  
7           gave a very substantial redirection of our finances  
8           within departments, certainly the Foreign Office did,  
9           I think the civilian side of the MoD did, certainly the  
10          Department for International Development did.  And at  
11          one stage I was responsible for Foreign Office resources  
12          covering the whole of what you might call the arc of  
13          instability, central and eastern Europe and Russia, the  
14          former Soviet Union, south Asia, the Middle East and  
15          north Africa.  And half of it went to Iraq  
16          and the other half went on the rest, such was the level of  
17          the redirection of resources that we made within our  
18          existing departmental budget.

19               We also re-directed the cross-Whitehall funds such as  
20          the Global Conflict Prevention Pool so that an  
21          increasing proportion of the pool's resources were sent  
22          to Iraq.  I think at one stage well over a quarter of  
23          the pool's resources were being directed to Iraq, and  
24          that was squeezing heavily the operations and activities  
25          that we were funding elsewhere in the world, but it gave

1 a sense of the extent to which Iraq was the priority in  
2 government at this time, within existing departmental  
3 budgets.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We keep hearing from witnesses about  
5 the tension between the short-term and the long-term and  
6 how the DFID resources were not being made available,  
7 how these could not be used locally. Was there any  
8 effort to arrange flexible arrangements to make sure  
9 there could be some synergy between the short-term and  
10 the long-term?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The funds were available for what were  
12 called quick impact projects, and they were primarily  
13 funded through DFID and distributed by the military as  
14 much as anyone else. But DFID were rightly concerned to  
15 ensure that what was done was sustainable, that we  
16 didn't just run a project one day, make people feel good  
17 for one week and it all fell apart after that.

18 They wanted to be able to see that the improvements  
19 we were delivering would be durable, and that was one of  
20 the advantages of involving DFID on the ground.

21 Now, we were all impatient for progress, no one was  
22 more impatient for progress than the Prime Minister, and  
23 we were trying to achieve the right balance of effect.  
24 And we can comment later as to whether the overall  
25 project, the whole programme, was successful or not.

1 I think there is a strong case for saying that over the  
2 six years of this, from 2003 to 2009, we achieved  
3 a great deal, but each week, each month, there were  
4 arguments, there were problems, there were complaints  
5 and there were issues that we had to sort out back in  
6 London.

7 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Can I mention one machinery of  
8 government point which had a more permanent effect,  
9 which is what was called the post-conflict  
10 reconstruction unit, now the stabilisation unit.

11 That was created in, I think, 2004 deliberately as  
12 one of the lessons learned, and they did  
13 play a useful role, for example, in setting up our  
14 operation in Helmand and helping with the civilian  
15 aspects of that operation. So that was one area of  
16 innovation.

17 You are seeing the DFID people tomorrow. I think  
18 they would say they did put substantial funds into Iraq,  
19 but I keep coming back to the scale of  
20 what is involved -- I mean, the Americans at one point  
21 in 2004 were asking for a  
22 \$16 billion supplemental for Iraq.

23 These are astronomical sums and it would have been  
24 very difficult for us to have matched that. Most of the  
25 money which came into CPA South -- and maybe this is

1 a good point to mention this -- you know, was American  
2 money. One of our tasks all the way through from the  
3 summer of 2003 all the way through to the period of  
4 Mr Maliki's government, had been to try to get Baghdad  
5 to devote enough resources and attention to Basra. And  
6 we had that debate with the CPA, with Ambassador Bremer,  
7 and the Prime Minister raised this with President Bush  
8 as well. The money did eventually flow, but I think the  
9 story is that it took a long time and it was fitful.

10 Getting the Iraqis themselves to devote their  
11 political energies to Basra, their second city, the  
12 great Shia city of Iraq, only came when Prime Minister  
13 Maliki was appointed, when he went down to Basra in,  
14 I think, May 2006.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We hadn't thought about those sums before  
16 we went in?

17 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: We had no plan for handling Basra, as  
18 you heard, because that was something which emerged only  
19 during the course of the military action.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's pursue that after the break. This is  
21 the right time to take about ten minutes.

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Thank you very much.

23 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Thank you.

24 (3.26 pm)

25 (Short break)

1 (3.39 pm)

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's restart, if we may.

3 I would like to start myself with a question that  
4 has really developed out of the first half of this  
5 session, and I think I would like to start it with  
6 Hilary Synnott.

7 He gave us evidence the other day and we have read  
8 his book "Bad Days in Basra", and he was very critical  
9 of the effective delivery of the UK effort so far as he  
10 could see it from CPA South in Basra. He says:

11 "Blair put a constant public emphasis on the  
12 importance and urgency of making progress but was  
13 seemingly little interested in the processes within  
14 government by which this might be brought about ...  
15 unable to mobilise government departments to produce the  
16 necessary results."

17 We have heard a great deal about all the efforts  
18 that were being made in the period both when he was  
19 consul general, head of CPA South, but also later, when  
20 the situation on the ground was getting worse but the  
21 efforts were getting better.

22 Is it fair or unfair of Hilary Synnott to say that  
23 his critique was simply because he was there too soon?

24 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, he certainly didn't see the full  
25 fruit of what he set in train in the summer and autumn

1 of 2003. You know, he may well be disappointed even to  
2 see things as they unfolded later in 2004.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: 2003/2004?

4 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: But I think he was right that some  
5 things went slowly, but a lot of what he was asking for  
6 was expert help and it wasn't easy to persuade either  
7 British people or our partners internationally to second  
8 people to what were increasingly difficult and dangerous  
9 conditions in Iraq, even in Basra.

10 I mean, in the period we started, it was relatively  
11 quiet compared with the rest of Iraq, but nevertheless,  
12 when you visited that compound, you were aware of the  
13 security threat to everyone there.

14 So of those two things you mentioned, Chairman, the  
15 first one- was the Prime Minister uninterested in the  
16 processes of delivery? No, he wasn't. He was interested  
17 in them and chased things regularly, and within  
18 Number 10 he was given, you know, regular feeds of  
19 information on how we were getting on and chased his  
20 colleagues in Cabinet about it.

21 Was it difficult to deliver? Yes, it was, partly  
22 because of the Baghdad/CPA, Basra/CPA disconnect and  
23 because it took time for the Americans to respond to our  
24 request that they give us more priority and funding than  
25 they had initially.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: The reason, I suppose, an alternative  
2 critique to Hilary Synnott's, which is that actually we  
3 were simply in our efforts, the UK national effort on  
4 Iraq, too small, too slow and too few in numbers to  
5 manage and handle what we had taken on in the south-east  
6 in particular.

7 Now, it depends, I suppose, where you draw your  
8 baseline and when you make your final judgment about the  
9 success or otherwise of our effort, though there is  
10 a very large volume of blood spilt along the way however  
11 you measure it. But you mentioned the United States  
12 resources. Were we actually, with our own national  
13 resources of expertise, of funding, of skills in  
14 government, up to it?

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I respond on this? I think we  
16 delivered very substantial resources to the  
17 reconstruction effort in Iraq and in particular in the  
18 south.

19 I was looking through my notes. For example, at one point we  
20 employed 130 advisers for police training, this was  
21 in early 2005. We built up to that number. As Nigel  
22 says, we built up to pretty much a full complement of  
23 staff in southern Iraq in the consulate general there.

24 The problem wasn't the scale of our effort, because  
25 I think if we put in more effort, it wouldn't



1 necessarily have been enough to overcome what was the  
2 great problem, which was the huge onslaught of violence  
3 that the coalition and the reconstruction effort and,  
4 indeed, ordinary Iraqis were facing during this period.

5 Every time we tried to build a new facility or we  
6 would repair a pipeline or we would put  
7 back up an electricity line, they would be  
8 taken down by people, either criminals who wanted to  
9 steal the materials or, more often than not, insurgents  
10 who wanted to undo what we were doing.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: But we failed to foresee that situation and  
12 if we had foreseen it, it would have been beyond our  
13 compass to deal with it.

14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think you are right that we failed to  
15 foresee it. The planning for the post-war, as we all  
16 know, was inadequate. The level of violence that we  
17 faced was not foreseen and we didn't have enough in the  
18 way of sheer military presence, either we or the  
19 Americans, to deal with the scale of the violence that  
20 we were facing.

21 But I think we do need to recognise that the reason  
22 so many Iraqis lost their lives, the reason it took  
23 longer than we would have liked to put Iraq back on  
24 a reasonable footing, the reason why the reconstruction  
25 effort was so difficult was because of the scale and

1       determination of the insurgents to destroy what we were  
2       doing.

3       MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just -- your point, Mr Chairman --  
4       was whereas the Ministry of Defence organises itself for  
5       emergencies and crisis and has Permanent Joint  
6       Headquarters and a whole structure which is meant to  
7       have respond very rapidly to developing situations, in  
8       the civil departments there isn't that same capability,  
9       other than for the immediate humanitarian response that  
10      one sees to hurricanes and other things.

11       And I think it took us a bit of time to -- it took  
12      Whitehall a bit of time to adapt, and may not have  
13      adapted sufficiently far to really support a long-term  
14      campaign such that we found ourselves in.

15      THE CHAIRMAN: Did we actually have the capability  
16      potentially to do it at all at that scale?

17      MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, I recall --

18      THE CHAIRMAN: Did we not bite off more than we could chew?

19      SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Again, I think you have to define your  
20      terms. I would say did we have the national capacity to  
21      develop the economy of the south-east of Iraq? No, we  
22      didn't. Was that actually what we were asking ourselves  
23      to do? Actually, we weren't because the fundamental  
24      assumption was that the funding would come from the CPA  
25      and from the United States, and by and large it did, and

1           it took a hell of a long time to come through.

2   THE CHAIRMAN: But we set objectives at the start or,  
3           indeed, before the start, certainly disarming the Saddam  
4           regime from the WMDs and bringing about a democratic  
5           stable Iraq, no threat to its neighbours and all the  
6           rest of it.

7           Along the way, between 2003 and 2008/2009, we  
8           gradually have to scale back the achievability of our  
9           broad objectives, don't we?

10   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes, and we did and there was explicit  
11           discussion of this, I think, towards the end of 2006  
12           where we asked ourselves whether we should explicitly  
13           change the overall aim, the one that you have mentioned,  
14           Chairman. And I think ministers felt that in its  
15           literal form it was very, very unlikely to be achieved  
16           in full.

17           But it was still a reasonable set of headline  
18           objectives, and some elements of them -- and we could  
19           discuss this, if you like -- some elements of them have  
20           turned out to be achievable and achieved.

21   THE CHAIRMAN: There is a less harsh version of the  
22           critique, I think, which is that actually the inherent  
23           timescale for taking a society like immediately  
24           post-Saddam Iraq and bringing it even to the state it  
25           now is at in 2009 was going to take six years or about,

1       and it was never going to be done in one or two. It  
2       couldn't have been done by anybody, not by the  
3       Americans.

4       SIR JOHN SAWERS: When you look at the problems we are  
5       facing in Afghanistan now, which began before Iraq and  
6       is carrying on for long after Iraq, it is a good example  
7       of what you are saying. When we  
8       looked at the post-conflict situation in Iraq, the  
9       government set itself an objective, and it is not  
10      exactly a bumper sticker but if I could just read out  
11      what the objective was, it is:

12           "A stable, united and law-abiding Iraq within its  
13      present borders, cooperating with the international  
14      community, no longer posing a threat to its neighbours  
15      or to international security, abiding by all its  
16      international obligations and providing effective  
17      representative government, sustainable economic growth  
18      and rising living standards for all its peoples."

19           Now, in this period of six years we have achieved  
20      that political transition and we will see further  
21      elections under the constitution next March. Iraq  
22      remains unified. It has got substantial self-government  
23      for the Kurdish people, more so than other countries in  
24      the region where there are Kurdish minorities. There  
25      have been no border changes. Iraq is not posing

1 a threat to its neighbours or to international security.  
2 It is abiding by its international obligations and there  
3 is scope for the Security Council to lift its remaining  
4 constraints once Iraq and Kuwait resolve some  
5 outstanding practical issues.

6 And economic growth has been achieved. In one year  
7 is achieved as much as 50 per cent in a year, and has  
8 been sustaining 5 to 10 per cent of growth since then.

9 There are still areas where there is further to  
10 go. It is not as stable or as law-abiding as we would  
11 like and the government is not as effective as we would  
12 like. There is still further investment to be made in  
13 these areas, but when you look at the objective that was  
14 set in early 2003, we have achieved in six years with  
15 a lot of pain, a lot of blood spilt, a lot of money  
16 spent, but we have nonetheless achieved those goals.

17 So it would be wrong to think that somehow we  
18 haven't focused continually on the scale of the  
19 objectives that we were set, even though in some areas  
20 we had to scale back on some of the practicalities.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and some of the quality. The picture  
22 that is painted in that statement of objectives is not,  
23 I think, what you would find in Iraq today.

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Except that you do have a --

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Technically on some, I agree.

1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It is not just technical, Mr Chairman.  
2 For example, the deaths from violence in Iraq this year  
3 is significantly less than deaths from violence in  
4 Pakistan, for example. That's a scale of the way things  
5 have improved. They are down to about 10 per cent of  
6 the level of civilian deaths of three or four years ago.  
7 THE CHAIRMAN: Proportionately?  
8 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Probably not.  
9 THE CHAIRMAN: I don't know whether we will find ourselves  
10 visiting Iraq, but it would be interesting to make the  
11 qualitative comparison, particularly with 2004 when I  
12 was last there.  
13 What I would like to take us on to in terms of  
14 resources delivery or whatever, is the impact of  
15 insurgencies. Establishing and holding security is  
16 absolutely the sine qua non for any other development,  
17 political, economic, social action. And we were facing  
18 in 2004/2005 the rapid worsening in both communities,  
19 Sunni and Shia, of that situation.  
20 I think it is reasonable to ask it must have been  
21 a very dispiriting experience to have to cope with that?  
22 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Of course it was, and it was difficult  
23 because every week there would be tragic news, whether  
24 it affected our own forces, our own nationals --  
25 handling, obviously, the series of kidnaps involving

1 British nationals was very difficult for everyone  
2 concerned, obviously their families particularly, but  
3 also for those who were trying to support them in  
4 government.

5 So it was a very, very difficult period, but not  
6 just for ourselves. Trying to keep the  
7 international community involved despite the insurgency  
8 was one of our big political tasks. Trying to get the  
9 United Nations to re-establish itself in Iraq after the  
10 trauma of the August 2003 attack was one of our major  
11 efforts. It eventually succeeded, but they took it  
12 slowly and deliberately for reasons one can understand.

13 But getting Brahimi involved in spring 2004, getting  
14 the special representative established, getting the UN  
15 support for the election effort was absolutely critical  
16 to getting things moving, but that was very, very  
17 hard for us.

18 And the main worry -- there was a worry obviously  
19 about the political seeds of the conflict back in the  
20 2002/2003 period, but the main worry was the security of  
21 their people and we had to keep coming back to that, all  
22 the way through.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to take that point back home, as  
24 it were, because a constant stream of bad news, risk  
25 levels rising rather than falling, you mentioned

1 yourselves earlier the difficulty of finding volunteers  
2 to go and help out with reconstruction and capacity  
3 building. What was the -- can I put it -- the mood in  
4 Whitehall from -- not the MoD, given what Desmond Bowen  
5 said, but from civil departments who may have had a more  
6 or less significant contribution to make but not  
7 a central one.

8 The currency had been re-established earlier before  
9 this phase anyway, but there is the matter of easing up  
10 resource flows in the face of the challenges that were  
11 emerging through the insurgencies. Did that happen?  
12 Policing has been a continuing and, I think, still  
13 present failure. Baker-Hamilton say just the same  
14 in 2007. So that hasn't worked.

15 Were all departments putting shoulders to the wheel  
16 as best and as strongly as they could?

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think it is probably right to say that  
18 the principal departments, Foreign Office,  
19 Ministry of Defence, the Department for International  
20 Development, were the ones that were engaged most  
21 practically on the Iraq issue and we worked very closely  
22 together during the period under the chairmanship of  
23 Nigel at the centre.

24 In terms of the other departments, I think there  
25 were contributions that individual departments made,



1       certainly it wasn't so much the Home Office on the  
2       police training, we were working closely with the  
3       Association of Chief Police Officers, ACPO, and they  
4       gave regular advice and visited regularly to advise on  
5       what support they could give.

6           I think it probably is true to say that, as the  
7       years went by and when the violence was at its height,  
8       there was a bit of weariness around about dealing with  
9       Iraq. It became, for example, more difficult to  
10      persuade people in my then department, in the  
11      Foreign Office, to take postings to Iraq. It was the  
12      most exciting place to be in 2003/2004, but once you had  
13      got to 2006/2007, there were attractions elsewhere and  
14      also people like to be associated with success and it  
15      looked for a long time as though Iraq was not going to  
16      be a success.

17           But I wouldn't say that there was resistance around  
18      Whitehall on this. Indeed, the figures I gave to  
19      Lady Prashar earlier about the scale of reorientation of  
20      Whitehall resources show, I think, that a sustained  
21      effort was made and not just in the three principal  
22      departments.

23      THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you.

24      MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just add in terms of resources, I  
25      can't remember whether there were two or three quite big

1 packages of gifted equipment, which were organised, some  
2 of which was money that was drawn from established  
3 budgets, but some of it was new money that came from  
4 the reserve and that was to equip both the 10 Division  
5 that the British armed forces were responsible for,  
6 bringing it up to standard and bringing it into being,  
7 and some of it was for the police.

8 So there was very much -- and particularly as the  
9 insurgency took hold there was a sense of needing to up  
10 the game on bringing Iraqi forces up to a standard where  
11 they could deal with this themselves. So there was  
12 certainly a change of not just mood, but change of  
13 emphasis and more money extracted from the reserve than  
14 had been the case before.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I would like to -- and I think  
16 I will invite Sir Lawrence to do this -- bring  
17 Afghanistan into the equation again.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Chairman, before we move to  
19 Afghanistan, can I ask a question in relation to the  
20 police, because we heard from Sir Hilary Synnott on the  
21 issue of duty of care and the difficulty they had in  
22 getting police force, ACPO and others. So there was  
23 a real practical difficulty because, you know, staff are  
24 not being released because of duty of care. And the  
25 other thing we heard from other witnesses was it was

1 kind of the training provided by the Italian police  
2 force which was more relevant. So was there enough  
3 analysis being done in terms of niche training, in  
4 persuading other coalition partners to work and how were  
5 you hoping to unblock issues about duty of care?

6 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Could I just take that question,  
7 Lady Prashar? It was important that people who were  
8 deployed to Iraq had proper security  
9 arrangements for themselves, which was one reason why  
10 our biggest police training effort was carried out in  
11 Jordan and we took the police trainees from Iraq to  
12 Jordan in order to train them there.

13 A second factor was that the Iraqi police were armed  
14 and needed to be trained in the use of arms and the  
15 discipline relating to arms, and there was only one  
16 police force in the UK that is systematically armed and  
17 that is the Police Service of Northern Ireland, formerly  
18 the RUC. So we did have a particular contingent from  
19 Northern Ireland who took part in this police training  
20 effort, because in many other forces they didn't have  
21 that familiarity and training with firearms.

22 I think a third point is it was difficult to  
23 persuade people to take these jobs. It was quite  
24 difficult to attract the people, the police officers,  
25 either serving or retired, to do the sort of training

1       role. We had wonderful leadership early on from Chief  
2       Superintendent Doug Brand, who was the chief police  
3       adviser for a year or so during 2004, and he inspired  
4       a lot of people to come out and work on police training.  
5       But it was a struggle and we needed to provide security,  
6       needed to get the right people and you needed to have  
7       the right terms and conditions.

8   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you still had two senior  
9       diplomats, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Hilary Synnott,  
10      there working on the ground?

11   SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, we had a very substantial  
12      Foreign Office and MoD and DFID effort on the ground.

13           One aspect of this was the security of premises.  
14      Those who were working in Baghdad and Basra were in  
15      broadly secure areas: in Baghdad in the Green Zone; in  
16      Basra in Basra Palace Compound, and these were  
17      protected.

18           If you are going to be training police officers, you  
19      need to be in the police academy and travelling back and  
20      forth each day to do this, and you are more exposed.

21      For example, as our adviser in the Ministry of Finance  
22      was exposed when he and his protection detail were  
23      kidnapped two years or so ago.

24   MR DESMOND BOWEN: Duty of care was a problem, but it was a  
25      problem actually that was gripped, or we tried to grip

1       it at a very senior level. Permanent secretaries were  
2       engaged in this, and tried to resolve issues. And it is  
3       something that went on through into the Afghan  
4       experience.

5           I am not sure that you have got the right solution,  
6       but there is a problem and there is a difference between  
7       those who, as John said, were in one place and others  
8       how are out maybe mentoring and monitoring in the front  
9       line where it is very difficult to provide security.

10   THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

11   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just a couple of points to follow this  
12       up. On this particular point, it's obviously very  
13       difficult to get people to serve in dangerous place like  
14       this and as Mr Bowen has said, civil departments didn't  
15       have the same capacity as the Ministry of Defence.

16           In an ideal world it would have been better to have  
17       thought about that in advance rather than after the  
18       event, but what lessons have been learned from this? To  
19       what extent does the stabilisation unit now provide us  
20       with a corpus of people who are geared up to do that and  
21       prepared to take the risks and be deployed at short  
22       notice?

23   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I'm a bit out of date on that, but  
24       this was one of the initial purposes of the PCRU, now  
25       the Stabilisation Unit -- was to have a bank of people

1       who could, indeed, be deployed quickly across the range  
2       of competences. Not just that, we have also tried to  
3       apply that and suggest that model to the United Nations  
4       as well, that there should be an international pool of  
5       people who can be rapidly deployed to post-conflict  
6       situations.

7               So as I understand it, that was one of the aims of  
8       the --

9       SIR RODERIC LYNE: Mr Bowen, do we need a branch of our  
10       military that deals with post-conflict reconstruction,  
11       as the Americans have?

12       MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just jog back to the stabilisation  
13       unit. Douglas Alexander I think made an announcement  
14       today of having a database of 1,000 people, people who  
15       are trained and capable, of which 200 would be available  
16       to be deployed.

17               I just make the point that 200 still isn't a very  
18       large number if you are taking on a task the size of  
19       Iraq or even a small part of Iraq.

20               In terms of the military, should they have their own  
21       stabilisation element? It is something that has been  
22       thought about and, indeed, I think the review -- and I'm  
23       out of date and, indeed, out of the Ministry of Defence,  
24       but I think there was a review of the Territorial Army  
25       some year, year and a half ago, which talked very much

1 about the possibility and that there was particular  
2 expertise that was located or could be located in the  
3 Territorial Army which could be drawn upon and that  
4 would enable people who were militarily trained to go  
5 out and undertake tasks that would otherwise be done by  
6 civilians.

7 And some of the thinking on that derived from  
8 experience in Basra, where there were bankers who helped  
9 banks to operate, engineers who helped the sewage system  
10 to operate and so forth. So it is not completely new,  
11 but one of the issues that arose interestingly in Basra  
12 in 2003 was that TA soldiers who had in their full-time  
13 life been bankers or engineers had joined the TA to be  
14 soldiers and were slightly surprised to find themselves  
15 doing their old job in rather different circumstances.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: We had evidence from more than a couple of  
17 reservists to the exact opposite effect, that their  
18 professional skills in civilian life were not being used  
19 although they were needed.

20 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I'm sure it worked both ways.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Second point. Sir John rightly says that  
22 the fundamental problem was the onslaught of violence.  
23 What had led us to underestimate the onslaught of  
24 violence so badly? Some people had warned about it, we  
25 heard of one from Sir Jeremy yesterday. To what extent

1       was it the false analogy that ran through Sierra Leone,  
2       Kosovo, Serbia, the initial victory in Afghanistan, that  
3       made us think -- when I say "us", I mean perhaps the  
4       American leadership -- that this was going to be so much  
5       easier than it turned out to be? And could we, if we  
6       had prepared for Phase 4 much better than we did, have  
7       mitigated, if not prevented, the level of violence that  
8       followed?

9   SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, we probably all have our views on  
10   this, and what you were asking for is views because it's  
11   a hypothetical scenario that you are painting.

12       I think there is little doubt that had we planned  
13   for the post-war period more thoroughly and in a more  
14   joined-up fashion with the United States, we would have  
15   thought through some of these scenarios and we would  
16   have been better prepared, for example, for issues like  
17   guarding the arms dumps, rebuilding government  
18   departments, controlling the borders and issues like  
19   that.

20       I think it was unprecedented the scale of  
21   violence that we faced in Iraq. The mindset of our  
22   American colleagues was Germany 1945, and we all have an  
23   image of that: a sullen population, defeated, but no  
24   sustained violence against the victorious forces. And  
25   still it took several years to put that all back



1       together again, and you yourself remarked the other day  
2       that planning had begun three or four years beforehand.

3           Very few observers actually highlighted the scale of  
4       the violence that we could face. I think about the only  
5       person in my recollection who got it right was  
6       President Mubarak who warned of unleashing 100 Bin  
7       Ladens. The combination of an undefeated Ba'athist  
8       regime melting away and coming back as a gradually more  
9       potent insurgency combined with the attractiveness of  
10      Iraq as a means for international terrorists under the  
11      umbrella of Al-Qaeda to have a go at the Americans,  
12      combined with Shia extremists supported from Iran, this  
13      combination creating the level of violence, the  
14      onslaught of violence that I have mentioned, this was  
15      not thought through by any observer.

16           I think had we known the scale of  
17      violence, it might well have led to second thoughts  
18      about the entire project. And we could certainly  
19      have mitigated some aspects of it had we had a clearer  
20      appreciation of it in advance. But even with all that  
21      said, I think the fact that we were able to weather that  
22      storm, that we were able to work with the Americans, to  
23      get to the position that we have got to now in 2009,  
24      where the British military mission is complete bar some  
25      training of Iraqi military forces at a fairly low scale,

1       which is fairly typical of work we do in other  
2       countries, I think it is quite remarkable that we got as  
3       far as we have in this six-year  
4       period.

5             But I don't think it is reasonable  
6       to assume that we should have predicted all this  
7       violence in advance, because very few people did  
8       actually do that. That wasn't the anticipated scenario  
9       that we were stepping into and it was an unprecedented  
10      scenario that we found ourselves in.

11   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Another issue that might have  
12   produced second thoughts was the knowledge that there  
13   were no weapons of mass destruction, not necessarily  
14   with everyone, but the knowledge that there were no  
15   weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

16             We have heard that obviously the UNMOVIC had not  
17   found what we suspected they might find. We heard this  
18   morning from General Fry the surprise that he felt and  
19   others felt that we didn't find anything. In December,  
20   the first head of the ISG in resigning said we were all  
21   wrong, and later that year we had the Duelfer report  
22   which confirmed all of that, although it did of course  
23   talk about the actual aspirations that  
24   Saddam Hussein had.

25             Why did it take so long for the Prime Minister to

1        acknowledge the fact that what we had expected to find  
2        wasn't there?

3        SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Well, because he was waiting for the  
4        ISG to -- the Iraq Survey Group to produce the report,  
5        and it did so in stages, interrupted by David Kay's  
6        departure -- I think, as you said, Sir Lawrence, I don't  
7        think they produced their final report until some time  
8        in 2004.

9               So he was waiting for them to pronounce, but he was  
10       aware of their interim findings, aware of the advice we  
11       were getting from them that they were unlikely to find  
12       any actual WMD. But obviously there were a number of  
13       other things that they were exploring and a huge amount  
14       of documentation which they were trying to get through  
15       along with a lot of detainee interviews which they were  
16       conducting. So that was continuing.

17       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it was reasonably evident,  
18       certainly by the time David Kay reported, that it was  
19       unlikely that -- that anything large-scale was going to  
20       be found. Yet until Christmas 2003, things were being  
21       said by the Prime Minister that suggested people should  
22       wait, that he still believed that stuff would be found.

23       SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Or might be found. And I think  
24       within our system views varied on  
25       this and some people felt that something might emerge.

1 Others didn't. And, you know, that  
2 was its position within Whitehall.

3 I think it was January of -- I was going to say 2004  
4 when the government asked Lord Butler and others to  
5 conduct an Inquiry based on a very clear interim view  
6 from the Iraq Survey Group that there were no WMD and  
7 that the fundamentals of intelligence were wrong and,  
8 therefore, we had the Butler Inquiry.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: So it was not until Charles Duelfer's final  
10 report, which was based on the intention, that it became  
11 clear and that's several months later still,  
12 December/January 2004?

13 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: That's right.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sir John mentioned the sense of  
15 gloom around April. Was this compounded by the fact  
16 that the purpose for which we had set in motion this  
17 whole enterprise didn't seem to have warranted it?

18 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think most of us by then had  
19 internalised that we were not going to find the scale of  
20 weapons of mass destruction that we had  
21 understood there to be.

22 I don't think it did add to that gloom. We were in  
23 a different situation. We were on the ground in Iraq,  
24 trying to put the country back on its feet and facing  
25 a great onslaught, as I have described, from various

1        directions. That was the challenge we faced. The fact  
2        that we didn't discover weapons of mass destruction  
3        didn't actually alter the scale of the problem we faced  
4        on the ground.

5            I think it is worth pointing out that the Iraqis  
6        themselves did not see WMD as the primary issue.  
7        Obviously it was very important for us and it was  
8        a surprise that we didn't find weapons of mass  
9        destruction. For Iraqis themselves, their great concern  
10       was to ensure that Saddam and his ilk could never come  
11       back, that this was the end of the tyrannical regime  
12       that they had suffered under for 30 years, and they were  
13       fighting over who was going to be in control.

14           Frankly, the great majority of Iraqis wanted us to  
15       succeed. It was a minority that we were dealing with,  
16       and in all my many visits to Iraq and during the three  
17       months I spent there, weapons of mass destruction was  
18       primarily an international concern rather than an Iraqi  
19       concern.

20    SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Can I just say, for the  
21       Prime Minister, what it meant in the aftermath of that  
22       statement from the ISG was that it was important to  
23       restate what we were now in Iraq for, and I think if you  
24       look at his speech, I think in March 2004, so just after  
25       these events, what he was trying to say was whatever the

1 divisions, nationally and internationally, over going to  
2 war, we did hope that people would rally to the new  
3 Iraq, both within the UK and around the world, and that  
4 cause deserved people's support.

5 He went into some detail about the decision-making  
6 leading up to the war, but said actually we now need to  
7 focus on the task at hand.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I just want to jump ahead now to  
9 another issue we discussed with General Fry this  
10 morning, which was the decision to go into Afghanistan,  
11 not as a decision particularly about Afghanistan -- not  
12 obviously relevant -- but how it affected our troops in  
13 Iraq.

14 When we were talking before the break, you mentioned  
15 that we decided that Iraq was our strategic priority.  
16 At what point did it stop being our strategic priority  
17 and Afghanistan started to at least compete?

18 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It took towards the latter stage of  
19 the period that we are talking about.

20 Just two points really: first of all, there was some  
21 discussion in, I think, 2004 about whether the ARRC  
22 should be --

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Explain what the ARRC is.

24 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: It is the major headquarters run by  
25 the UK, attached to NATO, which can be used in major

1 combat situations, and there was a proposal that it  
2 should be used in Iraq for us essentially to expand our  
3 command area from MND South East to include the southern  
4 sector of Iraq based in Najaf, which the Americans and,  
5 I think, the Polish were running. And ministers decided  
6 not to do that.

7 They didn't think there was a sufficiently  
8 compelling case to do it anyway, but there was another  
9 reason, which was that the ARRC might be needed in the  
10 future should we move into a more ambitious military  
11 role in Afghanistan, which, indeed, of course, we did  
12 in 2006.

13 That was only one of the reasons why the ARRC wasn't  
14 used in Iraq, but it was --

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What were the other reasons?

16 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: As I have said, that it wasn't obvious  
17 that it would help, it would leave us in a difficult  
18 position commanding a very diverse group of forces in  
19 the south, an area which we didn't have any prior  
20 experience of. It wasn't obvious that it would lead us  
21 to greater influence over the whole campaign strategy  
22 than we had already, nor that there was a huge amount of  
23 American pressure to do it.

24 So overall it didn't seem to us to be necessary to  
25 move beyond our responsibility for MND South East, and

1       that, I have to say, was the pretty consistent view of  
2       the Prime Minister all the way through, that we should  
3       concentrate on MND South East where we had the  
4       responsibility.

5       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But already we are starting to think  
6       that we daren't extend ourselves more in Iraq because we  
7       may have other tasks to come in the future?

8       SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think the decision was taken the other  
9       way round, that we didn't need to extend ourselves  
10      further in Iraq and, therefore, the assets could be  
11      available, subject to separate decisions, for other  
12      theatres.

13      SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But as we heard this morning, this  
14      depended upon a drawdown of our forces quite quickly if  
15      we were going to have insufficient slack to be able to  
16      cope with a new significant commitment in Afghanistan.

17      SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Initially, I'm not sure that's right.  
18      The operation which, of course, began in Afghanistan  
19      in 2006, was, by today's standards, a relatively small  
20      one. It was 3,000 or 4,000 troops, and that was  
21      manageable with the numbers which we then had in Iraq,  
22      in 2005/2006, which were probably in the region of 8,000  
23      or 7,000, something like that.

24      THE CHAIRMAN: Just to interject, we have figures for 2006  
25      between 5,500 to 6,500 in Afghanistan.



1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That probably includes the ARRC.

2 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: That will include the ARRC, but I think  
3 in terms on the ground in Helmand it was initially just  
4 under 4,000, but that can be checked.

5 So that was not, as it were, in conflict with the  
6 level of forces that we had. The issue came much more  
7 into people's minds in the 2006/2007 period, where there  
8 was explicit discussion based on papers from the  
9 Ministry of Defence about the balance of effort. And as  
10 our requirements in Afghanistan went up, it obviously  
11 made it necessary to think very much about the numbers  
12 in Iraq and the speed of the drawdown, which was already  
13 in train. And I think we were given advice by the  
14 Ministry of Defence that there was a finite number of  
15 battle groups and that they have to be apportioned  
16 between the two theatres. And that's what was discussed  
17 and debated by ministers ahead of the Prime Minister's  
18 announcement in the House of Commons in February 2007  
19 where we talked about moving from, I think, 7,000 to  
20 5,500 during the course of that year.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was it 2006 that we made the  
22 commitment to Helmand?

23 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: 2006 was when we went into Helmand.  
24 The ARRC came in, I think, around that time as well into  
25 Kabul.

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just add to what Nigel has said?  
2 There was in 2006 a military calculation as well, as to  
3 where troops could be deployed to best effect, where  
4 they would be able to deliver effect on the ground, and  
5 there was a sense that they would be more usefully  
6 deployed and the concentration and the focus ought to be  
7 in Afghanistan and not in Iraq, where there was  
8 a training job to be done, but it was a diminishing role  
9 that we could see.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I do not have the transcript of this  
11 morning in front of me, but paraphrasing General Fry,  
12 what I understood him to say is this: that through 2004,  
13 certainly through 2005, there was a growing realisation  
14 that Afghanistan might demand more, that there was  
15 exactly as you have described in terms of the feeling  
16 that's where the army would feel it would be doing most  
17 of the things armies do and would prefer to do, rather  
18 than a training job, that in Iraq no doubt had become  
19 very difficult, but that two parts of the calculation  
20 were not wholly accurate or had to be shifted. One was  
21 the timetable for actually getting out of Iraq, that  
22 a lot of these decisions were taken on the assumption of  
23 an earlier timetable for getting out of Iraq, and  
24 secondly, that perhaps once again we went into a part of  
25 the world where we didn't have quite as full an

1       understanding as we might like to have had of what we  
2       were getting into. Would you like to comment on those  
3       two observations?

4   SIR JOHN SAWERS: That last point is a completely separate  
5       point from this Inquiry.

6   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is not wholly, because there is  
7       a lessons learned question. And I think that's one of  
8       the lessons we might have learned.

9   SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think it is fair to say that we were  
10       facing two very substantial political/military tasks:  
11       one in Iraq; one in Afghanistan. Our approach was to  
12       focus our efforts on Iraq primarily, and to do what we  
13       could in Afghanistan, but for that to be second,  
14       we aimed to prevail in Iraq whilst we held the situation in  
15       Afghanistan.

16       As the Iraq deployment came towards an end, all  
17       departments in government and the then Defence Secretary  
18       John Reid took the lead in analysing this and working it  
19       through the Whitehall system, it became clear that we  
20       had some headroom militarily and politically to get more  
21       involved in Afghanistan, but the constraint was we  
22       couldn't do that until we were confident about the  
23       drawdown of our forces in Iraq, which, as you say, took  
24       rather longer than we had envisaged, say, in 2005 and  
25       early 2006.

1           But it was clear that we could only build up in  
2           Afghanistan if there was confidence in  
3           our ability to reduce our level of commitment in Iraq.  
4           And so we needed to have that confidence first, and all  
5           this was work which I recall, the Foreign Office was  
6           closely involved with it, but the work was led by the  
7           Ministry of Defence and it was very much done on  
8           military advice, the level of commitments that could be  
9           entertained and considered and were within the  
10          capability of the armed forces as they were then.

11       SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Just to add -- and I agree with that.  
12          Everything took longer. I mean, that's one of the  
13          lessons, that certainly in relation to our drawdown, not  
14          least because as time went on, there were more people to  
15          consult, as well as the situation getting more difficult  
16          in Basra itself. We needed to fit this in at every  
17          stage to the Iraqi Government's own narrative on  
18          building up its own security.

19          There were delays, as we all know, in getting those  
20          two Iraqi governments stood up, which in turn had an  
21          impact on everything else and so on. So everything took  
22          much longer than first planned.

23          As far as Helmand is concerned, my recollection is  
24          that the real preparation for that was more 2005  
25          than 2004. I don't think there was very much going on

1        then. The ARRC issue was in a way separate, because the  
2        ARRC could have gone in whether or not we were involved  
3        in Helmand. That was to do with the command of ISAF.  
4        And, Sir Lawrence, I do think that those of us who were  
5        working on the possibility of our taking the role in  
6        Helmand were very conscious of the need to prepare it  
7        extremely thoroughly and to try to think through these  
8        things.

9        It comes back to what a reasonable expectation is of  
10       your level of knowledge as you go into a theatre like  
11       Helmand or even a place like Iraq, and we did try to  
12       amass a huge amount of information from intelligence and  
13       other sources of what we were going to find when our  
14       forces went there. But as John said, this was  
15       a proposal to change our role in Afghanistan from the  
16       north to Helmand, which came from the Chiefs of Staff.  
17       The Defence Secretary and others made sure that the  
18       reconstruction and economic angle was handled at the  
19       same time. Hugely difficult for some of the reasons we  
20       have been discussing today, to get the civilian  
21       expertise in there at the same time, but we did and we  
22       made sure that in Lashkar Gah we had a civilian head of  
23       our provincial reconstruction team who had the  
24       expertise, which was built up over a period of time, to  
25       deliver the civilian and development effect.

1           Far from perfect, I'm sure, today, but that was  
2           precisely what we were trying to do in the run-up, and  
3           something that Dr Reid insisted we should think about  
4           and was clear in the papers that were put to Cabinet in  
5           January 2006.

6   SIR MARTIN GILBERT:   How conscious were you while you were  
7           doing that of the Iraq experience of three or four years  
8           earlier?

9   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   Virtually everyone involved in the  
10          Afghanistan work had been involved in Iraq at one stage  
11          or another from 2002 onwards, so we were very conscious  
12          of it whilst, of course, accepting that the two  
13          different countries are very different and the military  
14          operations are very different between the two.

15   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   I think we want to talk to military  
16          witnesses, and we will have a chance to do so, more  
17          about this.

18          The question of the influence of Iraqi experience on  
19          Afghanistan is very interesting, but as we don't have  
20          much time left, I would just like to follow this line  
21          through in terms of the demands on our forces, because  
22          one of the things that is also happening in 2006 is  
23          there is a major policy review in the United States,  
24          which ends with the President's decision on the surge.  
25          Just at the point at which we are looking to draw down

1       our forces, they are preparing to surge.

2               What discussions were there with the Americans about  
3       should we surge too or should we at least hold our  
4       position until the Americans had a chance to develop and  
5       see whether they can make their surge work?

6   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   There was no proposal, certainly at  
7       the political level, for us to surge too.  And one of  
8       our objectives as the President's policy became clear  
9       was to make sure that the situation in Basra should  
10      continue to be seen as different and that our own  
11      drawdown plans, which were based on conditions there,  
12      should not be affected.  And that was explicitly  
13      discussed with the Americans during that period.

14             It was after all only a month or so after the  
15      President's announcement that the Prime Minister made  
16      his about our own transition plan in Basra when he  
17      announced that to the House in February 2007.  So, you  
18      know, that was one of the things.

19             The other thing that we said, which was, I think,  
20      implicit in the American plan but we certainly  
21      encouraged, was that the surge in forces needed to be  
22      accompanied by a political effort, which in the event  
23      Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus undertook with  
24      great success.  But that was the Sunni outreach, the  
25      emphasis on providing security for the populations and

1           so on, which was the hallmark of that period in 2007  
2           and 2008.

3   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   What was your assessment of the  
4           prospects for this policy, because to some extent it  
5           came a bit out of the blue from the Baker report and so  
6           on, and the Baker-Hamilton report, and the pressure  
7           seemed to be in the same direction as the pressure in  
8           the UK was to draw down forces and get out as soon as  
9           was reasonably possible?

10  SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   This was an example of what I had said  
11           earlier.   In the latter part of 2006 this was the  
12           President and his team grasping Iraq policy themselves,  
13           making the decisions himself after a great deal of  
14           deliberation.   I think that within the UK system there  
15           was some scepticism as to whether it would work, but an  
16           understanding of the reasons for it.

17           The key thing, looking at our narrow UK interest,  
18           was that it did not affect the rationale for what we  
19           were doing in Basra, where conditions were different,  
20           both security and in terms of what we intended to do.

21  SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   It would be very difficult for us to  
22           do any more, given what we have just been discussing  
23           about our commitments in Afghanistan?

24  SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   And they understood that as well.

25  SIR JOHN SAWERS:   I think it is fair to say that the



1 Baker-Hamilton Commission reported along lines that to  
2 some extent reflected a concern that we weren't going to  
3 be able to achieve wider objectives. It was about  
4 working more closely with the likes of Iran and Syria  
5 and about finding a basis to withdraw US forces sooner  
6 rather than later, and President Bush to his credit said  
7 he wasn't prepared to lower his expectations. He would  
8 provide the resources necessary to deliver on the goals  
9 that he had set.

10 So there was a separate review within the White  
11 House after Baker-Hamilton that led in the end to the  
12 surge, and this was something which, as Nigel says, many  
13 other observers, including many people in the British  
14 system, military and civilian, were sceptical about.  
15 But in the end it was proved the right approach, and  
16 coupled with the political strategy, the Awakening  
17 Councils, the effort to quell the insurgency in the main  
18 Sunni areas, it proved to be a success. But at no stage  
19 do I recall, you may want to ask our military  
20 colleagues at some point, but at no stage do I recall  
21 a request from the Americans to us to increase our force  
22 levels because the situation they were dealing with was  
23 essentially how to deal with the Sunni insurgency, a  
24 combination of the former Ba'athist elements and the  
25 AQ-inspired violence, which of course is Sunni, and it

1       wasn't directed primarily at the issues that we were  
2       facing in the south and which were in a more mature  
3       phase and closer to a position whereby we could  
4       withdraw.

5       SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   Sorry --

6       SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   I was just going to add one point,  
7       which is that what the surge in the end enabled the Bush  
8       Administration to do -- and, of course, American public  
9       opinion was changing over the course of the period that  
10      we are discussing today, but what he was able to do when  
11      he came to give a timetable in the middle of 2008, he  
12      was able to do so on the basis of recent success, and  
13      that is the ideal position for a drawdown strategy.

14      We tried to do something of the same by pointing, as  
15      I was suggesting earlier, to certain conditions which we  
16      thought had been met in Basra as well, as we were  
17      drawing down. But undoubtedly it helps to be able to  
18      say that you are doing so in conditions where you have  
19      achieved at least the good part of your aims.

20      SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   So just closing the circle, we  
21      started by saying that it all depended on what was  
22      happening in Baghdad and in the end the reason that you  
23      have been able to give a more positive account of the  
24      situation in Iraq today is because of what happened in  
25      Baghdad and the ability to sort that out. And through

1       this period we were doing what we could, but it was to  
2       some extent a -- sideshow maybe would be a bit harsh,  
3       but in the end it was Baghdad that was the key?

4   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:  Yes, but against a backdrop where, for  
5       all the difficulties in Basra, Basra did not present --  
6       Basra and its population of 3 million or 4 million  
7       people -- Basra did not present a strategic threat to  
8       the overall effort and there was no ultimate withdrawal  
9       of Shia consent.

10       So okay, it was a rough and ready estimate that we  
11       gave of how we were getting on in Basra and we  
12       deliberately chose as a government to accept that as we  
13       left Basra it wouldn't be perfect; it was going to be  
14       rough and ready and difficult.  We developed  
15       deliberately this doctrine of sufficiency for what we  
16       were doing there.

17       But the American effort nationally was predicated on  
18       at least a basic degree of Shia consent and that was  
19       what we were the guardians of in Basra.

20   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  So we started off with exemplary and  
21       we ended up with sufficiency?

22   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:  Yes, and I don't think we should be  
23       apologetic about it, and we discussed this a lot,  
24       debated it a lot, and as time went on, the logic of the  
25       political process was that we had to accept ultimately

1           that there were Iraqi standards which needed to be met  
2           and that they were ultimately the arbiters of their own  
3           destiny in Basra.

4   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   Thank you very much.

5   SIR JOHN SAWERS:   And it was evident from very early on that  
6           the key to a successful transition lay in the capital,  
7           it lay in Baghdad, and we had to put the transition, the  
8           political, the security situation, the economic  
9           situation in the capital first.

10   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   Thank you.

11   SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Let me just follow through on the logic  
12           of the political process. By late 2006/2007, the Maliki  
13           government is there, it has sovereignty, and we have to  
14           operate with its consent. How much influence did we  
15           have over that government and how much did it constrain  
16           what we could do in the south of Iraq?

17   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD:   I think there is both good and bad  
18           news on that. The good news is that Prime Minister  
19           Maliki responded to our request that he put more  
20           emphasis from the start on Basra, as a priority for his  
21           government. He visited there very early on, he took  
22           a close interest in security and saw it as part of his  
23           national strategy.

24           And that's one of the things that had been missing.

25           There was a disjuncture between Baghdad politics,

1 national politics, and politics in Basra. In a way it  
2 is rather surprising, that the Shia  
3 majority in Basra didn't translate easily to the Shia  
4 national parties in Baghdad.

5 So that was the good side of it. But I think that,  
6 it was at times a difficult relationship with  
7 him. He wanted to do things his own way with his own  
8 security forces. I think Dominic Asquith told you that  
9 there were times when the Iraq national leadership was  
10 more comfortable dealing itself with the problems of  
11 Shia militia and so on than authorising --

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How did this translate specifically with  
13 regard to our role in Basra?

14 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: The easiest example to give you is  
15 when we were constructing Operation Sinbad,  
16 really our last heave to improve  
17 security and economic conditions in Basra before we  
18 started to substantially draw down. At that stage, in  
19 the autumn of 2006, Prime Minister Maliki was unwilling  
20 to authorise the strike operations, offensive strike  
21 operations, against militias, which we had originally  
22 intended would, not the main part of, but be part of that  
23 overall operation. That undoubtedly changed the  
24 nature of the operation and meant that some of the  
25 issues which we had intended to try to deal with were

1 left unresolved for later on, and that was what  
2 ultimately led, I suppose, to -- beyond my period  
3 -- the Charge of the Knights in the spring of 2008.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But essentially in this latter period we  
5 were sort of hanging on in Basra, unable to do very much  
6 and just waiting to get out?

7 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: We had continuing roles, and I think  
8 those were set out and they are not negligible. They  
9 were the roles of continuing to train Iraqi forces,  
10 finishing the training of the 10th Division, continuing  
11 the training of the 14th Division. We had the role of  
12 continuing to protect the supply routes, continuing to  
13 keep an eye on the border and having an intervention  
14 facility, should it be needed by the Iraqi Government.

15 Given what I have just said, I suppose it wasn't  
16 obvious that we would be invited to take particular  
17 action in normal circumstances, given their reservations  
18 in the autumn of 2006. But those were the four  
19 continuing requirements, which justified the force of  
20 about 5,500 which we came to towards the end of 2007.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How much had our traction with the  
22 United States declined by this point? General Cooper  
23 said that 5,000 against their 140,000 didn't give us  
24 a lot of traction. They had done the surge, we were  
25 going in the opposite direction. Maybe they were taking

1 a rather negative view by this stage of performance.  
2 Theirs had improved, perhaps ours hadn't. Were we left  
3 with much traction with the Americans?

4 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: By that stage I would say Iraq  
5 occupied probably a less central position in dialogue  
6 between the two countries than it had at the beginning  
7 of the period we have been discussing. By 2007 there  
8 were probably other issues which had risen up the  
9 agenda, like Iran, like the Middle East peace process.  
10 That's not to say that there weren't continuing  
11 discussions about Iraq, but maybe in terms of what we  
12 have just been talking about, the national decisions in  
13 Baghdad, there were fewer of them that needed to be made  
14 at that stage. You had had the surge decision. It was  
15 being implemented in a way that we agreed with, given  
16 that there was a high degree of political subtlety and  
17 activism in the way that it was being implemented by  
18 Petraeus and Crocker, and you were in a post-election  
19 period in Iraq with no immediate Iraqi milestones, and  
20 for once in this story things were starting to go a bit  
21 better on the security side. So it wasn't the  
22 preoccupying issue of UK/US dialogue that it had been  
23 undoubtedly in 2002 and 2003.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So at the beginning of this story we go  
25 in with some quite ambitious objectives for what we

1 would achieve in Iraq and also for the degree of  
2 influence that our large contribution initially would  
3 give us with the Americans. By the end of it we were in  
4 a very different situation. As you said earlier, we  
5 were just trying to achieve the minimum requirements  
6 before we could actually leave Basra: sufficiency.

7 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes, but reading into that that the  
8 Iraq that we were leaving is one that we had had  
9 an imprint on because of our contribution on the  
10 political process, to the international framework in  
11 which Iraq operated, both regionally and multilaterally,  
12 and so on. And those were things where the decisions  
13 had essentially been made in the 2004/2005 period. But  
14 those have to be, I think, read into one's overall  
15 account.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just revert to my first question to  
17 you at the beginning of this conversation? You came  
18 into this issue from a completely different area, from  
19 dealing with the European Union, and you had perhaps the  
20 bad luck to come into it at a time when things were  
21 already going quite badly wrong. You then had the  
22 unenviable task of leading at an official level work in  
23 Whitehall of a very intensive kind, a very draining  
24 kind, I should imagine, a depressing kind, looking at  
25 the papers, through the worst period and making the best



1 of a bad job.

2 Now, as you look back on it, do you think that Iraq  
3 was worth the very high cost, especially in lives lost  
4 and people seriously injured?

5 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: That's a very difficult decision and  
6 a very difficult debate and I can't answer that even  
7 now. I know that at the time it did require a high  
8 degree of resilience and energy on the part of everyone  
9 concerned but it was a hugely important issue for our  
10 government, for the reason I gave at the beginning, that  
11 ministers realised that our reputation internationally,  
12 in everything we did, would suffer if we weren't able to  
13 see some measure of success in Iraq.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So what has it done for our reputation in  
15 the world? Has it been a plus or a minus?

16 SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: I would answer it in the same way as  
17 other people have answered that question to you: It  
18 depends who you are talking to and whether you are  
19 talking publicly or privately. I'm sure that the  
20 professionalism that our armed forces showed has  
21 enhanced our overall reputation. I'm sure that the  
22 effort that the UK put into the political process, to  
23 the international framework for Iraq, has done us no  
24 harm. But of course there were areas of the Muslim  
25 world and the Arab world in particular where what we did

1           was extremely controversial. That has probably --

2   SIR RODERIC LYNE: And in the European Union.

3   SIR NIGEL SHEINWALD: Yes, but I think in the

4           European Union -- maybe we should have had a discussion

5           about this but there was a period of reconciliation and

6           repair to relations in the European Union really quite

7           rapidly during the course of 2004. It didn't translate,

8           as I said earlier, into fundamental decisions by the big

9           European countries to get into Iraq to help with

10          reconstruction and redevelopment and so on because they

11          were, I think, worried about the security situation and

12          had no direct motive to do so. They did things like

13          training outside the country and helped through the

14          multilateral organisations.

15                But I think the political divisions in Europe -- and

16          they were divisions; it wasn't Europe versus the UK --

17          remember that it was very evenly divided in 2003 --

18          those divisions did heal reasonably rapidly and if you

19          remember, one of the things that all of us round this

20          table were dealing with during the autumn of 2003 was

21          our initiative on defence with France and Germany, part

22          of the effort by the government of the day to restore

23          some of the equilibrium with two of our major European

24          partners.

25   SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just add: The question which

1 Sir Roderic asks is one which all of us involved with Iraq have  
2 asked ourselves many times during the years since this began  
3 and there is not a clear-cut answer. One issue that is  
4 clear-cut is that Iraq is a better place than it would  
5 otherwise have been and that the people of Iraq, in my  
6 experience, the political leaders of Iraq, are  
7 enormously grateful to this day for the effort that  
8 Britain and America, and in particular our servicemen,  
9 played to liberate them from Saddam Hussein.

10 I have been concerned at times over the years that  
11 the success in Iraq was overshadowed by the damage to  
12 the West's reputation in the wider Islamic world and the  
13 damage to our capability there. But I have been struck,  
14 not least by what my successor as Ambassador to Egypt,  
15 Dominic Asquith, said to you earlier, that even in  
16 Egypt, where there was very strong popular concern about  
17 the conflict in Iraq, even in Egypt the mood has  
18 changed and moved on. Our leaders have changed but our  
19 values persist and the attractiveness of our values  
20 persists across the Islamic world.

21 So I don't think there has been that sustained  
22 damage to our reputation in the Islamic region. We have  
23 learned a lot of lessons from all this. The Iraqis,  
24 undoubtedly, have benefited enormously from the  
25 sacrifice, above all the sacrifice of the 179 servicemen and women

1       who died in the conflict and in the years since the  
2       conflict ended.

3           We do have to weigh that against wider issues  
4       and the wider reputational costs of it. But I think  
5       there is a risk of us here now exaggerating the scale of  
6       that reputational cost because certainly many of the  
7       countries that we deal with now, Pakistan,  
8       Afghanistan, the Arab countries, Egypt, Turkey, have  
9       moved on and they are now dealing with a better situation  
10      that has been left behind in Iraq than they had when  
11      Saddam Hussein was in power.

12   THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have probably come to the natural  
13      end for this session. I'll ask in a moment whether each  
14      of you has final comments or observations to make. But  
15      I would just like to pick up a tailpiece because,  
16      Sir John, you went from that role to New York. So the  
17      reputational assessment you could make in terms of the  
18      United Nations at large is not different from the one we  
19      have heard, namely there are pros and cons, some for,  
20      some against, some say things in private they won't say  
21      in public and vice versa?

22   SIR JOHN SAWERS: I certainly found that Britain's standing  
23      in the United Nations remained very high. It certainly  
24      was when I was in New York, from 2007 until just  
25      a couple of months ago. We were seen as a nation,

1 perhaps more than any other of the big powers at the  
2 United Nations, as being committed to making the  
3 United Nations work. We weren't there simply advancing our  
4 national interests, we were there trying to advance and  
5 promote a global system which was in everybody's  
6 interest, and I think that's one of the abiding values  
7 that we have in our foreign policy.

8 Yes, there were some individuals who remain  
9 aggrieved about some aspects of the Iraq policy  
10 and, yes, the UN still mourns the loss of one of its  
11 great leaders, Sergio Vieira de Mello and the 19 others  
12 who died in the bombing back in August 2003, but our  
13 standing, our role in the Security Council, our capacity  
14 to exert influence in the United Nations, has not  
15 suffered enduring damage. I think straight after the  
16 conflict, yes, there was a concern and a problem that my  
17 predecessor faced in the months and the year or two  
18 straight after the Iraq conflict but it was not still  
19 there when I was at the UN.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Well, final comments. Mr Bowen,  
21 any?

22 Right. I thank our witnesses and all those who have  
23 sat through this afternoon's session. I think we have  
24 talked a lot about potential, if not final, judgments,  
25 at any rate provisional judgments, about the whole

1       six years and I think the committee itself is extremely  
2       lively aware of the casualties, the blood. The Treasury  
3       you can rebuild, blood you can't get back, and I don't  
4       know whether at this stage we shall come to the kind of  
5       final judgment that these last questions have raised;  
6       this may be the first draft of history. But we are  
7       conscious throughout of that cost that has been incurred  
8       by humankind.

9           I think I'll close with that. Thank you again.

10          We are starting again tomorrow morning at 11.30 and  
11       then going off into the afternoon, where we will have  
12       senior officials from DFID and from the Treasury.

13          With that, I'll close the session. Thank you very  
14       much.

15       SIR JOHN SAWERS: Thank you very much.

16       (4.55 pm)

17       (The Inquiry adjourned until 11.30 am the following day)