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Tuesday, 5 January 2010

(10.00 am)

SIR WILLIAM PATEY

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Good morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: Happy new year and welcome back everyone, and to our first witness of the New Year, Sir William Patey. The purpose of this session is to examine developments in Iraq from summer 2005 to summer 2006. In broad terms it is the period from the formation of the Iraqi transitional government to the formation and first months in office of the first fully sovereign Iraqi Government after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The session will cover the United Kingdom's role in the process leading to the formation of the new government, the security situation in Iraq in general, and in Basra in particular, and the start of the process of the United Kingdom handing over security control to Iraqis in a number of provinces.

Since we have had a break and are now resuming, but I won't go on repeating this formula, I do want to recall once only that the Inquiry has had access to thousands of government papers, some of which are still coming in, including the most highly classified for the period under consideration, and we are continuing this

1 week to finalise the picture of the policy debates and
2 the operational events and the decision-making
3 processes.

4 These evidence sessions are an important element in
5 informing our thinking and in complementing the
6 documentary evidence, and so it is important that
7 witnesses are, and feel able to be, open and frank in
8 their evidence while respecting national security.

9 We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence
10 based on their recollection of events and we are, of
11 course, checking what we hear against the papers to
12 which we have access. Now, I remind all witnesses that
13 they will later be asked to sign a transcript of their
14 evidence to the effect that the evidence they have given
15 is truthful, fair and accurate.

16 Sir William, before we begin questions, I wonder if
17 you could describe your role at the time in question.

18 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I was the British Ambassador to Iraq
19 from June 2005 to July 2006.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I would like to start with
21 a rather general question, but the situation that you
22 found yourself in at the time was one where the
23 United Kingdom's ability -- I'm asking -- was quite
24 constrained in terms of the ability to control events to
25 determine what should happen. We wonder how far there

1 was a full and well judged recognition of that fact at
2 different levels in London, in Baghdad and elsewhere.
3 Would you like to comment on that?

4 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, I think the level of ambition was
5 probably higher than the ability to deliver. I do
6 recall in Iraq at some stage a saying that what could be delivered
7 on Powerpoint couldn't necessarily be delivered on earth. It
8 was a difficult situation, but it didn't mean we were
9 helpless or powerless. We would have liked more control
10 over the events but the key player was obviously the
11 United States. They were the biggest players in town. We had,
12 obviously, responsibility in a military sense for
13 MND South East, which was the four provinces of the
14 south centred in Basra, but the main players were
15 obviously the Americans, but we worked very closely with
16 them.
17 them.

18 A new American ambassador arrived shortly after me,
19 Zal Khalilzad, and my task was to work closely with
20 him and his team, and I think -- you would have to ask
21 him, but I think we did achieve quite a close working
22 relationship. So we were able to influence events but
23 not control them.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: There is the proportionality between the
25 scale of the US presence and our own, there is also the

1 lateral shift, isn't there, to Iraqi (eventually full)
2 sovereignty, which is taking place?
3 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think that's the key development at
4 the time I was there. We had had an election
5 in January 2005 to form the Iraqi transitional
6 government whose task was to run the country while the
7 constitution was drawn up and a fully sovereign
8 independent Iraqi Government was formed. So the whole
9 period while I was there was one of almost introspection
10 as the transitional government politicians got on with
11 devising a constitution and then positioning themselves
12 under the terms of that constitution to form
13 a government.

14 So it was quite a difficult time in terms of the
15 Iraqi politicians who increasingly were being asked to
16 do more and to take more responsibility for running
17 their own country. Our objective was to transition out
18 of Iraq to a fully sovereign Iraqi Government, handing
19 over full security control and we had ambitions to do
20 this earlier than has been achieved, I think.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Martin?

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Based on our own previous experience
23 and our pre-posting briefings, was the situation you
24 found in Iraq as you expected?

25 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, I think it was. The security

1 situation was difficult. It was a country in
2 transition. It was -- I suppose what I didn't quite
3 expect was the sort of the level of historical baggage
4 I found when I got there. It was very difficult to
5 engage politicians. I remember a meeting I had with
6 prominent Shia politician. We only had half an hour and
7 the first 20 minutes was spent and we hadn't reached
8 beyond a thousand years ago. There was quite a strong
9 sense of victimhood amongst the Shia politicians, so
10 that sense of bitterness and sectarianism, the level of
11 that, perhaps, took me a little bit by surprise.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Who were the primary actors in Iraqi
13 politics with whom you were able to engage?

14 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: When I got there, they were just about
15 to begin the constitutional negotiations and because the
16 Sunnis had excluded themselves from the election, they
17 weren't -- they hadn't elected their own participants in
18 the constitutional commission, and so the constitution
19 was essentially being drawn up by the other two big
20 groups, the Kurds and the Shias, and I think at that
21 stage we were trying to certainly engage with the Sunnis
22 to bring them into the process.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: And to make sure that the Shia and the Kurds
24 didn't exclude altogether the Sunnis despite their
25 self-exclusion?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think there was a danger -- as the
2 negotiations with the constitution got very difficult,
3 there was a danger that the Kurds and Shias could reach
4 a deal which, if it was to the exclusion of the Sunnis,
5 would never have lasted, the constitution would have
6 been stillborn.

7 So part of the process -- I remember part of the
8 role the British played, a distinctive role we played at
9 the time was to remind the players that a constitution
10 that did not include the Sunnis would not be a viable
11 one, and that advice was accepted and there were
12 adjustments made to the membership of the constitutional
13 commission. A great deal of effort was
14 made to accommodate some of the Sunni
15 requirements for a constitution.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Who were you able to argue the case,
17 for example, against the intensification of
18 de-Ba'athification which was taking place?

19 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We spent a lot of time on that trying to
20 convince the transitional government and the Shia
21 politicians that de-Ba'athification had gone too far,
22 that the de-Ba'athification commission was being abused.
23 It was being used as a tool to further political ends
24 rather than save Iraq from a return of the Ba'ath.

25 Now, that is not an argument that was accepted very

1 readily by Shia, who had a visceral fear of the
2 Ba'athists and saw Ba'athists in most places. So we had
3 limited success.

4 We were arguing for the de-Ba'athification
5 provisions to be excluded from the constitution. We
6 managed to get them watered down, we managed to get them
7 reviewed, but that was one of the main issues for the
8 Sunni community, because at the time we were trying to
9 reach out to those Sunnis who were involved in the
10 insurgency but who really had political objectives and
11 who didn't want to be excluded. Those who were prepared
12 to give up arms and join the political process. So
13 there was a strong move to bring them in.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you engaging with them?

15 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, I spent a lot of time with Sunni
16 political parties and Tariq Al Hashimi, who was the
17 leader of the IIP, and Saleh al-Mutlaq, and some of the
18 more extremist fringes, Khalaf Ulayyan and others.

19 At one stage, I was accused by some Shia politicians of
20 being a Sunni-loving Shia hater because of this effort.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The other area I believed you were very
22 active in related to human rights and to the whole
23 question of the detainees and the treatment of the
24 detainees. Can you tell us something about what you
25 were able to do about that?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Obviously, the large number of detainees
2 being held was a contributing factor to some of the
3 alienation of the Sunni community. There were quite
4 a lot of Sunnis being held. There was the aspect of the
5 detainees held by the coalition, and we were engaged
6 with the Americans in trying to speed up the processes,
7 so that people who were picked up in large sweeps could
8 be processed quickly and moved out.

9 There was also the accusation that there were death
10 squads operating within the Ministry of Interior and
11 detention centres that were abusing human rights. Indeed
12 the Coalition -- it was mainly in Baghdad -- the
13 Coalition uncovered a horrific detention centre, Jadriya
14 I think it was called, and that led to a process of
15 inspections, unannounced inspections, but you had the
16 dilemma, you were trying to get the Iraqi Government to
17 take responsibility and to improve its record, while at
18 the same time under pressure to do something
19 immediately.

20 There was always a balance to be struck by something
21 that was sustainable and getting the Iraqi Government to
22 improve its processes and to put into place procedures
23 for -- that would respect human rights and in dealing
24 with the most egregious cases at the time.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was this also a joint UK/US endeavour?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: In Baghdad it was mainly the US forces.
2 We had our own problems in Basra. We had -- mainly with
3 the police. We had a huge problem with the police in
4 Basra, with criminal elements infiltrating the police,
5 what I would describe as a situation of Mafia gangs and
6 political infighting. So we had our own problem.

7 I don't think we ever got to the stage of uncovering
8 or coming across the sort of systematic abuse in detention
9 centres that were uncovered in Baghdad.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of engaging with the Iraqi
11 body politic, were you able to make any contact or pass
12 on any messages to the Sadrists and to engage them in the
13 process?

14 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We had a policy of Sadrism outreach, if
15 you like. I was encouraged by Number 10 in particular
16 to reach out to the Sadrists, to give them a message
17 that we felt they had a place in the political system,
18 we wanted them to give up their arms and to stop
19 attacking coalition forces and to join the political
20 process. They were very reluctant. Moqtadr al-Sadr
21 refused to see me throughout my time there and every
22 Sadrism I did see seemed to lose their job soon
23 afterwards. So it almost became a policy to decimate
24 the Sadrists just for the British Ambassador to call on
25 them. The Minister of Transport lost his job soon after

1 I developed a contact with him, and a few others. They
2 were very reluctant to engage with us, but we tried to
3 engage with them.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Just as a postscript on that, was Sistani's
5 influence operating in a positive way at that time in
6 respect of the Sadrists?

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think he had less influence on the
8 Sadrists because, of course, Sistani was not the source
9 of emulation for the Sadrists, he wasn't their Marjaih,
10 but he did have influence given his position as Grand Ayatollah. He
11 was not somebody they could ignore. So he had an
12 influence on them, but it was weaker than perhaps his
13 influence on some of the other Shia groups.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You say that Number 10 was keen on this
15 engagement. How was that keenness expressed?

16 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Phone calls to me saying, "Get on with
17 it". Phone calls saying, "How are you getting on
18 reaching out to the Sadrists?" It was expressed in, you
19 know, telephone calls, messages. It was part of a daily
20 engagement, I have to say. There was really rarely
21 a day went by when I did not have a phone call from
22 Number 10.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: This was during the whole period of the
24 formation really of the --

25 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: An intense period for us because, in

1 a sense, the future of Iraq, our strategic success or
2 failure hinged on this period. We either got
3 a constitution that was acceptable to most Iraqis, that
4 would provide the basis for the formation of a sovereign
5 government, or we didn't, and it was a kind of intense
6 period in which the price of failure seemed quite high.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One of our original end-game concepts
8 in 2002 was that a unified Iraq should emerge. Was
9 there, during this period of the formation of the first
10 government, ever, in your view, a danger that this might
11 be unobtainable, might be endangered?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think I wrote when I left that the
13 prospect of descent into civil war and the break-up of
14 Iraq was possibly more likely than a transition to
15 a stable democracy unless certain things happened, and
16 I think there were forces pulling Iraq apart.

17 Obviously, one of the biggest Shia groups was
18 angling for a constitution that would allow them to form
19 a region, a Shia region, of three or nine provinces.
20 Obviously Kurds already had a high degree of autonomy.
21 So there was a debate within Iraq. One of the great
22 debates over the constitution was the extent to which
23 there would be a federal system. I think a bit like
24 in Europe federal means different things to different
25 people, to some people it meant a strong central

1 government, to others it meant a weak central government
2 and strong regions. So there were different people
3 arguing for different things, and that was one of the
4 intense debates over the constitution. But the danger was
5 the sectarian nature of the politics in Iraq was leading
6 Shia to move to Shia areas, Sunnis to move to Sunni
7 areas, and you could have had a de facto sectarian
8 division which would have made it very difficult to hold
9 the country together. So there was a constant danger.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Where did the Kurds fit into this and
11 what was your own engagement with the Kurds during this
12 period?

13 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I had intense engagement with the Kurds.
14 I had regular contact with, Barhem Saleh, the Deputy
15 Prime Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, the Foreign Minister,
16 and with President Talabani, obviously, and I was
17 a regular visitor to Erbil to see President
18 Massoud Barzani, the President of the Kurdish region,
19 and Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister.

20 So I spent a lot of time with the Kurds trying to
21 persuade them that their best interests lay in a federal
22 Iraq, but a united Iraq, because an independent
23 Kurdistan was never viable for them in terms of its
24 neighbours, in terms of the situation in Iraq, and at
25 a leadership level they understood that. On the street,

1 in Kurdistan everybody was for independence, but at a --
2 at the level of the body politic they understood the
3 realpolitik of that. And getting them to play
4 a constructive part in drafting a viable Iraqi
5 constitution, I spent a lot of time with them.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: The Kurdish President was a very reluctant
7 and occasional visitor to Baghdad, I believe.

8 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, although he -- on one occasion, at
9 the crucial time of the constitution, he spent about
10 a month there hunkered down with everyone else.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: I was going to ask whether your Kurdish
12 interlocutors were mainly to be found in Baghdad on
13 pretty much a continuing basis, or did you have to
14 travel north a lot?

15 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I travelled north quite a bit, and when
16 Massoud Barzani came down -- I mean, we had pretty
17 regular contact with Massoud and obviously, you know,
18 the two factions of Kurds, the KDP and the PUK, the KDP
19 were represented by Hoshiyar Zubari, the Foreign
20 Minister, so you would talk to the Foreign Minister
21 about foreign policy, but you would actually be talking
22 to him about internal politics as well.

23 Occasionally, he would say, "You had better go and
24 see President Massoud", and Talabani and Barhem Saleh of
25 the PUK were in Baghdad virtually all the time.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Do you feel that the UK's influence,
2 your influence, was effective in ensuring the cohesion
3 at this time?

4 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think we were listened to. We used to
5 have a joke with the Kurds -- I'm Scottish, as you have
6 probably gathered -- that we were the troublesome hill
7 people from Britain and they were the troublesome hill
8 people of Iraq. So we used to have this joke, and a lot
9 of the experience of having a Scottish assembly,
10 separate currencies, or at least able to print your
11 currency -- some that of experience we were able to talk
12 frankly to the Kurds about, that it was possible to
13 retain a separate identity within a united country,
14 actually proved to be quite persuasive.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: With the creation of the sovereign
16 government, did this affect our ability, the UK's
17 ability to act in Iraq?

18 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, we had to accept that
19 increasingly, as the Iraqis took control, they took
20 decisions, and some of them, you know, might not have
21 been decisions that we would necessarily have wanted,
22 but that was always going to be the case. I remember
23 saying, "Our task is to transition to Iraqi control. It
24 might not always be pretty, but ultimately it is the
25 only way to go".

1 One of the problems we had in Basra, I would say,
2 and others will talk to you about Basra, of course, who
3 lived the experience more directly than I did, but
4 getting the politicians in Baghdad to take
5 responsibility for some of the things that were going on
6 in Basra was difficult. It was inter-Shia politics
7 going on in Basra, and life was bad enough in Baghdad
8 without getting -- part of our job was to say, "Look, if
9 you can't run Basra, you know, where you do not have the
10 complications of Sunni insurgency or Kurds, who is going
11 to believe you can run the country?" So there was
12 a constant dialogue to get them more engaged in taking
13 responsibility for what was going on in Basra.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we would like to turn to the security
16 situation and, to start with, one of your original
17 objectives, I think you said, was to enable or help to
18 bring about the handover of the provinces to the Iraqis
19 as progress towards sovereignty was taking place.

20 Were there formal conditions set for the draw-down
21 of our forces and the handover the provinces to the
22 Iraqi authorities?

23 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We began to look at that, I think,
24 in August/September of 2005, where we established
25 a conditions-based transition team in which we began to

1 talk to the Iraqis about the conditions that would have
2 to be met before provinces could be handed over. That
3 dialogue started quite early, but the Americans were
4 quite reluctant at the time because they didn't want to
5 get involved in discussing timetables for withdrawals.
6 That was one of the issues.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: There is a natural tension in any such
8 situation, I imagine, between conditions on the ground,
9 on the one hand, and a desire to drive through a policy
10 with some degree of timetable, but from the UK
11 standpoint in Baghdad it was a general objective policy
12 to bring about handover?

13 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: It was an objective of the Americans,
14 too, actually. I think we just felt we were probably
15 a bit closer to it than they were in Baghdad. I got my
16 instructions. You ask -- I mean, the first time I have
17 ever had instructions, as an ambassador, directly from
18 the Prime Minister to go was to help get a constitution
19 that the Iraqis would vote positively for, the formation
20 of a new government and create the conditions for the
21 withdrawal of British troops. I mean, it was quite
22 simple.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Quite simple. One of the -- well, indeed,
24 the conditioning factor, in terms of conditions on the
25 ground, is the violence from its different quarters and

1 sources and motivations. I wonder whether you could
2 talk a little bit about that? In particular, the
3 different sources the violence to begin with. You have
4 got Sunni refuseniks, you've got Al-Qaeda, you've got
5 nationalism and you have also got Shia complications
6 between different factions. Can you just paint
7 a picture of the 2005/2006 situation?

8 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: You have got a very complicated picture
9 because you have a Sunni insurgency, mainly in
10 Anbar Diyala and Mosul provinces, overlapping and tied
11 up with an Al-Qaeda terrorist presence, which had
12 indigenised itself, if you like, and become Al-Qaeda in
13 Iraq led by Zarqawi. You had that level of violence.
14 You had Shia militia operating in and around Baghdad and
15 in the south. You had tensions overlaying that. You
16 had criminal gangs operating, and sometimes it was
17 difficult to differentiate a criminal gang from
18 a militia, and you had particular tensions in places
19 like Kirkuk, where the Kurds had particular aspirations,
20 and there were tensions between the various minorities.
21 So it was quite a complex picture, but with probably
22 the highest level of violence in and around Baghdad.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: This is too simple a question to address such
24 a complex picture, but is there any general judgment you
25 can make about the relationship between the levels of

1 violence in Iraq as a whole, but in particular in the
2 south perhaps, and our military presence, the UK's
3 military presence? Leave aside the US.

4 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think the level of violence in the
5 south changed while we were there because it had been
6 a relatively benign area. We didn't have a terrorist
7 presence, certainly not Al-Qaeda, and there was very
8 little in the way of an insurgency.

9 I think, as we got more and more involved in trying
10 to establish the rule of law, trying to work
11 a non-corrupt police force, trying to build up the
12 capacity of the Iraqi security forces, we increasingly
13 found ourselves at loggerheads with particular interest
14 groups and that led to a higher level of violence in the
15 south than when I arrived. That was part of a painful
16 process of us being responsible for security and trying
17 to improve the situation, because we were coming up
18 against the interests of people like the Jaysh Al Mahdi
19 or criminal gangs.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: One way of expressing it at the time,
21 I think, was that we might be part of the problem rather
22 than part of the solution. On the other hand, from what
23 you have been telling us, if we were to fulfil our
24 objectives, there really was no choice but to address
25 the militias in the south.

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: In a sense, we became a target and
2 people tried to portray us as the occupiers. When we
3 were originally in Basra, that was not how we were seen,
4 but we were on the horns of a dilemma. I think
5 eventually we succeeded because we did establish -- we
6 did establish a competent 10th Division, 14th Division
7 of the Iraqi security forces. We did root out some of
8 the worst elements of the -- of a corrupt police force
9 and once the Charge of the Knights took place and the
10 militias were taken on in the south and defeated, that
11 did lead, I think -- it was after my time, but it did
12 lead to an improvement in the security situation.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like, if you would, to analyse
14 a little more in-depth the militias' problem in the
15 south. Was this principally a struggle for power, both
16 political power and, if you like, control over criminal
17 activities and assets, or was it at least as much or
18 more the build-up of resentment against the British
19 presence, the Multi-National Division in the south and
20 its attempts to bring about an incorrupt or at any rate
21 a less corrupt system of government and policing?

22 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think it is quite complex motivation
23 because you get people -- I think the Jaysh Al Mahdi
24 had -- the Sadrists started off as an Iraqi nationalist
25 organisation. They were the most Iraqi nationalists of

1 all. They transformed into the most influenced by the
2 Iranians. They moved from being the most Iraqi
3 nationalists of all, but they still traded on this Iraqi
4 nationalism. So they set themselves up as, "The Brits
5 are occupiers. We must drive them out", and they
6 constantly required us to -- the propaganda was all
7 about withdrawal of British troops and they wanted
8 a timetable. That's partly rhetoric but it was also how
9 they portrayed themselves.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: In competition with alternative Shia
11 factions?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Exactly. That was part of their USP, if
13 you like, but it was all part of a power struggle to
14 gain control. of the port, for instance. I mean, the way
15 it operated in Iraq at the time was that people would
16 get control of ministries or get control of economic
17 assets and those assets would then be exploited for the
18 benefit of a particular political party or a militia or
19 the supporters of that party. So it was quite complex.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: That, as it were, partly political power
21 struggle game that was being played among the Shia
22 militias, was this also true at the national level, that
23 the coalition presence was, as it were, a convenient
24 board against which to bounce competing interests for
25 local politics?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think at the national level it wasn't
2 so evident. The political infighting didn't quite
3 involve posturing vis a vis the Coalition. From time to
4 time, there would be complaints from particular factions
5 if the Coalition had come down particularly hard on
6 a particular group and the Prime Minister would complain
7 if we had gone in hard on some Shia militia. Rarely did
8 I hear him complain if we went in hard on some Sunni
9 militia.

10 It wasn't so much -- it played at political level in
11 Baghdad and I think most of the political factions in
12 Baghdad realised that the withdrawal of -- a precipitate
13 withdrawal of the Coalition would not be in anybody's
14 interests, certainly not in Iraq's interests. So there
15 was a consensus on that. I didn't recall getting into
16 many arguments about our continued presence.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. You touched earlier on the problems,
18 again particularly in the south, perhaps nationally as
19 well, of forming, perhaps for the first time, an
20 incorrupt, effective law enforcement service, a police
21 service. There had been no tradition of such a thing.
22 It was starting from scratch.

23 Was it principally a matter that could be and could
24 successfully be addressed by training effort and input
25 of that kind, or is there some more fundamental question

1 about the nature of policing in a society in
2 a Middle East country?

3 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think we were learning on the job.
4 I think we started off thinking we would plant Surrey
5 constabulary in Basra and ended up with the RUC I think is where
6 we ended up. I think there was a certain
7 naivety involved in what we could do and what we could not -- but we
8 were learning constantly. I mean we had to but
9 I think we sowed some real seeds but I think part of the
10 problem was that the public demanded -- the politics
11 here demanded instant results and I think sometimes we
12 lost sight of the longer-term impact we were having in
13 the absence of instant results.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. You foresaw just then exactly the
15 question I was going to come to which is: how far did
16 the lessons which were having to be learned painfully
17 and by experience on the ground -- was it possible to
18 communicate those back to London in particular?

19 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We were adjusting our profile all the
20 time, even within one year we -- I remember we had
21 Ronnie Flanagan out, who came out. When things weren't
22 working, we didn't just keep ploughing on. We did look
23 at things again, Ronnie Flanagan came out and looked at
24 the police and made a lot of recommendations which were
25 implemented, and I think in the end we sometimes had

1 to decisively. In one case there was a criminal intelligence unit
2 which we had formed and had to completely disband because it had
3 been completely infiltrated, but we took those
4 decisions, and it was a slow process, but I do think we
5 laid some groundwork there. But I think it was never going
6 to succeed until the Iraqi politicians took
7 responsibility for it.

8 That was always my view: until the Iraqis themselves
9 took responsibility for it, it was always going to be
10 second best.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: The Iraqi politicians were having to learn
12 from scratch with no previous experience?

13 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, and they were also playing politics
14 at the same time. The Governing Council in Basra was
15 made up of different factions. So the governor was from
16 one party called Fadhila and the other was from
17 SCIRI/Badr and they were at loggerheads. People would
18 align themselves in the police to a particular faction
19 and gain protection as a result.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: You mentioned a little earlier about the
21 relative success that the coalition had in training up
22 the Iraqi military security forces, and indeed the
23 creation of the 14th Division I think.

24 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: The 10th Division and then bolstered by
25 the 14th, yes.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Looking at the end of your time, and it was
2 only a short year, the progress on the military front
3 had been much faster than on the policing front, and
4 indeed that is an uncompleted task, as I understand it,
5 even now.

6 Was that simply a result of the self-disbanding of
7 the Iraqi army under the Saddam regime, that it was
8 possible to start from scratch, as opposed to leaving
9 the provincial governor and police forces in being with
10 all their inheritance?

11 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think it was the nature of the beast.
12 I think the army was a national army. It was recruited
13 nationally. People were deployed away from their own
14 areas. By its nature the police were recruited locally.
15 If you recruited the police in Anbar, you got a lot of
16 Sunnis linked to the local tribal leaders; if you
17 recruited them in Basra, you got a lot of local people.
18 So I think they were different beasts.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Clearly our Inquiry is about lessons learned,
20 primarily. It is hard to judge what is the lesson to be
21 learned in terms of reforming, organising effective
22 policing to reasonably satisfactory standards under
23 western eyes in a Middle East country, what those
24 lessons are, how you go about it, how you conceive the
25 concept of policing.

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think the lesson I would take from
2 this is you have to stick to your principles. There is
3 no point in compromising over a police force that is not
4 going to uphold the rule of law. Therefore, you have to
5 keep insisting on that. I think you have to be patient
6 and you have to get local buy-in for it and local
7 responsibility for it, because, ultimately, the local
8 politicians are going to be answerable to their own
9 people if you have got elections.

10 So you know, it is not easy and I don't think there
11 is any -- if it happens again, you know, God forbid, we
12 hope it doesn't, but if it happens again, there is no
13 quick fix.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But in your discussion with the Iraqis
15 and your stress on the rule of law, were you able to
16 make progress in a way in influencing their mindset?

17 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, others will judge and probably ask
18 those who came afterwards whether we had any impact.
19 I think it was a painful process, but I do think we had
20 some influence in Baghdad to get the Ministry of
21 Interior to take more responsibility for what was
22 happening in local policing. We were able to persuade
23 them to disband the truly corrupt units and to try and
24 support policemen who were honest and not subject to
25 political influence. But it was a daily -- it was

1 a daily struggle.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: It was a daily struggle which you
3 undertook?

4 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, we had no choice. If we were
5 going to get out, we had to leave some semblance of
6 a rule of law there.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I think you have already begun to bring out
8 the fact that, addressing the security complex of
9 questions, the national perspective is a quite different
10 one from the provincial one, certainly looking at the
11 south-east, whether it is in terms of competitive
12 rhetoric and attitudes among different factions or
13 whether it is a matter of the consequences of taking
14 action by coalition security forces.

15 How far in Baghdad was there an awareness among the
16 nascent Iraqi Government, an awareness of the security
17 situation in the south and their attitude to it, or was
18 it simply seen as, "That's a Shia problem in Basra
19 province or it is a coalition problem mainly for the
20 Brits"?

21 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Amongst the Iraqi Government it was
22 difficult to interest Kurdish ministers or Sunni
23 ministers on it. For the Americans, it was something
24 that we were supposed to deal with; the Brits were in
25 charge down there, "You should be dealing with it".

1 I think for the Prime Minister, for instance,
2 Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, and then subsequently
3 Nouri al-Maliki, and the Minister of the Interior, who
4 was also a Shia, Jabr then Bulani, for them, they were
5 torn. They would send -- we had a particular incident
6 in which three British soldiers were picked up on the
7 streets of Basra. They were in civilian clothes, it
8 was understandable. They wanted to find out what they
9 were doing. They were taken to a police station and
10 then it was established that they were British
11 soldiers on legitimate Coalition business. Yet, that
12 police station was in the hands of the militia and those
13 soldiers were handed over to a militia.

14 There is your breakdown of the rule of law, and in
15 dealing with that situation, where we took direct
16 military action to recover those soldiers, there was
17 a disconnect between us and the Iraqi Government in the
18 centre. The Iraqi Government, who thought we had been
19 heavy handed, apportioned blame to us, and I had some
20 very forthright discussions with the Prime Minister and
21 his nominated representative on this.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Was that genuinely a difference of world view
23 or was it a necessary political reaction from the
24 standpoint of Iraqi politicians in Baghdad?

25 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think there was a little bit of

1 a difference in world view, different standpoints, but
2 there was also an element of them playing a bit of
3 politics. They had political rivals in those areas,
4 those political rivalries in Basra were transferred up
5 into Baghdad. At this time, we were going -- against
6 this security backdrop we were going through a period,
7 after the elections, of -- a sustained period of
8 political infighting on who would be Prime Minister and
9 how the government ministries would be divided up.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: I have a sense, in what you are saying, that
11 certainly looking at the security situation in the
12 south, the Baghdad politicians' reaction is defensive
13 rather than aggressive.

14 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Very much defensive, and our aim was to
15 get them more engaged and to take responsibility for
16 what the local factions of their political parties were
17 doing, and explaining to them that, ultimately, this
18 is -- our plan is to transition security to them, so it
19 is in their interests to have a professional,
20 non-corrupt police force and a professional army capable
21 of outgunning any of the armed groups that might still
22 be there.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. You mentioned a little while back
24 Sunni outreach. I would like to ask just one or two
25 questions about our relationship with the US in the

1 coalition in the security context particularly.

2 Sunni outreach, you implied, I think, indeed you
3 said, that there might be a difference of emphasis or
4 timing between ourselves and the Americans in the year
5 you were there. Was that something that was shifting?
6 Was there a coming together of the UK and the US view?

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, we were first movers on this.

8 I think very quickly the US agreed with the analysis.
9 It didn't take very long to get the US to see that,
10 unless we brought the Sunnis into the process, we were
11 not going to have -- (a) we were not going to deal with
12 the insurgency, and (b) we were not going to have
13 a political system in Iraq that had any chance of
14 success or of being sustainable. So I would put them
15 a few weeks at most behind us.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Was that true more generally for the whole of
17 the military strategy between the US and the UK
18 partnership?

19 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: During my time, I thought the
20 cooperation between the US and the UK was very good.
21 I didn't detect any great divergence of strategy over
22 military. I think the only area of slight concern the
23 Americans might have had was a concern that we might
24 transition more quickly in the south than they would be
25 comfortable with. I think that became a concern later

1 on and they clearly wanted success, success
2 meant transitioning to Iraqi control, but they didn't
3 want to get too out of kilter with their own plans.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Was that simply, as it were, relative timing
5 rather than a different assessment of conditions in
6 Maysan or Muthanna province?

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We had a debate about conditions in
8 Maysan and we set out with the Americans and with the
9 Iraqis what would constitute the conditions for
10 transfer, and at various times there would be different
11 assessments and things would -- I think the Americans at
12 one stage got more concerned about Maysan because of the
13 Iranian dimension and the prospect that, if the British
14 were to transition to Iraqi control, that would somehow
15 increase Iran's ability to infiltrate, and our view was
16 we weren't actually controlling the border anyway. So
17 that wasn't something we were giving up.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: It was more that kind of consideration in the
19 US mind rather than their anxiety that they might come
20 under more pressure, if we were handing over provinces
21 in the south, for them to do the same in central Iraq or
22 the north?

23 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I don't think they felt that sort of
24 pressure. They had concerns that their line of supply
25 was all through the south and, if something went wrong,

1 they could be a bit vulnerable, but these were
2 understandable concerns and they were dealt with in
3 terms of having a strategic back-up and -- these were
4 just normal -- I would regard as normal
5 political/military discussions that we had.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: One last thing from me on this general thing.
7 You mentioned detainees already, not a problem
8 essentially in the south. There were not many detainees
9 that we were holding.

10 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: The ones we had were troublesome.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Indeed, but there weren't also anything like
12 the same levels of scandal and worse. Did you have in
13 your year particular concerns about the evolving US
14 approach to detainees and attached scandals, whether
15 they were being held by Iraqi groups themselves or
16 indeed by coalition forces?

17 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: The big dilemma, and the Americans
18 shared this -- I remember having a discussion with
19 General Casey -- they could see the political damage
20 that having tens of thousands of detainees held without
21 processing for long periods was not conducive to
22 a policy of inclusion and reaching out to the Sunnis.
23 They knew that. It was one thing to take a decision to
24 speed up the process, and they did speed up the process
25 of dealing with detainees, but your American soldier on

1 the ground was picking them up as quick as they were being released.
2 So there was a real issue there.

3 There was also an issue that the Iraqis, the
4 ordinary Iraqis, preferred the detainees to be in
5 American custody than Iraqi custody. So there was an
6 issue of having to clean up the image of detention by
7 the Iraqis, deal with the issue --

8 THE CHAIRMAN: As part of the transition?

9 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: As part of the transition. In order to
10 make it palatable for all the detainees eventually to be
11 handed over to Iraqi control or Iraqi process, you had
12 to create a situation where there was confidence in that
13 Iraqi process that individuals wouldn't be subject to
14 abuse.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and presumably the image, in the Iraqi
16 minds and eyes, would follow the reality of reform?

17 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: The difference between -- you could
18 usually find out where your brother or son was, or
19 father, in the American system. In the Iraqi system
20 they often didn't know where they were.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Just going back for a moment to Basra
22 detainees, you have mentioned that there were a few but
23 they were troublesome. Was there a quite different
24 process of assessment and picking up and holding and
25 processing?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, we had -- I mean from what -- we
2 had a sort of rather forensic approach to this. The
3 people we picked up tended to be the people we had
4 evidenced were attacking us or blowing us up. So we had
5 very few, but we were pretty confident that the ones we
6 had were bad guys. The trouble was they were nearly
7 always Shia and they were nearly always connected by
8 some process to some politicians. So for every detainee
9 that we picked up in Basra, I was always being summoned
10 by the Prime Minister or the Minister of the Interior to
11 explain myself, whereas the American Ambassador had tens
12 of thousands of them and nobody cared.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Last from me: Basra/Baghdad, several issues.
14 One of them is resources, the resource flow, whether it
15 is US money going into the south or, indeed, UK direct
16 to the south. Your perspective from Baghdad was -- were
17 the lines of communication and, indeed, the lines of
18 resourcing and exchange of information reasonably open
19 in your year?

20 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: In terms of civilian resources?

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, principally, I suppose.

22 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We didn't have a lot of money to spend
23 in the south. We spent considerable sums, but we didn't
24 have the resources that the US had, but during my
25 period, it was about getting the Iraqis to spend their

1 own money. Oil production was
2 up to 2.6 million barrels a day at the time, but the
3 Iraqis had an unspent capital budget. There
4 was -- I mean -- I remember complaining -- there was
5 \$2 billion of capital sitting in the Ministry of Finance
6 unspent, with demand for power stations and roads. So
7 it was getting the Iraqis to spend their own money
8 wisely that was the focus. I'm not sure it was
9 a question of resources, it was a question of
10 governance.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: How far does that lie back in the history of
12 2003, and even 2004, where certainly the American
13 approach, as we have heard it, was to engage in quite
14 long-term plans for large-scale projects, oilfield
15 development, electricity and water infrastructure, as
16 opposed to things with a quite short payback period?

17 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: It is difficult to know. At the time,
18 I used to have a weekly meeting and somebody would tell
19 me the megawattage of electricity that was being
20 produced. It was one of our indicators: was it going up
21 or down? It was very difficult to deliver, given the
22 security situation, you know, the transmission lines
23 were being blown up. It was very difficult to get
24 a power station project up and running. You had a very
25 weak administration, and I think part of the problem was

1 that you had no means of delivery. One of the discussions I had
2 with the Deputy Prime Minister a lot was, "Could you
3 take this out of the bureaucracy?"

4 The Iraqi bureaucracy was in no fit state to deliver
5 on a reconstruction programme. Could you somehow take
6 that out, because -- so you had a weak system, which is
7 a function of the collapse of the Iraqi bureaucracy in
8 2003/2004. So you had to rebuild that system at the
9 same time as which you were trying to rebuild the
10 infrastructure, at a time when the government was trying
11 to establish the constitution, form a government --

12 THE CHAIRMAN: And much more interesting things like that.

13 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: -- against an appalling security
14 backdrop. So there were -- you know, there were
15 formidable obstacles in terms of getting the power grid
16 up, power stations built, oil pipelines repaired and
17 I can't say we had a huge amount of success.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Were you, yourself, in the problem zone in
19 terms of balancing electricity supply in the south,
20 where much of it was being generated, and the centre of
21 Baghdad?

22 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I did intervene a couple of times to
23 suggest that there was a National Grid and that Basra
24 couldn't just isolate itself from events, but there were
25 occasions when Basra was having twice as much power as

1 Baghdad. So there was politics being played there and
2 we did intervene with the government to try and improve
3 the situation and to prevent a beggar thy neighbour
4 policy.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. The last thing really is relations
6 with the US through your period. You have told us that
7 in many respects the kind of dialogue that went on was
8 entirely natural and expected. If there were
9 differences, these were resolved or capable of being
10 resolved, there weren't huge splits or tensions, but did
11 the standing of the UK, in terms of its influence within
12 the coalition as a whole, change by reason of our
13 getting closer to handover, getting closer to drawdown
14 than the Americans were?

15 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I don't think so. I think the Americans
16 regarded us as their most important coalition partner.
17 We were, by far, the largest contributor, both in terms
18 of military resources and civil and political resources.
19 The American Ambassador I were the only two coalition
20 ambassadors who were on the Iraqi National Security
21 Council, so we sat on the Iraqi National
22 Security Council with the Prime Minister and the
23 Minister of Defence in terms of trying to manage this
24 transition. So we had a very close relationship.

25 We operated closely over the discussions on the

1 constitution, over government formation, over supporting
2 the electoral process. There were differences of view.
3 We had opinions, they had opinions. We argued them out.
4 But I didn't really detect any great division. Our aim
5 was the same, and I thought -- personally, I thought the
6 relationship was very good.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Martin?

8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Continuing with relationships, may
9 I ask, what was the UK relationship with the Maliki
10 government --

11 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, we were sort of relieved at the
12 end that a government had been formed. I mean, there
13 was quite a period -- a long period, a drawn-out
14 period -- we had hoped that there would be
15 a Prime Minister appointed in the January and the
16 government might be formed in February. That actually
17 rolled on to April and May and was very painful.

18 Nouri al-Maliki came sort of from nowhere through
19 this process. It was -- once the UIA, the Shia
20 grouping, had won the majority of seats in Parliament,
21 it was clear that the UIA was going to have to nominate
22 the Prime Minister. A long period when it was between
23 Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, the incumbent, and Adil Abdul-Mahdi
24 of a rival function, and they kind of checkmated each
25 other, but then it was quite clear that, still, the UIA

1 were going to have to nominate someone, and then there
2 were various discussions and Nouri al-Maliki sort of
3 arrived as a rather surprise candidate, came to the
4 fore, but our initial contact with him was good. He
5 said all the right things. He was leading a government
6 of national unity. They agreed a national programme
7 in May. It was based on national reconciliation,
8 national recovery, international engagement. He said
9 all the right things about inclusion. So I think we
10 were quite encouraged by his steps and initial
11 statements.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you involved in encouraging him?

13 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I was in a rather difficult position in
14 the sense that -- I think he had the impression that he
15 wasn't Britain's favourite candidate, but our position
16 was we wanted a credible leader who could lead
17 a balanced government and national reconciliation. We
18 didn't have a preferred person; we had a preferred
19 model.

20 I think he certainly -- he certainly came forward
21 with the right ideas at the time. So we were involved
22 directly in trying to shape the national programme, the
23 programme of national reconciliation and to help him
24 develop something we called the international compact
25 which was a better relationship with the international

1 community, because I think institutions like the UN and
2 the IMF and the EU had been a bit stand-offish on Iraq
3 and we wanted to use the fact that a sovereign
4 Iraqi Government had been formed after an election to
5 have a new relationship with the international
6 community. So we very much engaged with him. I mean,
7 I only had an month or two -- six weeks of an overlap,
8 two months at most, of him when he was forming the
9 government.

10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Had his dependence on the Sadrists been
11 an issue?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: He was less dependent on the Sadrists
13 than Ibrahim al-Ja'afari would have been. So he was kind
14 of free of that. He was neither dependent on the
15 Sadrists nor on SCIRI, so he had an opportunity for
16 independence. He was from Ja'afari's own faction called
17 the Daw'a. He had a reputation for being sectarian.
18 Some people
19 thought him very pro-Iranian -- I never thought that;
20 I thought it was a misreading of Maliki -- and, maybe
21 conscious of his reputation for being sectarian, he did
22 very clearly come out with this national reconciliation
23 plan, which you would have to ask others about how well
24 it has been implemented.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But in terms of what we had hoped for?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: He was saying the right things.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to ask you about your
3 contact with London. You mentioned your frequent
4 telephone calls direct with Number 10. The instructions
5 you got across the board, were they instructions that
6 you felt were attainable?

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: In the end, we did. I mean, my
8 instructions were: get a constitution, get it agreed,
9 have an election, get a government formed and get some
10 troops out. So I suppose they were, because that's --
11 by July, when I left, we had done all of those.
12 Handover in Muthanna was just about to happen.
13 Obviously, we would have liked to have got more troops
14 out quicker, but it was always a conditions based
15 approach, and when the conditions were right. We
16 weren't just going to pull troops out for the sake of
17 it.

18 So they were reasonable requests as long as you
19 realised that they weren't in my gift or solely in the
20 gift of the British Government. We were actors in
21 a complex situation where there were other actors and
22 the key for us was to work with the Americans, with the
23 Iraqis, mainly, to try and see a path through. I was
24 always struck by how open Iraqis were to discussions
25 about how democracy worked, and what struck me about it

1 was how little experience they had of it. Most politicians
2 had been in exile a while -- how it was just your own
3 normal experience. I don't regard myself as
4 a constitutional expert, but my everyday understanding
5 of how government works was useful in talking to Iraqi
6 politicians who were genuinely interested. So there was
7 a process of constant dialogue with individuals, which
8 I think had an impact.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: When you passed back your concerns to
10 London, did you feel they were understood and met
11 speedily?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think so. There was a certain --
13 there were certain frustrations sometimes that London
14 would -- we would come up with a new plan for the police
15 and a week later somebody would be asking how we are
16 doing. I said, "Oh, it is fantastic. We have
17 completely transformed the police in the last week".

18 I would say there was a tension between desire for
19 instant results and the realities on the ground, it was
20 understandable. I didn't complain too much about that.
21 I understood what was going on. But what you could
22 achieve in the sort of timescales that London needed for
23 political reasons were -- well there was a disconnect.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You have mentioned these political
25 reasons before at the beginning of your evidence today.

1 Do you feel the reporting culture was such that you were
2 able to transmit your needs and your problems?

3 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, I had no difficulty with that. If
4 I needed something, there was no problem in asking for
5 it. I didn't always get it because there weren't always
6 the resources. The security situation in Basra was
7 deteriorating. It would have been nice to have had more
8 helicopters for the military, but, as we have seen
9 elsewhere, you can't just conjure up helicopters very
10 easily.

11 I think I was realistic about what resources could
12 usefully be deployed. I was firmly of the view that UK
13 resources applied in Iraq were less good than Iraqi
14 resources applied in Iraq and our effort should be
15 directed to encouraging the Iraqis to take their own
16 decisions, build their own institutions, and, if that
17 took longer, it was better.

18 There was a tension between military commanders who
19 were under pressure to get quick fixes, and us under
20 pressure to get quick fixes, and putting in place
21 systems, procedures or a process that would be
22 sustainable. But I don't think those tensions ever
23 reached breaking point.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just wonder if I could follow up a bit
2 on the London end. You have talked about getting almost
3 daily phone calls from Number 10. Where were your
4 instructions coming from? Did it seem to you at all odd
5 that you were being managed from 10 Downing Street
6 rather than another department? Did you sense that
7 there was a joined-up policy in Whitehall?

8 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: No, I didn't find it strange, given the
9 sort of level of interest in the subject, the level of
10 commitment, personal commitment, by the Prime Minister.
11 I didn't get -- I had lots of visitors. Jack Straw was
12 out three or four, maybe five times in the time I was
13 there. The Prime Minister was out two or three times.
14 The Defence Secretary was out, you know, at least as
15 often as that. So I had a lot of direct contact with
16 the Ministers.

17 In a sense, we weren't getting daily instructions.
18 You know, we had -- I had my marching orders, if you
19 like, and a lot of it was left to us. It was one of
20 those -- what they were interested in was updates:
21 what's happening? What's happening on the constitution?
22 Where are we? Where are we on the electoral processes?
23 Where are we on the formation of the government? So
24 a lot of it was an insatiable appetite for information
25 on what was happening, and that was -- in a sense that

1 was the essence really of the Sheinwald call at nine
2 o'clock in the morning. It was a kind of, "I'm going in
3 to see the Prime Minister this morning. He is going to
4 ask about Iraq. What's happening?"

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There was also an appetite you have
6 talked of for instant results. You said --

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: There was.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- there was a level of ambition higher
9 than the ability to deliver. Did you sense that people
10 in London understood the constraints that were imposed
11 by the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi Government?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think they did. You know, I don't
13 want to overplay this kind of -- you know, this was
14 a bit of -- I understood the frustration. I'm quite
15 frank, so I would be quite frank back about the level of
16 ambition and the level of achievement and I didn't
17 encounter too many problems. Nobody withdrew me anyway.

18 So -- I mean, there was what I would call a healthy
19 exchange, them pushing us to achieve more, us explaining
20 reality, but getting on with it and trying to do more
21 and I don't think that relationship ever broke down.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What did you sense was the top priority
23 in London? Was it to achieve the objectives that we had
24 originally set ourselves, or was it -- you have talked
25 several times about the desire to transition out of

1 Iraq. We had been in there over two years at the period
2 you were there, and, indeed, three years by the time you
3 left. Was the real push at this stage to get out of
4 Iraq?

5 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: There was a real push to leave Basra,
6 leave the south, with a semblance of success, and
7 I think there was some pressure --

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: A "semblance"? That's a long way short
9 of what we had originally intended to do.

10 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Nobody expected Nirvana. Nobody did.
11 We were all realistic about what we could achieve.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We were realistic in 2005/2006. Had we
13 been reasonable in 2003/2004 when we set our original
14 objectives?

15 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We knew a lot more in 2005/2006 than we
16 knew in 2003/2004. We had learned a lot of lessons.
17 I think what was clear to me in 2005/2006 was just how
18 difficult this was.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the original objectives had been
20 a long way from reality?

21 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: The original objectives had been
22 ambitious.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's a euphemism. Overambitious?

24 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think the timescales were ambitious,
25 I do actually think that the project is

1 a five-to-ten-year project, and we are not yet ten years
2 away from 2003. I have always -- what was clear to me
3 when I was there, was that this would take longer to --
4 if your ambition was to reconstruct a state that had not
5 had democracy for the past 30 years, that had been led
6 by a brutal dictator virtually from scratch, that was
7 not going to happen in two years.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, the period you were there, London
9 were beginning to plan, to increase our forces in
10 Afghanistan. That started before you arrived, the
11 planning process. The announcement was made halfway
12 through your tour. The increased deployment from 1,000
13 to about 5,400 happened just before you left. You have
14 mentioned helicopters as one example of where you would
15 have liked to have seen more resources.

16 I know that is more in the area of the military, but
17 to what extent did you sense that at least in the
18 Ministry of Defence in London our objectives, our
19 priorities, were shifting, in the time you were
20 ambassador, from Iraq towards Afghanistan?

21 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: They were beginning to shift and there
22 was a sense that obviously if we were able to reduce our
23 presence in Iraq, that would create the headroom to
24 reinforce our forces in Afghanistan. There was
25 a backdrop for that. I was aware of that. In the end,

1 we weren't able to reduce our forces to the extent. We
2 still reinforced in Afghanistan. So you would have to
3 ask the military how they managed to do that. There was
4 certainly a sense that some drawdown in Iraq would help
5 ease the pressure for Afghanistan, but, in fairness,
6 there was never any question of withdrawing forces if
7 the conditions weren't right, and it took longer than we
8 originally thought.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you think the MoD's priorities and
10 Number 10's priorities were the same in this period?

11 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think so. I think the MoD were
12 obviously more anxious about some drawdown, but
13 I never -- it never got to levels of screaming and
14 shouting. I think they were also conscious that
15 a precipitate withdrawal could be very damaging for what
16 we called the UK's legacy in Iraq. There was talk of
17 our legacy and leaving a stable system in place before
18 we withdrew.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Following on from that, what was the
22 impact of the February 2006 bombing of the mosque in
23 Samarra?

24 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, this was part of what we saw as an
25 Al-Qaeda attempt to exacerbate sectarian divisions. So

1 there was the Samarra bombing, and I think the Al-Askari
2 mosque in Samarra. That was a blatant attempt at
3 increasing the sectarian divide.

4 My impression at the time was that actually it
5 brought people together and I think February 2006 was --
6 I think the -- certainly, after that, we began to see
7 some success in separating -- in getting the Sunnis to
8 come more clearly into the security apparatus and
9 things. So I think there was an initial, "My goodness!
10 Is this going to be the point at which Iraq breaks up
11 into sectarian civil war?" There was a shock element to
12 that. But the response of the politicians was such that
13 they managed that, and its impact was not what was
14 intended, certainly by the perpetrators.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the initial impact on the ground
16 was to vastly increase the levels of violence and
17 sectarianism on the ground?

18 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: There was initially -- but not
19 particularly great. There was initially some increase
20 in the levels of violence, but very quickly politicians
21 saw where this could lead, and I'm just -- I remember we
22 were having discussions with Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, who was
23 still the Prime Minister at the time, very conscious of
24 the need to dampen down sectarian response to this, and
25 I think subsequent events showed that they did manage

1 it.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So in the month afterwards, I think

3 the Defence Secretary announced the first drawdown of

4 8,000 to 7,200 British troops. So you didn't feel that

5 there was a problem in the developing security situation

6 that made it problematic to --

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Our troops were all in the south. So

8 you know, the consequences, had there been an increase

9 in violence as a result, most of it would have been felt

10 in and around Baghdad, Diyala province. So it wouldn't

11 have had much of an impact on our presence in the south,

12 given the preponderance, overwhelming Shia majorities in

13 those provinces.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just generally, when that

15 announcement was made, were you closely involved in the

16 decision-making leading up to that announcement?

17 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I don't remember that as a big

18 announcement. It was a sort of adjustment. I mean, the

19 8,000, 7,000 -- the big adjustment was going to be from

20 8,000 to 4,000, because that was going to be what we

21 called strategic overwatch, where our troops were no

22 longer on the streets, they would no longer be

23 responsible for security. So that reduction to 7,000

24 wasn't such a big deal as, say, a reduction to 4,000

25 would be.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it wasn't seen as having any
2 great political symbolical significance?

3 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: No, I think it may have been a response
4 to Afghanistan military -- but I don't recall it being
5 a big decision at the time and having to explain it in
6 any great depth.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Slightly related to that, at the
8 time one of the arguments one would hear about the
9 future of Iraq -- and you have alluded to this -- was
10 that the logic was to partition. That this would --
11 that the movement of populations that you have described
12 earlier might make this possible -- was that ever
13 seriously considered, do you think, to be a practical
14 policy by the British Government?

15 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: No, it was always a clear policy to do
16 what we could to work for the unity of Iraq.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there a point when you thought
18 that might be the result?

19 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes, I think I said in my dispatch that
20 a descent into civil war and possible partition looked
21 more likely at this stage than a sustainable democracy
22 unless we did a number of things. So it was
23 a possibility.

24 As sectarian violence increased, as things like
25 Al-Askari mosque, there were other incidents. There

1 were neighbourhood gangs driving out Sunnis from Sunni
2 areas and Shias from Shia areas. Baghdad was beginning
3 to divide into Sunni areas and Shia areas. So the sort
4 of increase in sectarian violence made it more likely
5 but not inevitable.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: From what you were saying, it was
7 largely the Iraqi politicians themselves who decided to
8 draw back from the brink. We were obviously encouraging
9 the reconciliation, but they sort of looked over the
10 precipice and saw where it would be leading them?

11 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think so. I mean, a lot of the -- the
12 decisive moment came, I think, after I left. Just
13 looking back, it was when -- I think there was a sort of
14 sense in which the Americans -- people felt that the
15 coalition was just going to gradually withdraw and they
16 might bide their time, people like Jaysh Al Mahdi and
17 others, and I think the surge, the famous surge
18 -- the reintroduction of more American troops
19 which empowered the government to do things they might
20 not otherwise have done. I think you should ask others
21 about this, but as a former insider looking from the
22 outside and inside again, something like the Charge of
23 the Knights in which the government was empowered to
24 take on the militias in the south, these were decisive
25 moments. These were decisive moments in bringing Iraq

1 back from a descent into civil war.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The last question on the Iranian
3 influence in all of this: how strong a sense did you get
4 in Baghdad of Iran playing a role? What did you see as
5 Iranian objectives in all of this? What were they
6 trying to achieve?

7 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think the Iranians were trying to have
8 as much influence as they could. So they were
9 basically -- they seemed to be dealing with just about
10 everybody, including Zarqawi at one point, but had most
11 influence with some of the Shia militia.

12 I think one of their successes was in influencing
13 the Jaysh Al Mahdi, who had, up to that point, been an
14 Iraqi nationalist group. We were convinced, and I said
15 so publicly at the time -- and we had evidence -- that
16 the Iranians were supplying explosives, EFPs, electronic
17 form projectiles explosives -- I can't remember what the
18 acronym stands for now, but they were pretty lethal
19 devices, and that Hezbollah in Lebanon had been
20 providing some training.

21 So there was a direct Iranian involvement with some
22 of the violent groups and there was also political
23 engagement by the Iranians. I would get that their
24 objectives were to maximise their influence in Iraq,
25 ensure that -- and to probably try and ensure the

1 coalition didn't succeed.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How much do you think that the
3 growing tension between Britain, the United States, but
4 also France and Germany, and Iran at this time was
5 a factor in this, in that they could see that Iraq was
6 a place where, if tensions had come to a head over the
7 Iranian nuclear programme, they could retaliate, as it
8 were, through Iraq?

9 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I'm reasonably confident that that must
10 have been in the Iranian minds, that this was
11 a playground in which they could impact directly on our
12 interests, so I'm sure that played a part.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have any recommendations
14 that you could make in terms of how this influence could
15 be limited?

16 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: My recommendations were to expose it
17 when we had, you know, to make it clear -- to get the
18 Iraqis themselves -- and we had some success in getting
19 the Iraqi politicians to make it clear to the Iranians
20 that this was unacceptable interference.

21 The best thing we could do was to promote Iraqi
22 institutions like a national army, an independent police
23 force, rule of law, all the things we were trying to do
24 anyway. These were things that would limit the extent
25 of any Iranian malign influence, and I think the

1 Iranians overreached themselves in Iraq. I do think
2 that there is an Iraqi saying that they have reminded
3 the Iraqis -- they have -- reengendered -- if there is
4 such a word -- Iraqi nationalism, and you are finding
5 a lot of Iraqis resentful of this sort of interference.
6 So they may have overplayed their hand.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I want to come back to the question
8 of detainees. You have talked about how they were
9 processed. That was one part of it. But was there any
10 concern about how they were treated while they were in
11 custody?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I think very few complaints about how
13 they were in American custody. I think the problem with
14 the number of detainees was how long they were held.
15 They were not processed, a lot of them were released
16 after three to six months. While I was there, the
17 biggest complaints were against Iraqi detention centres,
18 the MOI detention centres, and some of the horrific
19 things we found there when coalition forces did go into
20 something called the Jadriya bunker, and we also
21 discovered detention centres on the seventh floor of the
22 Ministry of Interior which led to a whole process of
23 dialogue with the Iraqi Government and agreement on
24 investigation commission and also coalition willingness
25 to inspect -- basically raid detention centres that they

1 were aware of.

2 So there was a determined effort to try and get to

3 the bottom of what the Sunnis called the MOI death

4 squads and politically motivated groups detaining

5 people. So there was quite a bit of concern about

6 detention in Iraqi facilities.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was done about it? What

8 priority was given to that --

9 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We gave quite a high priority to it.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- and was that concern raised with

11 you by London?

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: We didn't need London to raise it with

13 us. If I was involved in Sunni outreach -- this was

14 a nail in the coffin of Sunni outreach. Unless we could

15 address their concerns about death squads, political

16 targeting of people on the basis of their religious

17 affiliation, unless we could reassure them about the

18 independence of the police, the Ministry of Interior was

19 not a Shia ministry but a national one, unless we could

20 do all these things, then the prospects of an inclusive

21 government were nil. But you know -- so in a sense, we

22 were on this before London --

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What practical steps did you take to

24 actually deal with it?

25 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: In a sense, most of the issues with the

1 Americans because they had the forces in Baghdad. You
2 know, I spent quite a bit of time with the Minister of
3 Interior explaining to him in political terms why this
4 was bad news for him, why it was bad news for the
5 country. He always said the right thing; I wasn't
6 always sure he did the right thing, but in terms of
7 direct action, it was really the Americans, the
8 Americans raided the Jadriya bunker, they inspected four
9 other facilities. We persuaded the government to set up
10 an independent commission and Inquiry. The deputy
11 Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways, who was the Kurdish deputy
12 Prime Minister, he headed up an Inquiry. So you know,
13 we basically -- the Americans took some direct action,
14 we kept up the political pressure on the Iraqis to sort
15 this.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I ask another question? You
17 have been talking about the level of the ambition and
18 the time it will take to bring about change. I mean,
19 you were there only for about 12 months and obviously
20 invested a lot of time in building relationships. Do
21 you think you would have benefited if you had stayed
22 there longer?

23 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think it was something we
25 should --

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Well, we did do, we sent
2 Christopher Prentice. When the ambassador after --
3 Dominic Asquith replaced me. The ambassador after that
4 stayed for two years. I was ready to stay for two
5 years, but we had a policy, a health and safety, welfare
6 policy that nobody should stay longer than a year
7 because it was too difficult. Anyone who volunteered to
8 stay beyond a year was obviously mad and had to be
9 pulled out.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: You have given us a view of Iraq, of what is
11 now three and a half years ago, when you left. By the
12 time you did leave, on the one hand, the main objectives
13 of British policy for the time had been achieved. There
14 was a constitutionally elected government in being. The
15 security situation, however, was in a very serious
16 condition and getting worse.

17 If you look at the prospect for the state of Iraq at
18 the time, you thought there was still a serious risk
19 either of a Shia/Kurd diarchy or, worse still,
20 a fission. From a rather good seat in Saudi Arabia
21 today, and this is outside the scope of formal evidence,
22 I think, do you see the prospect now as substantially
23 better from the standpoint of what you described as
24 a seven-to-ten-year project, than it was at the point
25 where you left it in mid-2006?

1 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I do, yes, and I spent a lot of time
2 talking to the Saudis about this. I tell them that
3 I was a pessimist when I left Iraq. I think I described
4 myself as a pessimist who refuses to panic, but I think
5 the prospects are much better.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Just picking up one thing you said, part of
7 the rationale for that is correct, and indeed
8 courageous, decisions taken by the new Iraqi Government?

9 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Yes.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Not least in tackling the Shia militias in
11 the south.

12 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: Also the coalition sticking to its
13 policy that we would only withdraw troops when the
14 conditions were right and not against some pre-arranged
15 timetable.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Is there any final reflection you
17 would like to leave us with?

18 SIR WILLIAM PATEY: I mean, you touched on it. You know,
19 where do I think Iraq is going now? I spent a lot of
20 time trying to persuade the Saudis that they should be
21 investing more in Iraq in terms of time and effort.
22 I do think some of the groundwork has been laid.
23 I think I said that strategic failure is a possibility
24 but not inevitable. I think somebody else might say
25 strategic success is a possibility but not inevitable.

1 That might be where we are now.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I think that's the note
3 on which to conclude this session. We are grateful,
4 Sir William, thank you very much. We will resume in
5 about ten minutes' time for the second part of the
6 morning.

7 (11.27 am)

8 (Short break)

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