

1 (2.00 pm)

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, welcome back to everybody who was here  
3 with us this morning and welcome to those who have  
4 joined us this afternoon.

5 This afternoon we are going to continue to take our  
6 evidence on the issue of weapons of mass destruction.  
7 I would like to thank our witnesses for the evidence  
8 they gave us this morning.

9 We managed to cover a lot of ground on an issue that  
10 is anything but straightforward but is, of course,  
11 central to the United Kingdom's involvement in Iraq. We  
12 have taken evidence on the government's counter  
13 proliferation policy in the lead-up, the threats posed,  
14 the particular threat posed by Iraq and its weapons  
15 programme.

16 We looked in passing at the question of intelligence  
17 assessments, what the government thought it knew about  
18 the weapons programme, what uncertainties and gaps there  
19 were and the use of intelligence. We discussed the  
20 question of a dossier and we have been hearing about  
21 UNSCOM and its successor, UNMOVIC, the weapons  
22 inspection organisations, and I think we need to spend  
23 a little more time on that before we move to the  
24 post-invasion aspects of the WMD issue as the last main  
25 theme of the day.

1           Sir Lawrence?

2   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Before lunch we were looking at some  
3   very interesting and important questions about the  
4   relationship of the UNMOVIC process and the decisions to  
5   go to war.

6           Now, let's accept for the moment that there were  
7   questions of timings of the military operation that were  
8   determined by factors other than the UNMOVIC process,  
9   but I think it is important that we get straight in our  
10   minds whether or not, if UNMOVIC had been allowed to  
11   continue, it might have got a different result.

12           There is a general view that we went to war because  
13   Iraq was considering weapons of mass destruction.  
14   That's fair.

15           What you were saying before lunch, Sir William, is  
16   that the problem was, because of Iraqi non-cooperation,  
17   we were never going to be able to find that out.

18   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: No, I mean -- with non-cooperation,  
19   I don't think we could have ever got to the bottom of  
20   what we needed to get to the bottom of. But there was  
21   a different route that Iraq could have taken, as set out  
22   in 1441.

23           So it was not impossible that there could have been  
24   a peaceful solution to the issue of removing the threat  
25   of Saddam's WMD but with non-cooperation, it is very

1 hard to see how that would have been done.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But Dr Blix, as we also heard, was  
3 reporting improving cooperation under the pressure of  
4 what, in fact, did happen, but might have still remained  
5 a potential threat. That is military action. So it was  
6 the threat of force that got Saddam to allow inspectors  
7 back, the threat of force had encouraged cooperation.  
8 Was it possible that the threat of force might have  
9 encouraged more cooperation still?

10 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, we just don't know because the  
11 time ran out but I agree with you, that, as we used to  
12 call it "force on mind" had obviously had some effect.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Even without cooperation, you have  
14 pointed to a couple of areas where quite important  
15 discoveries were made with the help of intelligence  
16 provided by the UK. So it wasn't impossible that even  
17 in the face of not that great cooperation things could  
18 be found.

19 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, we were always asking ourselves,  
20 were we going to -- was there a silver bullet? Our  
21 assessment at the time and the assessment of those who  
22 were briefing UNMOVIC, was that that was not that great.

23 When we were talking to some of our -- of other  
24 countries, they were saying to us, you know, "It could  
25 have an effect on our thinking if you turn up something

1 really big".

2 Well, it would have been very good if we had been  
3 able to, but we were never more than moderately hopeful  
4 at the very best, given the general lack of cooperation.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you give the UNMOVIC inspectors  
6 possible sites to investigate or did the Americans give  
7 them possible sites to investigate which might have  
8 turned up something --

9 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: We passed 30 site-specific pieces of  
10 intelligence to UNMOVIC, covering 19 sites. Of those  
11 19 sites, I think about 10 were investigated.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you satisfied that, when they  
13 said nothing had been found there, that was because  
14 there was nothing to be found or did you believe it had  
15 been taken away or concealed? Did you accept what  
16 UNMOVIC had found at those 10 sites?

17 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: We accepted, if they said they hadn't  
18 found something, as Tim Dowse was indicating before  
19 lunch, there were some occasions when we didn't think  
20 the site inspection had been handled perfectly, but they  
21 had found -- they found some things which he had already  
22 mentioned. But there was never a silver bullet that  
23 came up.

24 MR TIM DOWSE: I think of the ten sites they visited, they  
25 found -- they produced results at four. In two of those

1 cases they uncovered illegal imports, but they weren't  
2 WMD-related, and the other two you mentioned before, one  
3 of them was documents related to the production of  
4 nuclear weapons hidden at the house of a scientist, the  
5 other one was the illegal motors for Al Samoud 2  
6 missiles which the Iraqis then subsequently admitted to.

7 I think it does all go to give you the general  
8 picture that we were getting some hits, but -- and  
9 Dr Blix himself, I think, he had a rather good phrase --  
10 he said, "Inspections aren't a game of hide and seek."  
11 What we were looking for was for the Iraqis to be open:  
12 to produce -- to provide the data which the inspectors  
13 could then go and verify, and that was not what we were  
14 getting. Again, it is this difference between passive  
15 cooperation and active cooperation.

16 As I said before lunch, the concern we had was that,  
17 as he had succeeded in the past, Saddam would  
18 effectively manage to string this out more or less  
19 indefinitely.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The difficulty they still had is  
21 that, when they said there wasn't anything there, they  
22 were actually correct.

23 MR TIM DOWSE: Well, as we now know, but at the time that  
24 was not our view.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was Dr Blix, both in his report and

1 in his more private conversations with you, puzzled  
2 himself by the fact that they weren't coming up with  
3 more? He stated publicly that he expected to find more  
4 than he did.

5 MR TIM DOWSE: I think he was quite -- in his  
6 discussions with us -- quite carefully neutral. He  
7 reported what was happening as he saw it. He told us  
8 that he regarded Iraqi cooperation as unsatisfactory,  
9 although it would be right to say that, towards the end  
10 of February, he said, "They are doing some things that  
11 we have asked them, though not everything". But he was  
12 quite careful not to express a view as to whether this  
13 process would eventually produce success or not.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: He was quite careful to say that he  
15 couldn't be sure what the eventual outcome would be,  
16 but, as I recall, he was quite sceptical about a number  
17 of claims that had been made by Secretary of State  
18 Powell in early February and was saying that they were  
19 finding it very hard to validate some of the particular  
20 things that had been said at that time.

21 MR TIM DOWSE: He began -- I can't remember precisely when,  
22 perhaps towards the end of February, he did raise the  
23 thought in certainly one meeting that perhaps the  
24 chemical and biological agents, the missing agents,  
25 didn't exist. But again, it was speculative.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's quite an interesting  
2 speculation. Was that passed on to Ministers?

3 MR TIM DOWSE: I think he actually raised it in  
4 a conversation with Ministers, as I recall.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On 18 March, the Prime Minister  
6 said:

7 "We are asked now seriously to accept in the last  
8 few years, contrary to all history, contrary to all  
9 intelligence, Saddam decided unilaterally to destroy  
10 those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably  
11 absurd."

12 Was any warning given to the Prime Minister that the  
13 claims might not be palpably absurd?

14 MR TIM DOWSE: Not by me, but I didn't know that he was  
15 going to say it.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I ask a supplementary to that?  
17 You keep insisting that it was to do with  
18 non-compliance.

19 Was the mindset that they were looking purely at  
20 non-compliance and, therefore, not paying much attention  
21 to what was being found, and it was substantive in the  
22 way that he suggested there was nothing there, not much  
23 attention was being paid to that because the mindset  
24 was, you know, to deal with Saddam's compliance and  
25 non-compliance?

1 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think that when things were found,  
2 what it showed was non-compliance. The very fact that  
3 they were being found showed non-compliance. For  
4 example, the rocket motors which he had not declared,  
5 which were found in greater numbers than he had  
6 declared, showed non-compliance; the nuclear documents  
7 hidden in the home of a scientist showed non-compliance.  
8 So I think that what -- when things were being turned  
9 up, it again showed non-compliance.

10 Sir Lawrence said that -- he said he didn't have  
11 things and it turned out that he didn't. That is  
12 correct, but you have also said it would have been very  
13 difficult to prove. Well, it was shown fairly well, in  
14 my view, by the Iraq Survey Group after the war, when  
15 there was, you know, more cooperation, when documents --  
16 more documentation could be found of the destruction of  
17 the CW and the BW in 1991 and when interviews not  
18 constrained by some of the threats that were being put  
19 out under the Saddam Hussein regime were able to take  
20 place.

21 So if you had had that cooperation, I think it might  
22 have been easier to try to prove whether some of the  
23 things he was saying were true or not.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, the point I'm making, though,  
25 was that what was being found, no assessment was made of

1 the danger of what was being found because more  
2 concentration was paid to non-compliance.

3 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, we were not assessing the danger  
4 of particular items which were being found. We were  
5 certainly putting a huge amount of emphasis on whether  
6 or not he was complying with the UN Security Council  
7 Resolution, because that was the grounds for providing  
8 the authorisation in the resolution way back in 1991.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one area --

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt, Sir Lawrence, I think  
11 Sir Roderic might have a follow-up question.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Like my colleagues, I would like just to  
13 pick up one or two points stemming from where we got to  
14 before lunch. You explained very clearly in the course  
15 of this morning that inspections could only work, be  
16 fully effective, if Saddam Hussein was going to  
17 cooperate actively with the process, not passively.

18 From the outset of this process, from the passage of  
19 Security Council Resolution 1441 in November of 2002,  
20 was there actually any likelihood that he would  
21 cooperate fully with the process, so that the  
22 inspections could be fully effective?

23 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Based on his track record, we wouldn't  
24 have thought there was a high likelihood of that, but,  
25 of course, he had the opportunity to change.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: He had the opportunity, but we didn't  
2 expect him to do it?

3 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes, I think we had a low level of  
4 expectation. Nevertheless, there had not on previous  
5 occasions been a situation where he was faced quite so  
6 starkly with the prospect that, if he did not comply and  
7 cooperate, he faced severe military action.

8 We had had the experience of Desert Fox, where there  
9 had been air action against him, as a result of  
10 non-compliance, but he had ridden that out and  
11 undoubtedly the military build-up, the very stark  
12 options that were being canvassed, we felt would put him  
13 under pressure such as never before. So although our  
14 expectations still were not high because he had a long  
15 record of miscalculation, I don't think we thought they  
16 were negligible.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we were setting off down this path not  
18 expecting it to work, but hoping that, despite the track  
19 record of the previous decade, it might?

20 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes, I think there was a genuine belief that  
21 there was a chance and, actually, had he cooperated, had  
22 he in the last resort met the benchmarks that were  
23 set for him, I think things would have been different  
24 from the British Government's point of view.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I now move forward to the French

1           proposal for a different form of inspections that  
2           Sir William mentioned this morning? Was that  
3           a feasible, a reliable proposal or was it essentially  
4           a tactical ploy put forward by the French so close to  
5           the deadline, the deadline that we discussed just before  
6           the lunch break, that it really couldn't have been  
7           genuinely viable?

8   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: We didn't think that it was genuinely  
9           viable because we didn't think that the inspectors could  
10          compel disarmament. We also thought -- and I think  
11          probably under the -- in a not dissimilar situation.  
12          Just putting numbers in without active cooperation would  
13          probably also not produce a great deal more than UNMOVIC  
14          were already producing.

15   MR TIM DOWSE: Also, there were severe practical  
16          difficulties. The proposal was to flood Iraq with  
17          hundreds of inspectors, but then there was a real  
18          question of where those inspectors would come from. It  
19          would have taken time to recruit them, time to train  
20          them, to brief them, and inevitably we are back to --  
21          were we to have gone down that route, there would have  
22          been a hiatus and we had little confidence that it would  
23          have produced a different situation in the end, as  
24          Sir William says.

25                 So I think we did tend to regard it as essentially

1 a tactical effort to yet again kick the can down the  
2 road.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would it be fair to describe it on the  
4 eve of the military action as an attempt at a wrecking  
5 amendment?

6 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think you could certainly advance  
7 that argument. Let's remember also -- this strays  
8 a little bit outside the strict counter proliferation  
9 area -- the French view of whether military action  
10 should be taken or not. They were looking at wider  
11 considerations, obviously, than just the counter  
12 proliferation considerations, but I think they felt that  
13 it would produce quite a bit of chaos in Iraq, that it  
14 wouldn't help the Middle East peace process, that it  
15 would increase the threat of terrorism.

16 Those were all perfectly possible political  
17 arguments to put forward, but those were not the  
18 arguments that swayed the decision of the government in  
19 this country, and so, against that background, your  
20 suggestion is a perfectly possible one.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just to complete the picture, can I turn  
22 to the third proposal, which you also mentioned just  
23 before the break, which was the reformulation by the  
24 British in the debate leading up to the failure to get  
25 a second Security Council Resolution that there should

1 be six benchmarks that were based on the clusters in  
2 Hans Blix' report.

3 Can you tell us what the purpose was of the  
4 British Government in putting forward that proposal?

5 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, it was to try to win support for  
6 a second resolution with, we thought, a realistic  
7 proposal in a short timeframe of actions which Saddam  
8 could take. But in the event, that second resolution  
9 never came to pass.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It was supported by the United States?

11 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes. It was our idea. I think it was first  
12 canvassed before the end of February when it began to  
13 become clear that the level of support for a second  
14 Resolution in the Security Council was dubious, to say  
15 the least. We were looking for a way to get more  
16 international support for a second resolution, at the  
17 same time as, if you like, visibly giving Saddam a last  
18 chance.

19 So in the -- and the US accepted that as an  
20 approach. I think they thought it was unlikely to  
21 produce the result that we expected or that we hoped  
22 for, but they thought it was worth the try.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And it was seen as realistic -- the word  
24 you used -- by UNMOVIC as well, by Dr Blix?

25 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think it was discussed with UNMOVIC

1           in New York.

2   MR TIM DOWSE:  The nature of the benchmarks that we might

3           set was discussed with Dr Blix.  I'm not sure the ones

4           that we eventually produced were quite the ones that he

5           thought were relevant, but there was a lot of

6           discussion, debate, in the last few days before we put

7           them -- those benchmarks -- forward, as to quite what

8           would both be a realistic and challenging test for

9           Saddam, but nevertheless not one where you set the bar

10          so high that he clearly would not be able to reach it.

11  SIR RODERIC LYNE:  But it nevertheless didn't attract the

12          support of the Security Council?

13  MR TIM DOWSE:  No, in the end, it fell away because of, as

14          Sir William said this morning, the rather clear

15          statement from the French that under no circumstances

16          would they support a second resolution.

17  SIR MARTIN GILBERT:  Just a small point, the benchmarks

18          would, of course, have come after the 19 sites which you

19          had indicated to UNMOVIC, of which you said nine were

20          uninvestigated.  Were they uninvestigated because there

21          was impeding of the investigation or because time ran

22          out?

23  SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  I think it was more the latter.

24  MR TIM DOWSE:  I really don't know.

25  SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  I think they got through ten of the

1 sites, but I don't remember them being blocked from nine  
2 other sites.

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So again, it was a question of the  
4 time?

5 MR TIM DOWSE: I don't remember. The process that was taken  
6 through was that we would provide, via our intelligence  
7 agencies, if you like, a briefing pack to UNMOVIC on  
8 a particular site, saying, "Here is what we believe  
9 we know about this. Here is how the -- whatever it is,  
10 the agent or the items or the equipment is concealed",  
11 and it was then up to them to take action on that.

12 Whether they didn't have time, whether they didn't  
13 have the resources, whether on some of them -- perhaps they  
14 felt we didn't provide them with sufficient evidence to go  
15 on, I don't know.

16 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Yes, it was a question ultimately of  
17 choice. They decided where they visited.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But they hadn't given up, so far as you  
19 know?

20 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: What I don't know is what their plans  
21 were for the future.

22 MR TIM DOWSE: Because there was a -- this was again  
23 a difference between UNMOVIC and UNSCOM. One of the  
24 Iraqi complaints about UNSCOM was that there was too  
25 much exchange of intelligence in both directions: inward

1 to UNSCOM, but also from UNSCOM to ourselves, the  
2 Americans and others.

3 So in UNMOVIC it was quite clear, and actually  
4 Dr Blix was rather firm on this, that there should be  
5 a one-way flow, that we would brief them. Otherwise, in  
6 return, we depended on his reports to the Security  
7 Council.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We have talked a lot about Dr Blix  
9 but, as we mentioned before lunch, Dr El-Baradei was  
10 also investigating and he did come to the conclusion  
11 that there was nothing to be found, there was no active  
12 nuclear programme at the time.

13 Did the UK accept that assessment?

14 MR TIM DOWSE: I think, as we said, our conclusion was that  
15 the nuclear programme had been effectively dismantled in  
16 the 1990s and our intelligence was that, although the  
17 intellectual capital had been preserved, scientists had  
18 been kept together in groups, documentation probably had  
19 been retained, we didn't believe there was an active  
20 nuclear programme. It was all contingent on the  
21 removal of sanctions, at which point we thought it would  
22 be restarted. So we didn't disagree -- it wouldn't have  
23 surprised us.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Vice-President Cheney, on the eve of  
25 war, said he did disagree. He thought they had got it

1 wrong.

2 MR TIM DOWSE: It wasn't our conclusion.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it does indicate -- just to give  
4 another American quote from Donald Rumsfeld, he said  
5 that, "Absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence",  
6 the question being, was there any way that the  
7 administration could have been convinced by the UNMOVIC  
8 process that actually there wasn't much there?

9 MR TIM DOWSE: Which administration?

10 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I don't know, because we never got to  
11 that point.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Had you discussed with the Americans  
13 prior to all of this, the point at which you could  
14 declare this process a success or failure? It is  
15 interesting, the benchmarks which sounded a very  
16 reasonable approach were, in a sense, being cobbled  
17 together rather late in the day. Was there any sense,  
18 when this process began, of the criteria by which you  
19 judged its progress and success?

20 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: That was very much up to the reports by  
21 Blix and El-Baradei because they were doing the work,  
22 but when we got the resolution, the Americans supported  
23 it strongly, so that suggests that the American  
24 Government, as a whole, were willing to see if Iraq  
25 could meet the tests.

1 MR TIM DOWSE: But if you mean, had we agreed with the US  
2 "A, B, C, if these boxes are ticked, then we will have  
3 cooperation", no, we hadn't made that sort of  
4 agreement. I think our view, rather as William was  
5 saying this morning in relation to Libya, we felt that  
6 we would know cooperation when we saw it.

7 Now, we would have reached our judgment. Whether  
8 the US administration would have reached the same  
9 judgment, I can't say, but they were certainly anxious  
10 that our judgment would match theirs. So I think they  
11 would have paid attention to our --

12 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: They were also providing UNMOVIC with  
13 support.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Although Dr Blix, I think, compared  
15 favourably our support to the support they were given by  
16 the Americans.

17 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: We can't comment on the support the  
18 Americans gave, but they were giving support.

19 MR TIM DOWSE: He described our support as the benchmark for  
20 assistance. Quite a lot of benchmarks.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Another benchmark, yes. Just to  
22 conclude, we had an assumption about what was there. To  
23 many people UNMOVIC was a chance to test that  
24 assumption, and by and large the answers coming back  
25 from UNMOVIC didn't support the assumption. Now, you

1           have given us reasons why that was so, but I'll come  
2           back to the point as to why there wasn't at least  
3           a warning to Ministers of the reason why evidence wasn't  
4           coming back from UNMOVIC to support this assumption,  
5           leaving aside the missiles, why evidence wasn't coming  
6           back because there was nothing there.

7   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I don't think we shared your assumption  
8           that -- because of what was being produced -- there was  
9           nothing there.

10   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I appreciate you didn't share the  
11           assumption, but at least there was a warning that it  
12           might be the case that there was an alternative  
13           interpretation of the evidence that was gaining in  
14           credibility.

15   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: As I mentioned earlier today, actually  
16           what UNMOVIC produced itself on 7 March showed that  
17           there were 128 actions that Saddam had to take in order  
18           to try to resolve the unresolved issues. But that  
19           doesn't suggest that we were seeing that we were more or  
20           less through and everything was in the clear.

21   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Absolutely not. All I'm asking is  
22           whether there was an alternative hypothesis that  
23           couldn't be supported by the evidence and, given that in  
24           these various sites that we sent them to, of which only  
25           half had been looked at, stocks had not been found, but

1 in other areas -- presumably, you had equal confidence  
2 in the intelligence -- something had been found, there  
3 was reason to at least warn Ministers that an  
4 alternative hypothesis might just be correct, that  
5 contrary to what the Prime Minister said on the eve of  
6 war, it wasn't patently absurd.

7 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think Sir Lawrence, 4 out of 10 as  
8 a strike rate is pretty good.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Not when you are going to war.

10 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: On the basis of intelligence, 4 out of  
11 10 is not a bad strike rate.

12 MR TIM DOWSE: I wouldn't put it quite in percentage terms  
13 but really the same point in a slightly broader way.

14 As I said before, we were getting through this  
15 period in January, February, a fairly steady stream of  
16 low level reports saying, "This piece of equipment has  
17 been removed. The Iraqis are intending to hide or bury  
18 this. They have taken something out by night and taken  
19 it around". So the background music, if you like, that  
20 we were working against all tended to reinforce our view  
21 that they were not playing straight, that they were  
22 concealing, they were still hiding things from the  
23 inspectors.

24 So you are right, it was possible to come to  
25 a hypothesis that the inspectors were not finding some

1 things because they weren't there, but against the  
2 background of that sort of reporting, against the fact  
3 that they were finding some things, it tended to  
4 actually reinforce our view that that alternative  
5 hypothesis was not the correct one but  
6 in fact, our longstanding assessment that the --  
7 particularly the chemical and biological agent, weapons,  
8 existed, was correct. So I think we could have briefed  
9 Ministers, perhaps, that we were wrong, but we didn't actually  
10 think we were wrong. The evidence seemed to us in that  
11 period to be rather confirming it.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to repeat my point, I wasn't  
13 asking you to say that you were wrong, only to alert  
14 Ministers to the possibility of an alternative  
15 possibility that might have influenced decisions at this  
16 late stage. That was the only point I was making.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I can just make the layman's point, if  
18 we were finding some things and had already scored 4 out  
19 of 10, the ordinary person would tend to say, "Why not  
20 go on for longer and see if you can get 8 out of 10 or 9  
21 out of 10?"

22 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, we were, as has been discussed  
23 already, at that stage, in difficulties on the second  
24 resolution, so at that point we came up with the six  
25 tests as a possible way of at the very last minute

1 testing Saddam a bit further.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm hearing the sound of battle in my ears  
3 and we are getting to the end of March. I want just to  
4 stay in the era of run-up. There is one question before  
5 we come to the post-conflict aspects of WMD and that's  
6 to ask: was there, and, if so, what was it,  
7 a pre-conflict plan for finding and, if found, disposing  
8 of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq following an  
9 invasion?

10 MR TIM DOWSE: There was an American plan. I myself didn't  
11 know the full details but we were aware that there were  
12 American military plans to go and investigate sites and  
13 make safe against longer-term disposal WMDs that were  
14 discovered. Because the Americans were going to be  
15 providing the bulk of the forces, we were sort of  
16 relatively secondary to that.

17 My own and my department's involvement was much more  
18 in looking ahead to how we would exploit the discovery.  
19 First, because we confidently expected to find WMD and  
20 we wanted to make the most of that, together with what  
21 was going on simultaneously with Libya and AQ Khan, we  
22 wanted to essentially raise international awareness of  
23 the threat from proliferation and we thought that the  
24 discoveries that we would find in Iraq would help to  
25 reinforce that campaign.

1           We also were quite conscious that when we announced  
2           a discovery in Iraq there would be those who were  
3           sceptical, that -- who would claim that we had planted  
4           it in some way, those who were opposed to the war, so we  
5           were quite concerned to ensure that there was, if you  
6           like, independent verification of that. And certainly  
7           our view, which we persisted in for quite some time, was  
8           that the obvious people to observe and verify findings  
9           made by the coalition would be UNMOVIC, and we spent  
10          quite a period of time trying to persuade the US of that  
11          view.

12          So before the war, that was really how it was, but  
13          the detailed planning was done -- so we understood -- by  
14          the US. And, in fact there was a military unit, I think  
15          it was called the 75th Exploitation Task Force, which  
16          was supposed to deal with WMD discovery as the campaign  
17          went forward.

18          THE CHAIRMAN: But contrast, I think, with the apparent  
19          absence of planning to take control over the hundred or  
20          more arms dumps for conventional weapons.

21          At the time -- we are still looking at the  
22          pre-invasion phase, looking ahead in planning terms --  
23          was there at that point a different kind of doubt that  
24          something would be found in the way of usable CBW  
25          munitions?

1 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: We thought it was quite possible.

2 MR TIM DOWSE: Of course, we did think it remained possible,  
3 despite the very last-minute intelligence that arrived  
4 about warheads being dismantled, we still thought there  
5 was a real possibility that Saddam would actually use  
6 chemical weapons against invasion forces.

7 If you recall, there was the -- I think it appeared  
8 in the media at the time, the so-called "red line"  
9 around Baghdad, which -- the theory was that if  
10 coalition forces crossed that line, then Saddam would  
11 use WMD. And the ISG subsequently interviewing Iraqi  
12 military officers after the war were told, that, "Yes,  
13 there was a red line, but it actually didn't relate to  
14 use of WMD".

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Still staying in late March/April, was there  
16 any surprise at all in London, or, as far as you know,  
17 in Washington, that nothing was being found in those  
18 first few days and weeks?

19 Security, of course, in Iraq was beginning to break  
20 down, the arms dumps themselves of course had been  
21 raided, but nothing was being turned up in the first few  
22 weeks. Did that provoke any questioning at that time?

23 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes. I think we were certainly concerned.

24 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Yes, surprised and concerned. It  
25 wasn't what we had expected.

1 MR TIM DOWSE: I think, as you say, security began to break  
2 down quite quickly at the end of April and that raised  
3 additional concern that the evidence that we still  
4 believed was there would be lost.

5 I think we always thought that, in addition to  
6 weapons, there would be evidence in the form of  
7 documentation or components -- and in terms of  
8 scientists that we had interviewed.

9 One of the things we were quite concerned about was  
10 that Iraqi WMD experts would escape out of the country  
11 and go and sell their services to other countries. So  
12 we had some contingency planning to try to spot that  
13 happening and try to prevent it. But, yes, there was  
14 quite a lot of concern, I would say, growing  
15 through April, that, as the situation in Iraq became  
16 more chaotic, that evidence would either be destroyed or  
17 otherwise lost and that we wouldn't -- and that this was  
18 not being dealt with as effectively as it should be.

19 In fact, I visited Washington in late April with  
20 a colleague from the Ministry of Defence to discuss with  
21 the US the progress of the WMD recovery campaign, and,  
22 at that time, the US were beginning to talk about  
23 establishing the Iraq Survey Group in its first  
24 incarnation and we were discussing what input the UK  
25 could make to that.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: It was already big by the end of April, as  
2 I understand it.

3 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: It was an American concept. The first head  
5 of it, David Kay, was an American appointee, but what  
6 about the United Kingdom's share in both the manning and  
7 operations work plan?

8 MR TIM DOWSE: We put in 100 experts including -- there was  
9 a Chief of Staff who was not a WMD expert, more of an  
10 administrator. We provided some equipment. We, with  
11 the help of Porton Down, deployed a "silver standard"  
12 analytical laboratory, which was based at Baghdad  
13 airport, to deal with samples.

14 So, there was quite a large-scale UK input and we  
15 found -- there were a number of difficulties. I think  
16 administrative difficulties really in the early stages.  
17 There were problems in the sharing of intelligence,  
18 the Americans had certain rather strict rules, their  
19 military, on what could be shared, so the UK contingent  
20 I think found life in the early stages a little  
21 frustrating. But we overcame that.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. There would have been work going  
23 on outside the ISG itself. No doubt the American  
24 recovery team continued for a time and in the south  
25 I imagine British forces were, as it were, on the

1           lookout. Was this part of a planned scheme or was it  
2           just opportunism? I'm thinking of the UK presence in  
3           the south.

4   MR TIM DOWSE: In the south there was a general  
5           instruction. You would need to ask the military  
6           witnesses precisely what the orders were, but my  
7           understanding was there was a general instruction to  
8           follow up evidence of WMD. We had provided a list of  
9           sites that we were concerned about. We fed that into  
10          the American country-wide plan and I think there were  
11          several hundred, actually, sites that needed to be  
12          worked at.

13                One of our initial concerns was that these were  
14          being addressed in a rather ad hoc way and there wasn't  
15          much evidence of a systematic approach, but in the south  
16          we were getting, as I recall, Iraqis coming to our  
17          military and saying, "We know where there is some WMD".  
18          Certainly from the Foreign Office we were  
19          encouraging the Ministry of Defence, and through them  
20          the forces in theatre, to pursue these leads because  
21          obviously we were very anxious to both secure the  
22          evidence -- because we did still think it was  
23          a possibility that remnants of the Ba'ath Party or  
24          Saddam's regime would still be trying to destroy some of  
25          the evidence -- but we also wanted to recover it, for, as

1 I say, exposure to the world.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Do you, perhaps with hindsight, now consider  
3 the ISG as having been, broadly speaking, configured and  
4 scaled sensibly? The Butler Committee, I recall, went  
5 in probably May and already had an enormous document  
6 mountain in Arabic incapable of translation by reason of  
7 size and was building up.

8 Was the ISG, as it were, up to the task?

9 MR TIM DOWSE: It is slightly difficult to say. I think, if  
10 the task was to produce the evidence that essentially  
11 our assessments had been right, it probably was. We  
12 always thought that the process of exposing WMD,  
13 making it safe, et cetera, would be a long-term project,  
14 would take quite a bit -- we didn't think the ISG --  
15 I remember we had a discussion with the Americans about  
16 this. There was a suggestion that it could all be wound  
17 up by the end of 2003. Our view was that was very  
18 optimistic. We thought it would take longer.

19 But was it up to the task? It is difficult to --

20 THE CHAIRMAN: The head of the ISG, David Kay, produced  
21 a report in, I think, October 2003. What were its key  
22 findings and how was that received in government?

23 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: The interim report?

24 THE CHAIRMAN: This is the interim report in October.

25 MR TIM DOWSE: It largely said we have work in progress.

1           There was a period through the early summer leading  
2           towards the report, where I think one of the main  
3           concerns that I had, and we had generally at the  
4           Foreign Office, was that we should not declare success  
5           too rapidly, that it was -- again, we were concerned  
6           that verification would be necessary, that we needed to  
7           be absolutely sure of our ground, given the criticisms  
8           that had been made already and some remarks that I think  
9           Dr Blix was saying publicly, that, when we  
10          produced the evidence, which I think we still thought we  
11          would find, that we would need to be very sure of our  
12          ground.

13                 There were finds that were being turned up by the  
14          military which were then being released to the press, we  
15          felt prematurely. So we spent a certain amount of time,  
16          if you like, almost telling our Ministers that they  
17          should be careful about what they said and we should  
18          wait for the ISG report. Then the Kay Report  
19          essentially, I think was -- carried a tone of optimism  
20          that the WMD was there and would be found, but just  
21          hadn't been yet.

22   THE CHAIRMAN: There was a network of secret laboratories.

23   MR TIM DOWSE: There was a network of secret laboratories,  
24                    although the eventual conclusion was that they were for  
25                    the Iraqi intelligence services to work on assassination

1 methods, but it is still not certain what it was for.  
2 We hadn't known about those previously.

3 We did, of course, discover some trailers and that  
4 occupied a lot of attention because they looked very,  
5 very similar to the trailers, the biological weapons  
6 trailers, that Colin Powell had described to the  
7 Security Council and we thought that that was really  
8 a very significant find.

9 There was then quite a lengthy discussion between  
10 experts. I remember some of our MoD BW experts went and  
11 looked at trailers and said, "Yes, we can't see that  
12 these would be used for anything else other than BW".  
13 Americans, or American experts, took the same view, but  
14 other experts took a different view.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Such as agricultural use.

16 MR TIM DOWSE: The eventual conclusion of the ISG was that  
17 they were for producing hydrogen. I'm not sure what the  
18 purpose of the hydrogen was for. This was an ongoing  
19 process, but, as I say, from the Foreign Office my main  
20 concern at this time was that we shouldn't -- and it  
21 was a concern that began to grow as the period went on  
22 and we still hadn't found a smoking gun -- that we  
23 shouldn't, if you like, trumpet success prematurely.

24 I think a comment that we eventually made was -- and  
25 it was picked up -- was that what we had was a 20,000

1 piece jigsaw of which 15,000 pieces had been hidden and  
2 we had to find the pieces and then put them together to  
3 form the picture and that this was not going to be  
4 something that happened overnight.

5 So that was really where we were and the interim  
6 report, of David Kay, in some respects we felt it was  
7 a bit too optimistic. He raised expectations too high.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: There was a mounting chorus of criticism of  
9 David Kay's leadership and management of the ISG in the  
10 later months of 2003, leading eventually to his  
11 resignation at the end of the year.

12 His stated reason for resigning was what; that there  
13 was nothing to be found merely, or what?

14 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I don't know. He went back.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: 2004, sorry, he resigned in January 2004.

16 MR TIM DOWSE: Beginning of 2004.

17 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Yes, he went back to the United States.

18 I think he may have had some differences with some  
19 people there.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: What I wonder is, and in one sense is  
21 academic but in another sense not, how far British  
22 Ministers, including, obviously, the Foreign Secretary,  
23 the Defence Secretary, and the Prime Minister, were sort  
24 of kept abreast of the changing assessment?

25 MR TIM DOWSE: Very closely. As you might imagine, given

1 the basis on which we had gone to war, there was a very  
2 close interest by Ministers, including the  
3 Prime Minister, in what was being found by the ISG and  
4 whether enough effort was being put in.

5 As I say -- my concern was that we should not  
6 announce things until we were absolutely certain of our  
7 ground because it would have been a disaster, frankly,  
8 in PR terms.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. We are in January 2004. David Kay has  
10 resigned. Charles Duelfer is appointed as his  
11 successor. This is still essentially an American  
12 operation. We had no hand in the appointment itself of  
13 in the choice of someone?

14 MR TIM DOWSE: We knew Charles Duelfer very well.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: The key thing, as we understand it from  
16 reading, is that he shifted the focus of the ISG's work  
17 very much on to whether or not the Saddam regime had  
18 a strategic intent in the longer term rather than the  
19 actual possession in the here and now for WMDs. Is that  
20 right?

21 MR TIM DOWSE: Yes, that's correct. He did put more  
22 emphasis, and, of course, their final report puts a lot  
23 more emphasis on strategic intent. He felt that the  
24 physical hunt for weapons would get you so far, but that  
25 only presented part of a picture and you needed a more

1 rounded picture. So I think he put a lot more emphasis  
2 on interviews with scientists again and I think his  
3 approach was, frankly, a sensible one. We certainly  
4 supported it.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: By January 2004 or a little after, is it now  
6 generally accepted in Whitehall by Ministers and  
7 officials that nothing will be found, nothing of  
8 significance?

9 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, increasingly, as time passed it  
10 was thought less likely that things would be found.

11 MR TIM DOWSE: I sometimes think I was the last official in  
12 Whitehall to think that we still might find something.  
13 It clearly became less likely as time went on.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Really, as we are coming to the end of this,  
15 I think, was the final report of the ISG,  
16 Charles Duelfer's report, persuasive in pointing to the  
17 existence of a strategic intent on the part of the  
18 regime to develop WMDs as soon as they were in  
19 a position to do so, ie sanctions lifted, or eased or  
20 whatever.

21 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think it was generally, and he went  
22 into some detail beyond that, as to the types of WMD  
23 that he thought Saddam was likely to concentrate on from  
24 all the work that the ISG had done, he thought that they  
25 would try, in particular, to work on the ballistic

1           missiles, also CW.

2   THE CHAIRMAN:  Just to interrupt you, I'm sorry, ballistic  
3           missiles with a range well beyond 150 kilometres?

4   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  Yes.  On that, they found evidence that  
5           they were working on ballistic missiles with a range  
6           considerably beyond 150.

7   MR TIM DOWSE:  Up to 1,000 kilometres, I think, yes.

8   THE CHAIRMAN:  Yes.

9   MR TIM DOWSE:  Of course, they had had the advantage, by the  
10          time of their final report, of interviewing  
11          Saddam Hussein himself, which helped.  So one could  
12          say that that added credibility, I would say, to their  
13          final conclusions.

14                 The fundamental conclusions they reached were that  
15          the nuclear programme would have been revived once  
16          sanctions were lifted: more or less what we had assessed  
17          before the war.

18                 On missiles, again, in general terms, they pretty  
19          well confirmed our assessment.  Where, of course, they  
20          reached a fundamentally different conclusion was that we  
21          had been wrong about the production of chemical and  
22          biological agents in 2002 and the intelligence that  
23          arrived at that time, and that was subsequently  
24          withdrawn, had led to us a wrong conclusion, although,  
25          again, on chemical -- in terms of strategic intent, he

1 thought Saddam -- the ISG concluded that Saddam would  
2 have tried to reconstitute the programme.

3 I should perhaps say that through the first half of  
4 2004 -- and I think even later -- we did keep finding  
5 chemical munitions in small numbers in the south of Iraq  
6 and elsewhere, and I spent some time, as then Chief of  
7 the Assessments Staff, making points to our Ministers  
8 that in every one of these cases they appeared to be,  
9 not newly produced weapons, but left over from the end  
10 of the 1991 war.

11 I think that rather added to the ISG's conclusion  
12 that the unaccounted-for munitions that UNSCOM had  
13 identified were simply ones that had been buried hastily  
14 in the ground and there hadn't been documentary evidence  
15 kept, and our belief back in 1991 and subsequently, that  
16 the Iraqis actually had quite an effective and  
17 meticulous accounting procedure was actually wrong. In  
18 the chaos of 1991, they had simply shoved things in  
19 holes in the ground.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: You both agreed that there was a mounting  
21 realisation through the course of mid-2003 into 2004  
22 that nothing would be found of contemporary usable  
23 munitions. There must have come a point where Ministers  
24 following this closely were advised or decided that they  
25 should announce this. Did that happen?

1 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Well, what we did was we waited until  
2 the final ISG report had been published in October --  
3 THE CHAIRMAN: September/October.  
4 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: October 2004, and then we conducted  
5 a JIC assessment comparing what was found with what the  
6 intelligence had been before the war. That was  
7 conducted in December 2004. But again, until the ISG  
8 had done its final report, we didn't want to prematurely  
9 announce conclusions before it had announced its final  
10 conclusions. But Ministers were reporting to Parliament  
11 the withdrawal of intelligence over that period.  
12 In October 2004, the Foreign Secretary was reporting  
13 that.  
14 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. There were two comparisons, I suppose,  
15 to strike -- I think we have come pretty much close to  
16 the end of this -- one is between our own assessment up  
17 to March 2003 on what was ultimately concluded by,  
18 effectively, September/October 2004.  
19 The other is how far Saddam's own declaration could  
20 be matched and fitted to a better degree than was  
21 thought at the time to what the ultimate conclusion of  
22 the ISG's work was.  
23 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Evidently, when he was saying that  
24 there were no --  
25 THE CHAIRMAN: The liar was speaking the truth.

1 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: -- chemical weapons or biological  
2 weapons, none were ever substantiated.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Is there more to be said about that or is  
4 that just it, in effect? There remained, of course,  
5 a very large number of issues of non-compliance as  
6 declared in Hans Blix' final report before the invasion.  
7 Is that correct?

8 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Yes.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: That was not set aside by the final ISG  
10 report.

11 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Some of it was.

12 MR TIM DOWSE: The final ISG -- the ISG reached conclusions  
13 but a number of those conclusions remain assessments and  
14 they are a balance of probabilities. There are  
15 relatively few issues on which one can say absolutely  
16 definitively, "We know the answer". What we have is an  
17 assessment which is a different assessment from the one  
18 we had before the war that seems to be more reliably  
19 based, but it is still an assessment.

20 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: If you look actually at the final ISG  
21 report, the terms in which it is couched very much fit  
22 what Tim Dowse says:

23 "Iraq appears to have destroyed its undeclared BW  
24 weapons and probably its remaining holdings of bulk BW  
25 agents, similar for CW."

1           So when we did our assessment in December 2004, we  
2           said in many cases this expectation or this  
3           intelligence -- this claim that we made before the  
4           war -- has not been substantiated. We didn't say it  
5           definitely could -- we could never find any of this in  
6           the future.

7   THE CHAIRMAN: I think that brings me to -- I have really  
8           got two final points. One is just for the record. The  
9           Butler Committee completed its work in the summer and  
10          that was well before the ISG's final work was completed  
11          and reported.

12          You mentioned, I think, Mr Dowse, that quite a lot  
13          of the intelligence that had come in before March 2003  
14          was disowned or turned out not to be valid in the months  
15          after the war. That is one thing. The other,  
16          I suppose, is to ask, in view of the assessment-based  
17          nature of the ISG's final report, and by implication the  
18          JIC's view, has anything at all turned up in the years  
19          since 2004 of significance?

20   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I am afraid I haven't been involved in  
21          this area.

22   MR TIM DOWSE: Not of significance, no.

23   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I'll just turn to my  
24          colleagues.

25   SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to follow up one point that

1 Mr Dowse made. You said that you were concerned, you  
2 and your colleagues in the FCO, that Ministers should  
3 not declare success too rapidly if something was found  
4 under the WMD by the ISG and that you had told Ministers  
5 to be careful about what they said about this.

6 Would you regard the Prime Minister's statement  
7 in December 2003 that:

8 "The Iraq Survey Group has already found massive  
9 evidence of a huge system of clandestine laboratories,"  
10 as corresponding to the advice you were giving to  
11 Ministers?

12 MR TIM DOWSE: I did not advise him to use those words.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Martin?

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Amongst other words you may not have  
16 advised the Prime Minister to use, also  
17 in December 2003:

18 "I'm confident when the Iraq Survey Group has done  
19 its works, we will find what has happened to those  
20 weapons, because he had them."

21 MR TIM DOWSE: The Prime Minister was making a statement  
22 with his level of confidence. As I say, I also believed  
23 for a long time that we would find them, because I, at  
24 that stage, found it hard to believe that there would  
25 have been so much reporting from before the war without

1           there being some fire behind that smoke.

2           Now, as it turns out, we have said, some key  
3           elements of that reporting was simply wrong.

4   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  Sir William, was there a point  
5           during the second half of 2003 when you began to lose  
6           confidence in the -- or what was the point when you  
7           began to lose confidence in the assessment that had been  
8           made before the war?

9   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  Well, after three or four months after  
10          the war, when nothing was being found, and we were  
11          reporting obviously to Ministers on what was going on,  
12          confidence reduces.

13   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  Again I come back to my point: how  
14          was this communicated to Ministers that they should at  
15          least now have been prepared -- presumably they were  
16          looking to you for advice -- for a rather embarrassing  
17          outcome after all that had happened?

18   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  I think there were JIC notes in June  
19          and July 2003.  There were reports  
20          in October 2003, April 2004, I have got down, and then  
21          there was the final JIC assessment in December 2004.

22   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  To what extent during this period  
23          and you have mentioned the interim reporting of  
24          David Kay -- was there a sort of clutching at straws in  
25          the hope that exactly the sort of thing Mr Dowse was

1 talking about would happen, that -- again, I'm sorry to  
2 keep on quoting Mr Blair. This is May:

3 "We have already found two trailers, both of which  
4 we believe were used for the production of biological  
5 weapons."

6 Now, it didn't take long before there were reasons  
7 to query that, so it was very difficult to get the  
8 mindset away from the starting assumption that -- in  
9 a sense, evidence was still being viewed to reinforce  
10 the assessment rather than to challenge it.

11 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: I think from about -- I think, the  
12 first intelligence that was withdrawn, as invalid, was  
13 in July 2003, and then I certainly remember the Foreign  
14 Secretary having discussions with the intelligence  
15 agencies about other doubts that they might have as we  
16 came into the autumn of that year. So -- and then  
17 further intelligence was withdrawn in 2004.

18 MR TIM DOWSE: In May, of course, we were still quite early  
19 in this stage and the ISG really only got operational  
20 round about the end of April/the beginning of May.  
21 So I think there was still very -- quite  
22 considerable expectation that we were going to find the  
23 evidence. Comments such as the one you quote about the  
24 trailers were what rather prompted the Foreign Office to  
25 advise that we should be cautious about, as I say,

1           being too categoric as to what we had found until we had  
2           got it absolutely verified.

3   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  When Mr Kay resigned and he said we  
4           were all wrong, how did that go down in Whitehall?

5   SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN:  I think, again, we weren't going to  
6           jump to conclusions until the ISG had finished its work.  
7           That was our fundamental decision.

8   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:  I have one final question, which is  
9           related, I think -- it indicates an issue, which is that  
10          you mentioned the Prime Minister was anxious that the  
11          ISG should do more, that everybody was keen that they  
12          explore every avenue to see if they can substantiate the  
13          claim, because, in a way, we were now in the position  
14          that we had put Saddam in.  We had made a claim that we  
15          were now trying to substantiate and we were finding it  
16          difficult.

17                 Given what was also going on in Iraq at the time,  
18          did this become a question of the appropriate use of  
19          resources, that this was protection that these people  
20          may need, the specialist nature of some of them was  
21          actually becoming a diversion from the growing task of  
22          maintaining law and order within Iraq?

23   MR TIM DOWSE:  Not from the task of maintaining law and  
24          order.  The ISG was a serious organisation but, when  
25          you look at the total number of troops that were in Iraq

1 available to maintain law and order, it was still  
2 a rather small percentage of those. The ISG, of  
3 course, was not only intended to look for evidence of  
4 WMD, but also for -- to follow up the trail of  
5 international terrorism and the presence of  
6 international terrorists.

7 Towards the summer, there was, I think, some concern  
8 among the coalition military commanders that the ISG  
9 should perhaps turn more of its efforts to the hunt for  
10 terrorists rather than the hunt for WMD, and there was  
11 something of a debate about that.

12 As I recall, it was amicably concluded, and the  
13 balance of effort may have been adjusted slightly but  
14 not very significantly. But we were satisfied that  
15 enough attention was still being given to the WMD target  
16 as well as the terrorism target.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Looking for terrorists in the present  
18 tense and looking for historic evidence of WMD, aren't  
19 these entirely different functions?

20 MR TIM DOWSE: It wasn't just looking for terrorists in the  
21 present tense, it was also following up the belief among  
22 some of them that there was an Al-Qaeda connection with  
23 Iraq, which we, of course, had always been sceptical of.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did you reconcile with what you  
25 thought Saddam Hussein had and to what was actually

1 found. I mean, this is not just communication with  
2 Ministers, but within Whitehall itself and all those  
3 involved in making these assessments?

4 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: Obviously, we did think: how do you  
5 explain all of this? I would give two reasons to  
6 explain it. One, a great deal of intelligence,  
7 particularly which underpinned our assessments on the  
8 production of chemical and biological weapons was  
9 withdrawn. So that changes, of course, the picture  
10 quite a bit.

11 The other was something that we touched on this  
12 morning, which was Saddam's current strategic intent  
13 which we simply did not know at the time and also the  
14 fact that he had not wanted to show himself quite so  
15 weak vis a vis Iran. So I would put those as two  
16 particular reasons. Others had been given in the  
17 Butler Report of not investigating sufficiently the  
18 historic evidence, but those are two that stand out.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the reason for not taking  
20 this into consideration when the whole picture was being  
21 developed before the war?

22 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: The JIC did quite a few pieces on  
23 Saddam's regime before the war and regime cohesion,  
24 those sorts of issues. But what we never had was the  
25 information that was in Saddam's own mind.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Had not the debriefing of Hussein Kamil  
2 after his defection in 1995 given some insights that  
3 perhaps later turned out to be accurate into the  
4 thinking in Saddam's mind?

5 MR TIM DOWSE: I thought rather the other way.

6 Hussein Kamil exposed a biological weapons programme  
7 that we had not previously had evidence of. He did  
8 claim that CW had been destroyed immediately after the  
9 war, but there was some doubt about whether he was in  
10 a position to know that in the same way that he was in  
11 a position to know about the biological programme.

12 He also exposed an organised Iraqi campaign of  
13 deception directed from the top -- so I think in  
14 many ways what he revealed to us very much coloured our  
15 approach thereafter. I think, to agree with what  
16 Sir William says, the Butler Report put its finger  
17 on it in a number of ways. You can never account for  
18 your intelligence simply being false, but there were  
19 a number of ways in which in respect of Iraq our process  
20 of assessing intelligence, putting it together with  
21 other information, failed and one of those was in not  
22 relating the technical intelligence on WMDs to the  
23 political context of a regime like Iraq's. That is  
24 something we have addressed since to try and avoid that  
25 happening again.

1           Another one, was, as I said this morning, getting  
2           into a certain mindset and not challenging the  
3           assumptions. I do think Iraq was an almost unique case  
4           in that respect, in that here was a country and an  
5           issue, WMD, that we had been studying in great  
6           detail and following for almost 15 years.

7           We had people, experts in our Defence Intelligence  
8           Staff and elsewhere in Whitehall, who had devoted very  
9           long periods of that time to this issue, and we were --  
10          we had got out of the habit of questioning ourselves and  
11          our assumptions. That is something that we certainly  
12          have given a lot of attention to since, to make sure it  
13          doesn't happen again.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Martin, do you have a question? Anything  
15          else?

16          Well, I'm very grateful to our two witnesses and you  
17          should have the opportunity, if you wish, to conclude  
18          your contribution today with any final remarks you might  
19          want to make.

20          Can I ask Sir William, are there any that you would  
21          like to add?

22 SIR WILLIAM EHRMAN: No, thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Dowse? No? Thank you both very much.

24          Tomorrow, looking ahead now, we are going to hear  
25          from Sir Christopher Meyer, the United Kingdom

1 Ambassador to Washington between 1997 and 2003. The  
2 focus of our Inquiry is very much on the decisions of  
3 actions of the United Kingdom Government, but it is  
4 important to understand developments in the  
5 United States on Iraq, and, of course, the interaction  
6 between the United Kingdom government and the  
7 US Government in the period.

8 So tomorrow, we are going to start to examine the  
9 United Kingdom's relationship with the US on Iraq  
10 between 2001 and 2003 and this theme will continue into  
11 hearings in the coming week.

12 The session tomorrow will cover foreign policy  
13 priorities and decision-making processes in the US  
14 Administration in the period, the evolution of policy on  
15 Iraq and the Middle East in Washington from the end of  
16 2001 to early 2003, including the decision on the  
17 invasion, and the United Kingdom's relationships with  
18 the US throughout that period. So that's for tomorrow  
19 and looking ahead.

20 With that, our thanks to our witnesses and thank you  
21 very much to the members of the public who attended this  
22 morning and/or this afternoon and to our transcribers,  
23 who have done a heroic task. Thank you all very much.

24 (3.11 pm)

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

