

1 (3.50 pm)

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon.

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Hello.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome back, everyone.

6 The objectives of this session, following from the
7 sessions on UK military planning last week and the
8 preceding session with Major General Tim Cross, are to
9 develop our understanding of the UK's planning for the
10 aftermath of possible military action in Iraq and
11 compare that to the experience in the first few months
12 after the invasion. And our witness this afternoon is
13 Desmond Bowen, who was the deputy head of Overseas and
14 Defence Secretariat in the Cabinet Office and,
15 therefore, you sat at the heart of cross-Whitehall
16 planning machinery, I think.

17 What we are seeking this afternoon is to add to our
18 broadly chronological approach starting in mid 2002, go
19 through the invasion and the first few months after it
20 up to August 2003, with subsequent witnesses to continue
21 the story thereafter.

22 I recall, as I do on each occasion, that the Inquiry
23 has access to many thousands of government papers,
24 including the most highly classified, of the period
25 we're considering. We are developing a picture of the

1 policy debates and the decision-making processes, and
2 these evidence sessions are an important element in both
3 informing the Inquiry's thinking and complementing the
4 documentary record. It is important that witnesses are
5 open and frank in their evidence while respecting
6 national security, and I remind every witness that they
7 will later be asked to sign a transcript of their
8 evidence to the effect that the evidence they have given
9 is truthful, fair and accurate.

10 Before we start, and repeating myself from the
11 previous session, the post-invasion phase is frequently
12 referred to as "Phase 4". It wouldn't be surprising if
13 that contraction comes into use in the course of the
14 afternoon.

15 Mr Bowen, can I ask you briefly to describe your
16 role as Director General Operational Policy in the MoD
17 and then as deputy head of the OD Secretariat?

18 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was the Director General of operational
19 policy, which in Whitehall terms is a director level
20 job, from 10 September 2001 until September 2002. That
21 job is the -- effectively, the civil service job within
22 the operational area; in other words, working for
23 General Tony Pigott, but being the policy and civil
24 conscience of the Ministry of Defence and working as
25 a very tight team with the Deputy Chief of the Defence

1 Staff commitments.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just interject? Do you have a dotted
3 line to the Political Director in the MoD?

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Very heavily dotted, and on to the
5 Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence.

6 In the -- I then moved to the Cabinet Office where
7 I became the deputy head of the Overseas and
8 Defence Secretariat, and that was a job which was
9 focused on the coordination across Whitehall of -- but
10 not -- coordination and stimulation of activity across
11 Whitehall for the whole of the overseas and defence
12 agenda, including at that time counter-terrorism. And
13 I have just -- I think it is worth saying that there is
14 also a role in relation to leading policy and also
15 running the emergency crisis rooms of the Cabinet Office
16 as well.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: And your reporting line in that role was?

18 MR DESMOND BOWEN: To the head of Overseas and Defence
19 Secretariat, who was also the foreign policy adviser to
20 the Prime Minister, namely David Manning.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Let's turn to the questions.

22 Usha?

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much, Chairman. Can
24 we talk a little bit about your role as the director of
25 operations and policy in the Ministry of Defence,

1 because we heard from Lord Boyce last week that military
2 planning began in April 2002. Were you involved in that
3 and what was your role during that period?

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I will talk about this and, of course,
5 I'm very happy to respond to you, Baroness Prashar.
6 This I was not actually particularly told to prepare
7 for, but that's fine.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It would be useful to know.

9 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Absolutely. Was I involved? Yes, I was.
10 I would say that I was very heavily involved in the plan
11 and execution of operations in Afghanistan, particularly
12 the setting up of the ISAF, which was a British-led
13 undertaking, in the winter of 2001/2002.

14 One of the concerns we had was the extent to which
15 we were heavily engaged in Afghanistan. Although we had
16 undertaken to lead ISAF for a period of three months, at
17 the end of three months we found ourselves still leading
18 with not much sign of being relieved of that. And
19 that's the leadership. With the leadership goes
20 a considerable amount of, you know, underpinning and
21 other activity.

22 So as we moved into 2002 and as it began to be clear
23 following the Axis of Evil speech and so forth that
24 there was a developing American interest in Iraq and, as
25 it were, robust action, so we wanted to understand what

1 that meant and how we might be involved. So I was
2 involved.

3 I would also say that when I went, as I think was
4 referred to in a session last Friday, to Washington
5 in April, the focus was actually getting help from the
6 Americans to find other leadership for ISAF, rather
7 than, you know, a specific investigation of what was
8 going on in relation to Iraq.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you also went to Washington and
10 Tampa in June 2002?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I did.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the focus of discussion
13 then?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: That was very much as events unfolded,
15 there was a desire on the part of the political
16 leadership, on the part of the Defence Secretary, to
17 understand what it was that was being planned. And this
18 was an opportunity to go to Washington and then to
19 Tampa, where the Central Command Headquarters is, to
20 understand where they were getting to, what their plans
21 were, the extent to which they were prepared to share
22 some of their thinking, in order to enable us to report
23 back to the political level so that at the political
24 level there could be decisions taken as to whether we
25 wanted to engage further in that understanding of

1 American planning and to see whether that was something
2 to which, you know, we would want to contribute, not
3 off, as it were, the military or civil bat, but off
4 a political decision.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the thinking at that stage?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The thinking was clearly that there were
7 developing plans. In fact, I think the Americans had
8 had plans, you know, on the shelf for a very good long
9 time, and these were being refined with both the passage
10 of time but also the change in, as it were, in policies,
11 as it were, operational and military doctrine as to how
12 to conduct operations. And it was clear that there was
13 a deal of activity from which we were largely excluded.

14 The point was really whether the Ministry of Defence
15 and, more widely, Whitehall and the Prime Minister
16 wanted us to investigate more closely what that was and
17 whether we should send a team. And the upshot was,
18 in July, that ministers agreed that we should send
19 a small planning team to Tampa and that the Americans
20 were prepared to, as it were, entertain us and to have
21 us on board as part of that team but without any
22 commitment as to what we might do.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was that planning team about the
24 military action or was it also about the aftermath?

25 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It was mainly about the military action.

1 I recall that the minute that I wrote, which went to
2 ministers, said very clearly that this seemed to be
3 military planning in a vacuum. What was required was
4 some kind of strategic framework that brought meaning to
5 this, and this was, you know, for the longer term and
6 not just for the short term, and with that needed to be
7 an appropriate legal basis which seemed to be certainly
8 invisible to us at that time.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So by the time you came to the
10 Cabinet Office, you obviously had a strong understanding
11 of the UK and US planning in relation to Iraq. So what
12 were you tasked to do when you arrived there? What was
13 your remit?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, my remit was across the board on
15 overseas and defence business, and I have to say that
16 counter-terrorism was as big a part of my remit as
17 anything else.

18 The -- clearly there was, you know, a strong focus
19 on Iraq because the Prime Minister was, as I arrived,
20 effectively setting out the policy to Cabinet
21 colleagues, and I, in my position as the deputy head of
22 the Secretariat, was one of the secretaries of the
23 Cabinet, so I was aware of that. But it was then being
24 promoted -- the policy was being promoted in a policy
25 way as to what it was that the Government felt was

1 important, and what was important was to disarm Iraq.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But who were you working with
3 particularly on military planning and disarming Iraq,
4 and which departments were involved?

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was working with the whole of
6 Whitehall. One of the things --

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When you say "the whole of
8 Whitehall", was DFID involved?

9 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was just coming to that. As I was
10 arriving -- and I don't think it was my initiative
11 because I think it was already in train. As this sort
12 of policy began to become, you know, more solid, so
13 officials said we need to have a system which is going
14 to bring the whole of the Whitehall apparatus together
15 in order to have a sort of contingency planning process.
16 And it was called the Ad Hoc Group of Officials on Iraq.
17 And that group started meeting, as far as I remember,
18 from, I think, 20 April and met pretty much weekly
19 thereafter. And that was -- you know, pretty much the
20 whole of Whitehall: The Department of Health were
21 there, the department for Transport, the DFID,
22 Foreign Office, MoD, of course.

23 The Civil Contingency Secretariat were there from
24 inside the Cabinet Office. There was a whole range of
25 people, all of whom had a stake in what might happen in

1 Iraq if disarming Iraq was a priority and was to be
2 taken forward, and it was a priority, it was to be taken
3 forward through the United Nations.

4 I mean, there was impact, for example, on transport,
5 there were issues about insurance of cargo vessels,
6 there were issues about air transport, there were issues
7 about chemical weapons and so forth. So there was this
8 broad grouping pulled together.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you were chairing this ad hoc
10 group?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was chairing it and sometimes my deputy
12 chaired it.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Why was this group established and
14 who decided to establish it at that particular time?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, I suppose the head of the
16 Secretariat agreed that this was the right time to
17 establish this contingency planning secretariat. It was
18 an entirely normal procedure. I would -- or my
19 predecessor or subordinate would go to the head of the
20 Secretariat to say, "Now is the time when we need to
21 bring people together, thinking through these issues and
22 doing the preparatory work".

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I think it was Sir Kevin Tebbit who
24 said last week that it was the Minister of Defence who
25 encouraged the establishment of this particular ad hoc

1 group. Was that your understanding?

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I don't know. It is not my
3 understanding, no.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But just to be clear, what were the
5 objectives that were set for this particular ad hoc
6 group? What were you tasked to do?

7 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It was contingency planning: Think about
8 the issues that will arise and work through what it is
9 that requires action in Whitehall.

10 I mean, now it may look absolutely certain as though
11 this would end up with a war in March 2003. In
12 September 2002 it looked like a serious policy
13 commitment to deal with weapons of mass destruction in
14 Iraq. There were any number of outcomes. It could have
15 been that Saddam would have had a coup made against him.
16 There were -- you know, there was a possibility that
17 a range of things could happen. It could have been that
18 there would be military action in 2004. You know, it
19 was not -- there was no assumption about when exactly
20 something would happen and, indeed, one of
21 the abiding recollections I have is that there was not
22 quite an expectation but certainly a wish that this
23 could be resolved without going to military action.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Given the fact there was a number of
25 option -- you know, disarmament, a coup, a possible ...

1 did you actually work out contingency planning in terms
2 of different scenarios, what were the implications? Was
3 that worked out by this group and were you reporting
4 these different scenarios to ministers?

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The reporting -- there was
6 considerable -- there was sensitivity about the extent
7 to which contingency planning was being, as it were,
8 broadcast. There were records of all these meetings,
9 they went to the participants, the participants were
10 under remit to report them to their ministers as
11 appropriate. So actually the reports weren't going to
12 ministers directly from the OD Secretariat.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So the sense I'm getting, it is at
14 a level, which is not very senior, discussions take
15 place, the ministers go to respective departments and it
16 is at their discretion if it goes to ministers or not?

17 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I'm not sure that I would agree with your
18 description of it being not very senior and, implied,
19 not very serious.

20 This was taken very seriously. You needed the
21 experts to be doing this work and I think the
22 Foreign Office were very much engaged at senior level.
23 They produced in October, I think, 12 papers to promote
24 and provoke thinking about this.

25 But, you know, some of the options, some of the --

1 you know, issues that arose, some of them could be
2 usefully pursued, some of them could not. There was
3 a whole range of work that was done by the Treasury, for
4 example, on macroeconomic issues. I would say that,
5 although I think there has been a tendency, and I think
6 I have been part of that tendency, to say all of this
7 work turned out to be not frightfully useful, there was
8 a lot of this work that actually was very useful. And,
9 for example, on the humanitarian side, I mean,
10 witnesses -- a number of witnesses, not least Tim Cross,
11 have said there wasn't a humanitarian emergency. One of
12 the reasons there wasn't a humanitarian emergency was
13 because DFID were engaged with the UN and with UN
14 agencies in order to ensure that they were prepared to
15 engage immediately after military action.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But did DFID engage with this
17 particular ad hoc group or was it engaging directly with
18 the United Nations?

19 MR DESMOND BOWEN: They were engaging with the
20 United Nations because the ad hoc group agreed that
21 that's what they should be going, and if they needed to
22 clear that with their minister, they would do that.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But my understanding is that the
24 ad hoc group met right after the invasion and you did
25 not chair all the meetings, you delegated that to an

1 official?

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That sends a signal about the lack
4 of priority accorded to the group in comparison to other
5 priorities in this group at this time?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: A junior official, a member of the senior
7 civil service, I'm not sure that's quite right, and it
8 just depends on the other priorities that exist.

9 One of the groups that I was chairing was -- I think
10 it was called the UNMOVIC Management Group, which was
11 designed to try to help UNMOVIC to be provided with the,
12 you know, necessary information to fulfil the UNMOVIC
13 task. These are priorities that you deal with.

14 I don't think the seniority necessarily tells you,
15 you know, how important or not important these meetings
16 are. It is a question of what the substance is, and
17 I don't think the substance was lacking.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, Sir David Manning shared his
19 view that the combination of these various Cabinet
20 committees in sharing your papers across departments
21 ensured that different departments were kept up to date
22 on the Iraq policy developments, and he added that:

23 "I wasn't approached, as I recall, by the
24 departments who said they didn't feel they were being
25 properly informed and I'm not aware of particular

1 decisions up until the moments when people who should
2 have known things who didn't know things."

3 Do you share this view?

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes, I do.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you think everybody was fully
6 informed and there was a sense of direction?

7 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I'm not sure what you mean by "everybody
8 was fully informed".

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: All the departments, you said, were
10 around the table. Was there clarity in terms of
11 objectives, what was being achieved, what scenarios were
12 being looked at, what contingency plans were there?

13 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes, because the papers were shared, the
14 papers were shared by the Committee with all those
15 present. As I say, I don't think there was anybody
16 absent from that group.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So your assessment is that this was
18 an effective ad hoc group?

19 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It was, yes.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. In February, the Iraq
21 Planning Unit was set up, which was headed by
22 Dominick Chilcott, and we will talk to him tomorrow.
23 But I would like to hear from you who decided that this
24 should be established, and why? Why did you decide
25 that?

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, the Foreign Office -- one of the
2 things that was clear -- and it was clear as early
3 as November, I guess -- is that there were various lead
4 departments for various different activities, and the
5 Ministry of Defence for, you know, military activity
6 clearly, DFID were leading on humanitarian and
7 reconstruction, although there was an issue there about
8 reconstruction in the event of there being a -- the lack
9 of an UNSCR, and the Foreign Office were responsible for
10 the overall engagement with a post-conflict Iraq, hence
11 the papers that they were writing, their leadership of
12 meetings in Washington in both November and January and,
13 indeed, when Americans came over at the beginning
14 of April, their leadership, their engagement with the
15 private office in Number 10.

16 So, you know, I think there was clarity about who
17 was leading.

18 What happened at the beginning of 2003 was that we
19 were certainly beginning to be concerned about the lack
20 of clarity on the US side about who was actually running
21 what the Chairman has referred to as Phase 4. And there
22 was the national -- the NSC that was -- the National
23 Security Council that had had a hand in that earlier on,
24 at the end of 2002, and the State Department had been
25 engaged. And at the end of the meeting on, I think,

1 22 January, when Edward Chaplin went with a team to
2 Washington, the Americans announced that the centre for
3 this work would henceforth be in the Pentagon -- and you
4 heard that from Tim Cross -- in terms of directives or
5 whatever it is.

6 There was suddenly a new focus. It wasn't as though
7 it was completely new, because the immediate aftermath
8 of any military action always focuses on the military,
9 you know, in Kosovo, East Timor, wherever it may be. So
10 there is always a military role. But it was clear that
11 there had been a shift.

12 When they came back -- I mean, I -- and in fact,
13 I think it was the conversations that I had with various
14 senior people across Whitehall -- I summoned a meeting,
15 I think, on 4 February and said, "I think we need to,
16 you know, boost what it is that we are doing. The
17 Foreign Office have the lead role in this. My view is
18 that the Foreign Office need to be pulling together
19 a unit that is going to take charge of this with
20 integrated Ministry of Defence and DFID people."

21 And that was Dominick Chilcott who was designated to
22 be the lead.

23 There was a discussion as to where it should be
24 located, and I think quite correctly it wasn't in the
25 Ministry of Defence and nor should it have been in DFID,

1 because that was more on, as it were, the humanitarian
2 and physical reconstruction, whereas there was a whole
3 political reconstruction agenda which clearly the
4 Foreign Office needed to lead.

5 So that's where -- you know, what I was trying to do
6 was to orchestrate lead departments who have the
7 resources, who have the minister in charge, who can
8 actually take forward the planning and engagement in
9 order to deliver the results in a coherent way for the
10 whole of Whitehall and for government.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did the Iraqi Planning Unit
12 relate to the ad hoc group that you were chairing?

13 MR DESMOND BOWEN: They would have contributed to it.
14 Increasingly, from February -- and I think it was active
15 from 10 February -- you know, they were the focus for
16 the interaction with the Americans and, indeed, with
17 others. But there was still work to be done on economic
18 and other factors.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about the other Cabinet
20 processes? Was there a link between the IPU and the
21 ad hoc group and other Cabinet processes?

22 MR DESMOND BOWEN: "Other Cabinet processes". I'm not sure
23 I understand that.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Other terms of communication, how
25 was this relating to --

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: They would feed into the ad hoc group.
2 They would come to the ad hoc group, they would be part
3 of that. But -- so, I mean, they were contributing as
4 the Foreign Office, but also contributing because they
5 were bringing along with them the Phase 4 sort of
6 planning, you know, agenda.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Now, the IPU was set up only about
8 a month before the military action. With hindsight,
9 what impact did this late establishment of this group
10 have on the UK's planning for Iraq?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, it was set up only a bit more than
12 a month before.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: February.

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: In February. But the fact is that the
15 Americans had only designated ORHA at pretty much the
16 same time. Just as soon as we realised we understood
17 where the centre of gravity was in America, you know, we
18 set up, as it were, a centre of gravity that could
19 interact with it.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But we heard earlier this afternoon
21 that General Tim Cross was actually embedded in the US
22 planning team and you were getting all this feedback
23 from the States, the planning isn't what it should be,
24 why did we not take an early action? Why did we ...?

25 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I'm sure you will ask Dominick Chilcott

1 that, amongst others.

2 One of the objects in the Whitehall process is to
3 try to locate, you know, who it is who has
4 responsibility for actions. And, I mean, it is very
5 clear, you know, as I say, the Ministry of Defence, DFID
6 and the Foreign Office between them, you know, had
7 various responsibilities on which they were leading.

8 Now, how much of this was fed back -- I recall, for
9 example, that the -- I think this is in early March --
10 the IPU put a paper to ministers -- I think there was
11 a ministerial meeting at which ministers decided that
12 they would engage with ORHA, that we wanted to send
13 a specialist contribution and also that we would take
14 responsibility, as was almost inevitable, but they would
15 take responsibility for the post-conflict, if there was
16 going to be a conflict, because of course it wasn't sure
17 even then -- there was going to be a military
18 requirement for some action, you know, after the event,
19 and that we would, as it were, take our responsibility
20 where we ended up at the end of conflict.

21 So -- I mean, this was a situation that was working
22 in the sense that the IPU were engaging ministers -- and
23 this was a group of ministers -- I think it was a group
24 chaired by the Prime Minister, and that's what happened:
25 there were ministerial groups that met.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you want to come in?

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Just pursuing that point, if I may, did you
3 get the sense -- this is perhaps before the IPU comes
4 into being, really -- that your ad hoc group, with
5 departmental representatives at official level, they
6 were, insofar as they needed to or felt they needed to,
7 getting political direction from their own ministers?
8 And then the question: at what point does a collective
9 body of ministerial oversight come into being and impart
10 political direction to these efforts? Is it early or is
11 it late on? Post-IPU even, in February?

12 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I think the thing that really -- I'm not
13 sure whether I'm answering your question. The thing
14 that really bedevilled our efforts was that we were
15 clear that the right answer -- we, the UK, were clear
16 that the right answer was to engage the UN. Every other
17 undertaking that we had had -- you know, Kosovo, East
18 Timor, wherever -- the answer for us was not to do it
19 ourselves, but to do it, you know, marshal the UN, get
20 the UN into the front line, support the UN, ask to be
21 involved in the whole business of corralling the
22 international community to the extent that we could and
23 to enable them to do that.

24 So there was fundamentally this clash between an
25 American view that the UN weren't necessarily the best

1 way of doing it and our continued efforts which were,
2 you know, all throughout the autumn but well into 2003,
3 and, indeed, right into March, April and May, to say the
4 UN need to be engaged in this.

5 Now, that, as it were, tussle, you know, was
6 continuing and I think that -- it certainly didn't help
7 us in the clarity of what we were doing.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: It is very hard to gear the two
9 administrations, the London and the Washington ones.
10 Somebody once said that centaurs can't exist because the
11 pulse rate of a horse is different to the pulse rate of
12 a human being. But that was your problem, managing it.

13 With hindsight, would there have been process or
14 machinery differences that could have helped at all?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It got onto agendas of ministers,
16 ministers raised it, you know, officials wrote letters.
17 I mean, there were letters even as late as March.
18 I think 10 March David Manning wrote to Dr Rice saying,
19 "You need to get a grip of this. This is our view and
20 we need to sort this out." I don't think we were
21 getting much traction.

22 And whether process would have helped, I don't know.
23 I mean, my personal view is that the effort to secure
24 a second UNSCR was sucking a lot of the effort and
25 energy out of the whole machine. And the point, I might

1 add, about the second UNSCR is that if there had been
2 a second UNSCR, you would have then had the whole
3 international machinery and support behind an effort
4 which would have brought the UN into the game.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: And arguably it was also costing the
6 United Kingdom political capital, was it?

7 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: As it became very clear that
10 military action was becoming increasingly likely, we
11 were told by previous witnesses that there was a great
12 deal of activity about post-war planning, gearing up for
13 that. What impact do you think this activity actually
14 had?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Which activity?

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Activity for post-war planning. As
17 the war became imminent, there was a lot of activity.
18 We were told by Sir David Manning and Sir Peter Ricketts
19 that there was a lot of activity in terms of post-war.
20 What was the impact of that activity?

21 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, I think I alluded earlier to the
22 work on the sort of humanitarian side which was done to
23 engage with the whole range of UN agencies, and DFID put
24 in, I don't know (inaudible) 20 million or so into the
25 UN, but there was a World Food Programme engagement.

1 I'm not sure that it wasn't their food on a British ship
2 that came into Umm Qasr quite early on. Unicef was
3 engaged, the ICRC -- the list of UN agencies -- ICRC
4 isn't a UN agency as such, but the rest of them,
5 including environmental agencies that were involved,
6 were involved very early on.

7 So, I mean, there was product out of it in terms of
8 the international community responding to that.

9 In terms of the -- you know, ORHA and what it was
10 able to do, I was interested listening to Tim Cross talk
11 about the engagement with ministries because that so
12 much was the idea: that the ministries should be stood
13 up again, that they shall be made to work and not just,
14 clearly, in central Baghdad but through to the
15 provinces. And some of the effort that was put in and
16 was designed to be put in was to enable those
17 connections to be made back down to the provinces.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I understand that on the ground.

19 What I'm more interested in at this period is what
20 advice was going up to the ministers and to the
21 Prime Minister? What advice was being put out to them
22 about the likely involvement after the war?

23 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, the -- I mean, again, the IPU were
24 putting up advice on that. There was -- I mean, before
25 the war the IPU were in the lead on this activity.

1 I mean, there was the idea of setting up the IPU to
2 actually empower it, to give it the responsibility to
3 take this forward.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What I'm asking is what advice was
5 it giving?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Do I have that in my mind? No, I don't
7 know, but the meeting on 6 March, which I think the
8 Prime Minister chaired, was designed to elicit
9 a response to questions about do we want to be involved,
10 what would be our roles, what would be
11 our responsibility. So, yes, they were being engaged
12 and there was some -- I would also say that the legal
13 side -- and there have been points made about the legal
14 issues -- I mean, I'm not a legal expert, but there was
15 quite severe legal guidance given on the nature of
16 occupation after invasion and how that was to be
17 handled. And if you take no action to seek UN authority
18 to reform and reorganise the country and the way it is
19 governed, you are a belligerent occupant, and as
20 a belligerent occupant you have no powers to change
21 rules, regulations and the constitution.

22 So there is quite a fundamental thing which actually
23 did make for difficulties in operating with ORHA when
24 ORHA wanted to, you know, change mechanisms for which
25 there wasn't legal authority to do.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But last week, Lord Boyce said:

2 "We spent as many hours working on Phase 4, on
3 aftermath planning as we did actually on the main battle
4 plan of winning the war."

5 Do you agree with that assessment?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Here I am sitting in the middle of
7 Whitehall with a handful of people. I mean -- you know,
8 I'm not, you know, an enormous organisation with --
9 pulling every bit of information to me. I'm actually in
10 the centre of Whitehall trying to ensure the government
11 departments are undertaking their responsibilities and
12 are taking forward the planning.

13 I mean, I don't know exactly what it was that the
14 PJHQ was doing. I do know that this January, 2003, they
15 set up a cell, a planning cell, to engage with CentCom
16 on the planning of the aftermath, of Phase 4; in other
17 words, that military phase where they are in charge and
18 before civilian administration comes back into the
19 frame.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But the purpose of the ad hoc group
21 was to actually coordinate activity across Whitehall,
22 and it was of course input from the Ministry of Defence
23 on military operations, but as much concern about
24 aftermath. But from where you were sitting did you see
25 serious consideration being given to the risk of

1 post-invasion insecurity?

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, post-invasion insecurity, but

3 I think post-invasion security -- they were aware of the

4 needs, they were thinking about how they would need to

5 conduct themselves, the numbers of troops they would

6 need. Maybe we will come on to what the situation

7 looked like in Basra from April/May through to July.

8 And, I mean, I think the view that we had -- and we had

9 a ministerial group that was formed, I think, on

10 10 April, which, you know, was taking papers and

11 assessing security and the things that we needed to do.

12 You know, the situation that the British forces were

13 encountering in that southern area was not at all unlike

14 the kind of, you know, level of security that we had

15 experienced and we expected to experience, you know,

16 after conflict.

17 It started to deteriorate and there were some very

18 bad moments, particularly in Maysan, but it was only in

19 August actually that we started having protests on the

20 streets and riots and stoning of soldiers. But you

21 know, very early on this looked like, you know, what we

22 would consider to be a near normal post-conflict

23 situation; not, I understand -- very clearly, not what

24 was happening in Baghdad where deterioration was much

25 quicker.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In your opinion, how good was the
2 UK's knowledge of Iraqi society?

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, clearly not good enough. I mean,
4 there was --

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How many unknowns did you identify?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: How many unknowns did I identify?

7 I think that's a trick question, Baroness Prashar.

8 The understanding of Iraq -- and Edward Chaplin
9 referred to this -- was not as good as it should have
10 been. We didn't have an embassy there, we hadn't had
11 an embassy for some time. There were exiles, there were
12 people that were talked to in Jordan -- I wasn't talking
13 to them myself -- and there were views that were coming
14 out of Washington which were, frankly, not always at one
15 with the views that we had about the likely
16 complexities.

17 But, I mean, there was one point that I would make
18 about Iraqi society, which -- I mean, I think "the joker
19 in the pack" is not the right phrase, but the thing that
20 we didn't have any understanding or expectation of was
21 the vehement and violent AQ presence that emerged very
22 rapidly and not only attacked the coalition forces but
23 also attacked the Shia and, indeed, tried to provoke,
24 and eventually did provoke, very, you know, appalling
25 civilian losses between Sunni and Shia.

1 So, I mean, that was something which I don't think
2 that we did see or see anything of. I mean, there was
3 very much awareness that the Sunni had ruled, that the
4 Shia were in the majority, that things would change
5 when -- you know, when Saddam Hussein went. But, you
6 know, that was -- those were things that, you know,
7 maybe could have been manageable, but I don't -- and
8 I don't think there was any sort of sense of
9 inevitability about any of that. You know, certainly
10 not in, you know, May/June.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Just if I may, butting in, Baroness Prashar's
12 unknowns question, is it true there was a considerable
13 degree of uncertainty about what we would actually find.
14 Tim Cross said earlier that the place was much more
15 broken than anybody might have expected. The whole
16 regime was in, if not collapse, at any rate in severe
17 decay.

18 What I suppose we are both asking is was that level
19 of uncertainty recognised and, indeed, communicated to
20 ministers and planners?

21 MR DESMOND BOWEN: At the time when it was discovered?

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: At the time it mattered, before the actual
24 invasion.

25 MR DESMOND BOWEN: No, because I don't think we knew.

1 I think when people went in, they found it was a lot
2 more broken than anybody had ever mentioned.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: I think that was the answer to your question.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That was the unknowns.

5 Now, we also heard from previous witnesses,
6 particularly Sir David Manning and Sir Peter Ricketts
7 and Edward Chaplin, about the extent of concerns of the
8 US planning, and they all believed that these were
9 raised with the Americans but that the agenda was being
10 set by Donald Rumsfeld, as we are all now aware.

11 How was the UK linked into this work, I mean in
12 terms of the US planning and different lines of
13 communication? How were we linked into this whole
14 process of UK planning?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The US military planning?

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Political and military planning.

17 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, there were -- in Washington there
18 was a liaison officer who was designated, I think, the
19 Chief of the Defence Staff liaison officer. So he was
20 connecting into the joint chiefs and the office of the
21 Secretary of Defence, and down at Tampa there was
22 a large-ish team.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We heard all of that, but we heard
24 this morning from Tim Cross that he wasn't sure who was
25 listening to him and what impact what he was sending

1 back was having on our own planning.

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: On our own planning? Who was listening
3 to him? This was going into the Defence Secretary if it
4 was Defence Secretary business, and the Foreign
5 Secretary if it was Foreign Secretary business, and then
6 there were meetings, both -- there were meetings of the
7 Cabinet. The Cabinet, you know, discussed Iraq
8 throughout the period from September to March I think at
9 every meeting that they had bar one, and there were
10 smaller meetings than were held in Number 10, and some
11 of those I was aware of and some of them I was not.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: At one level you are telling us that
13 the ad hoc group was the one that was coordinating at
14 this time across Whitehall and all departments are
15 represented, and yet you are saying there are bilateral
16 discussions, there was no feed into the central ad hoc
17 planning group?

18 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Bilateral discussion meaning?

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Between the liaison people who were
20 at the centre of Washington and the Ministry of Defence.

21 MR DESMOND BOWEN: They fed back to their parent department
22 and the parent department then takes it on. There is
23 a chain of command, civil or military.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: There is a fair question to the deputy head
25 of the OD Secretariat that your boss, David Manning, was

1 actually in a very privileged bilateral line with
2 Condi Rice. So that was being fed in, was it?

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Absolutely.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: About the entirety of US planning?

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: About the entirety, and particularly
6 about the aftermath. The exchanges, the contact
7 between, you know, the Prime Minister, other ministers,
8 as it were, the ministers most closely engaged and the
9 Chief of the Defence Staff was very frequent. But some
10 of that was happening in Number 10, not in the
11 Cabinet Office, clearly.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Again, I want to press you on this.
13 The picture I'm getting is the ad hoc group was not
14 getting all the information it needed to get because if
15 you are coordinating across Whitehall, the departmental
16 representatives on the ad hoc group, were they not
17 feeding you a picture of what feedback they were
18 getting from Washington?

19 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes, they were. They were bringing that
20 to the group. A lot of it -- yes, they were bringing it
21 to the group. What were they telling us? They were
22 telling us that some of the planning that was being
23 done, or not being done, in relation to the
24 post-conflict situation was, you know -- some of it was
25 starting late. It was. Some of it was bedevilled by

1 legal issues, some of it was bedevilled by the political
2 divergence between our view and the American view.

3 Was that known to ministers and to the
4 Prime Minister? Yes, it was, and not least because
5 briefs were being provided and there was consequent
6 action in terms of, you know, ministers engaging with
7 their -- you know, their counterparts and trying to
8 resolve some of these issues. Some of these issues
9 weren't resolved.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But action was being taken?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It was.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So that is your understanding, that
13 this was being filtered upwards?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In terms of the work of the ad hoc
16 group, I mean, my understanding is that it had a rather
17 restricted internal need to know basis circulation. Who
18 decided that this restriction should be imposed and why,
19 and how long did it last?

20 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I think -- I referred to that earlier,
21 that the idea was that this should be -- there were --
22 I mean, "restricted circulation" means that those who --
23 we had this wide membership, the minutes went to that
24 wide membership, so those who needed to engage with
25 others in their department did so and they reported to

1 the ministers as need be.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But in your view did this
3 restriction have any impact on the planning?

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The only real restriction, I think --
5 I mean, we were involved -- I think the Home Office
6 talked to ACPO, there were issues about community
7 relations and what the impact would be there. I think
8 the only restriction actually was on talking to -- and
9 there wasn't a restriction on talking to UN agencies
10 because DFID were doing that from some time, I think,
11 in November, you know, about the possibilities of
12 humanitarian issues. But there may have been -- there
13 were restrictions on, for example, talking to the oil
14 industry, on what the impact would be, and eventually --
15 I mean, probably only in February there was agreement
16 that we should talk to, or rather the Department for
17 Trade and Industry, as it was, and maybe the Treasury
18 also should be talking outside government circles. But
19 some of that sensitivity was political, but some of it
20 was about this whole -- this unwillingness to be doing
21 contingency planning in a way that might interfere with
22 the diplomatic process of getting 1441, the UNSCR,
23 in November.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you talking to the
25 United Nations?

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: No.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you talk to any of the Iraqi
3 exiles here, because in the USA there was quite an
4 engagement with the Iraqi exiles. Did you talk to any
5 here?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: No, that was something that the
7 Foreign Office were doing, if they were doing it at all.
8 That was their business.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you personally did not engage
10 with anybody?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: No.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay.

13 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can I just say, Baroness Prashar, we had
14 literally a handful of people, and this was one of
15 a number of issues. I know that it was absolutely top
16 of the agenda, but, you know, people did have to manage
17 their time and that's why it was important to designate
18 who was actually in charge and taking forward policy
19 issues.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Are you suggesting that you were not
21 properly resourced for the task?

22 MR DESMOND BOWEN: No, I'm not suggesting that. I'm saying
23 that if you have small resources, then that's how you
24 choose, as a government, to run our affairs: you do them
25 economically and you do them with prioritisation.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You did say Iraq was a priority.

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: But it is not the only priority.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You say you had all the tools at
4 hand to perform your task.

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I'm not sure that anybody would say they
6 had all the tools to hand to perform the task. I think
7 that would be an unwise commitment.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. As the military action
9 commenced, what were the UK's military campaign
10 objectives?

11 MR DESMOND BOWEN: They were set out in the military
12 campaign objectives, which were published on 20 March.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, how prepared were the UK
14 military and the key departments to deliver the
15 objectives?

16 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, just on objectives generally, in
17 about -- I think it was the end of September 2002,
18 I started some work on setting out the objectives of the
19 UK in relation to Iraq, and there were a whole series of
20 circulations and improvements and amendments and
21 changes. But, I mean, by about mid October they were
22 pretty much settled; it was a question of when the
23 Government wanted to publish them, and they published
24 them on 7 January, I think, 2003. And it was the
25 Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary who put them into

1 Parliament.

2 Almost immediately thereafter, against the
3 contingency of military action, I started some work on
4 the military campaign objectives, geared -- I mean,
5 I would emphasise very much to weapons of mass
6 destruction and to ridding Iraq of weapons of mass
7 destruction. No wider agenda.

8 The need to dispose of the regime was there because
9 they stood in the way of -- because the regime stood in
10 the way of weapons of mass destruction. Those
11 objectives were circulated on a number of occasions,
12 departments would have seen them, they were certainly
13 embraced in the operational directive of the Chief of
14 the Defence Staff. Ministries more widely were
15 absolutely engaged with what it was that we were trying
16 to do. This was absolutely core business. It wasn't as
17 though it was a surprise to anybody.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just one final question from me, on
19 the post-invasion objectives, do you think that we could
20 have done better if we were given more time because, you
21 know, the second resolution failed and we went into
22 military action? Do you think we could have refined
23 them better if we have been given more time?

24 MR DESMOND BOWEN: If ...?

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: If we had more time?

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Could we have defined them better?

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Better, yes.

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I would say I had also started work on
4 not just the military campaign objectives but on
5 post-conflict objectives. And, I mean -- I mean, I was
6 overtaken by events to some extent, but I was also
7 overtaken by the difficulty of having objectives that
8 coincided with American objectives, where we still hung
9 on to the desire for the UN to be involved and the
10 Americans were not prepared to concede that.

11 In fact, ultimately this was effectively conceded on
12 22 May when we had a UN Resolution which brought those
13 two things together. There was a role for the CPA, ORHA
14 CPA, but there was also a role for the UN and the
15 appointment of a special representative. And that was
16 the moment where the things came together. But in
17 a way, by that time, you know, life had moved on.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could focus just for a few moments
21 on the aftermath planning and its implementation.
22 Following the defeat of Saddam, immediately after, what
23 reporting were you hearing from the ground about the
24 realities and how they impacted, how they related to our
25 planning, and what was your own responsibility or

1 involvement in following that up?

2 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, communications weren't that easy.

3 I mean, other people have said that. There were
4 communications some of which were coming up the military
5 chain. One of the problems with the military chain is
6 that the military chain filters as it goes from one
7 headquarters to another, to another. So you don't
8 always get the ground truth. That's not necessarily
9 a bad thing because the ground truth of what the platoon
10 commander sees is not necessarily of strategic
11 significance. It may be, but there were emails
12 beginning to come through.

13 Some time, I can't remember when, we were concerned
14 about the level of reporting and its availability and,
15 you know, particularly the Foreign Office were concerned
16 because the IPU was, as it were, the operational
17 department responsible for handling that sort of new
18 political engagement.

19 I mean, I think we had, you know, a pretty good
20 idea. We had ministers visiting fairly frequently and
21 we had ministers coming back saying -- I mean, at one
22 time, you know, it looked as though -- and in the middle
23 of March there were reports, I remember seeing, which
24 said, for example, ORHA is, you know, developing
25 reasonably okay. You know, by the end

1 of March/beginning of April, you know, it was "ORHA is
2 not delivering what we want, you know, we need more
3 action on this".

4 So you know, there was -- I think it was very clear.
5 And that was then being fed into what was effectively an
6 annotated agenda that was being produced for a weekly
7 meeting of the ad hoc group on Iraqi rehabilitation, as
8 it was titled, which was a regular weekly meeting which
9 was trying to take the sort of big issues, not the --
10 what you are getting on with next, but the bigger
11 issues. And some of those were about legal issues, some
12 of them were about feeding people, some of those issues
13 were about where we should be placing our emphasis. And
14 I remember things like security sector reform and the
15 whole judicial sector were issues that ministers needed
16 to get their -- get to make decisions about.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you in charge of this new group?

18 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was the effectively the secretary,
19 I and my colleagues were the secretary, of trying to get
20 those key elements identified that ministers need to
21 address to, as it were, give strategic direction.

22 I think Jack Straw, when he was the Foreign
23 Secretary, who, as the chair of this -- he said that the
24 group was "designed to formulate policy for the
25 rehabilitation, reform and development of Iraq".

1 And at the opening meeting, he says that's what we
2 are about and that's what we are trying to do.

3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: When the engagement started, we saw
4 efforts -- I expect you were quite central to them --
5 coordinated by the Cabinet Office to agree what was
6 called a new UK strategy for Iraq. I'm wondering if you
7 could tell us what that strategy was and in particular
8 how it involved interdepartmental cooperation and
9 involvement in the --

10 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Can you just say what time you are
11 talking about?

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: At the time of the UN Resolution.

13 MR DESMOND BOWEN: That was certainly something that we were
14 involved in. This, as we know, was something where the
15 Cabinet Office, the OD Secretariat, was working hand in
16 hand in the IPU.

17 We started some work on that and then it was decided
18 to shelve it because the CPA, newly established, was
19 developing a vision and strategy and it made more sense
20 for us to be part that of broad US-led vision and to get
21 our vision incorporated into it and with ministerial
22 endorsement to get the then representative John Sawers
23 to be feeding in, you know, our part of it.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did our advice dovetail with it and
25 what were --

1 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I can't remember, I can't remember that.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: We were, of course, an occupying power along
4 with the United States until a UN mandate was given?

5 MR DESMOND BOWEN: If I may say so, I think we were an
6 occupying power afterwards, but we weren't a belligerent
7 occupant.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. The point being, though, there were two
9 occupying powers: the United States and ourselves. We had
10 equal responsibilities and duties, as well as
11 limitations, and I suppose the thrust of Sir Martin's
12 question was did we exert sufficiently the influence
13 that that status should have given us because we had an
14 equal share with the Americans, totally disproportionate
15 in volume and scale but equal in terms of responsibility
16 and duty? Did that come through? Was it projected?

17 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, I think we tried to project it.
18 But I think -- I mean, I think you are right to say this
19 was -- this is in terms of influence. I think it was
20 difficult to achieve influence, and you will hear more
21 of that from Jeremy Greenstock, and I think it is
22 instructive that whereas Tim Cross was designated the
23 deputy in ORHA, Jeremy Greenstock was not and, in fact,
24 chose not, because he didn't feel that he could actually
25 carry the responsibility that went with the title.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Quite. Thank you. Roderic?

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to make sure that I have
3 correctly understood the ministerial decision-making
4 process.

5 You have said that Cabinet discussed Iraq regularly
6 from the autumn onwards, but of course Cabinet is not
7 a place where you can have detailed discussions, and by
8 and large it's not the place where decisions get taken.

9 You have described the working of the ad hoc group
10 of officials, but an ad hoc group of ministers was not
11 set up until early April, that is to say after the
12 military action. So was there no formal
13 interministerial machinery meeting at ministerial level
14 as we approached this action?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Just a minor correction, and that is
16 there was a group of ministers meeting when the conflict
17 was underway from the 19 March, I think, until 28 April.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So a group of ministers meets from
19 19 March, becomes a committee in early April, at least
20 a committee is set up. But before that, Cabinet
21 subcommittees? Formal ministerial groups?

22 MR DESMOND BOWEN: There was no formal ministerial group,
23 but that was run out of Number 10 and there were
24 ministerial meetings, with what frequency exactly
25 I don't know.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Hang on. You don't know, but you are the
2 senior official at the centre of the coordinating
3 machinery, and you don't know what --

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I was the deputy head of the Secretariat.
5 The head of the Secretariat was in Number 10 and there
6 were meetings taking place. I would see records of some
7 meetings, but I can't tell you how many there were.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Or who was at them?

9 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Or who was at them.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So they weren't regularly automatically
11 minuted?

12 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I don't know.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it was a completely nebulous process,
14 as far as you were concerned? Although you were very
15 close to the centre of it, the person you report to was
16 at those meetings but you do not know?

17 Do you think that's a normal way of building up to
18 a very big decision of this kind?

19 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Is it the normal way? You know,
20 normality is what you are presented with and there is --
21 here we have a government that has been in power for,
22 you know, a number of years, that has a methodology for
23 how it sets out its business. Is it ideal? It is
24 certainly not ideal for officials. Is it -- does it
25 actually get business done? Above all, does it have the

1 right collection of ministers adequately informed to
2 take decisions? And that's the substantive issue.

3 I'm not in any doubt that ministers were, you know,
4 as in the picture as they could have been. Whether they
5 were sort of interdependent in how they saw the picture,
6 I can't say.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Do help us in our work because we are
8 seeking to learn lessons from the whole of this
9 exercise. That's our remit.

10 Are there any lessons you would suggest should be
11 learned from the way that decision-making was prepared
12 and taken in maybe the 12 months leading up to 20 March
13 2003?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: We started an exercise of lessons learned
15 within the Cabinet Office and, you know, one of the
16 conclusions of that was to say that you -- it would be
17 advisable to have a group of -- a smaller group of
18 ministers, not the whole Cabinet, that would be engaged
19 in the preparation of an activity of this sort. And,
20 you know, I have -- to reiterate, it wasn't necessarily
21 the case that this was going to have a military outcome,
22 but even if it wasn't going to have a military outcome,
23 the idea that there should be a group of ministers who
24 meet as a subcommittee of Cabinet recommended itself
25 to me.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It may not have been necessarily the
2 case, but in the view of many witnesses we have already
3 heard, for at least 15 months before this, certainly
4 from the Axis of Evil speech onwards, it was a perfectly
5 likely scenario. What happened to the Cabinet Office's
6 lessons learned exercise?

7 MR DESMOND BOWEN: It was -- I was told that this was not
8 the right time to be taking that forward.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Is so, is there a bit of paper?

10 MR DESMOND BOWEN: There is a draft, that no doubt you will
11 see, of the first outcome of a workshop that I ran.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who told you that it wasn't the right
13 time to take it forward?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Number 10.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who in Number 10?

16 MR DESMOND BOWEN: David Manning was quite clear that this
17 was not the right time to be doing this work.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What was the time you were doing that
19 work?

20 MR DESMOND BOWEN: June.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: I should perhaps just interject that we do
22 have a copy of the draft.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: On the question of the aftermath, the
24 Americans were in the lead. The views of this
25 administration on involving the United Nations were very

1 well-known for a long time beforehand. Even if there
2 had been a second Security Council Resolution, it was
3 clear that they had no intention of cutting the UN into
4 the action afterwards in any substantive way, and the UN
5 itself, the UN Secretariat, was not preparing to be cut
6 in and it would have taken them many months of
7 preparation really to wind themselves up if they were
8 going to play a leading role in the post-conflict
9 administration of Iraq.

10 So was it really realistic for the
11 British Government to go on working on the assumption
12 until such a late stage as it did, that the UN was going
13 to be in the lead on this?

14 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, experience, I think, elsewhere --
15 Kosovo, not least -- is that it takes time for the UN to
16 gear itself up and to arrive.

17 I seem to remember General Mike Jackson arriving in
18 Pristina and saying, "Who is going to run the government
19 here?" And the answer was the UN, and he said, "Where
20 are they?" And they said, "They will be along in two or
21 three months".

22 I'm not saying that this is an ideal situation, but
23 it is not unknown, and in a post-conflict situation it
24 does take time for things to settle down and for the
25 international community to come together.

1 Was it sensible for the British Government to go on,
2 as it were, hoping?

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Assuming.

4 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Assuming. Well, assuming but actually
5 working in that direction and getting the excellent
6 Vieira de Mello into Iraq to lead, in a quite sort of
7 formidable way, the UN was a major plus, and a major
8 negative when he was assassinated by an Al-Qaeda bomb.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But once he got in there he wasn't
10 actually in charge. Indeed, he was very frustrated that
11 he wasn't in charge, as one has heard.

12 But you are right in saying it takes the UN time to
13 gear up. It took us time to gear up as well. So could
14 we be assuming in January or February of 2003, by which
15 time the likely timing of a military campaign was very
16 obvious from the point of view of the preparing of
17 forces, that the UN could step in -- we knew it was
18 likely to be a very short campaign -- and deal with the
19 aftermath? Shouldn't we have been working on the
20 Colin Powell Pottery Barn principle of "you break it,
21 you fix it"? We were going to break it and expect them
22 to fix it?

23 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Don't forget we were engaged with ORHA as
24 a not very good vehicle, but the ministers, you know,
25 signed up to sending some specialists. They weren't

1 very enthusiastic about it and they certainly weren't,
2 you know, offering lots of money to support the
3 programmes. The Americans, you know, both had voted
4 a lot of money for reconstruction, but they had also had
5 very clear plans for making use of Iraqi funds which
6 were available to pay civil servants, Iraqi civil
7 servants and to make the admission work.

8 I think the experience was that, you know, even if
9 it initially looked halfway hopeful that ministries
10 could be brought back into operation, actually they
11 weren't very competent and actually weren't able to
12 deliver, you know, what they needed to deliver from the
13 point of view of the administration.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We were preparing to send some
15 specialists, but, as we heard from Major General Cross
16 earlier, we had very, very few specialists. We only
17 started advertising for them some time after the event
18 and, not unreasonably, it took some time to gear up for
19 this.

20 You told us that from November onwards, DFID had
21 been talking to the United Nations Secretariat about the
22 humanitarian aspects. But my puzzle is if,
23 from November onwards, a British government department
24 was talking about the humanitarian aspects which we
25 planned for, a contingency that didn't arise -- I don't

1 think you were quite right in saying it didn't arise
2 because we in the UK had caused it not to arise
3 earlier on.

4 Why had we not been able to prepare for the other
5 aspects of the post-conflict -- the governance, the law
6 and order, the services, the reconstruction effort -- on
7 the same sort of timescale?

8 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The work that DFID was doing was largely
9 work on humanitarian issues. I think it is -- I mean,
10 the engagement in the UN was very considerable and in
11 the international agencies and, indeed, NGOs.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Humanitarian?

13 MR DESMOND BOWEN: On the humanitarian side.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But on the rest of it.

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: On the reconstruction, there was ongoing
16 difficulty about the legal basis, and I do think we were
17 very clear that the reconstruction needed to be done in
18 the context of the UN. And, again, this was -- maybe
19 you are suggesting that this is something that DFID
20 should have maybe, as it were, forgotten the UN route
21 and started out on an entirely UK route. I mean,
22 I don't think that the UK felt that it had the resources
23 and capability to provide the range of, you know, effort
24 and expertise to bring Iraq back into action through, as
25 it were, both resources human and financial.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Or even the southern region that we took
2 the lead in and were going to do an exemplary job.

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: The southern region, there was again
4 a ministerial decision that we would take on, I think,
5 the four provinces from the point of view of military
6 administration and the security. But the organisation
7 that we contributed to -- we, the UK -- was an American
8 organisation. We were sending people into an American
9 organisation and that was, you know, very much the
10 junior partner role rather than saying this is separate.
11 And, you know, it didn't really make sense to say we
12 want to do this separately because monies were held
13 centrally and needed to be devolved, and one of the
14 problems that we discovered was how difficult it was to
15 drag money down from Baghdad, whether it was Iraqi money
16 to pay Iraqi civil servants and others or whether it was
17 programme money that came from, you know, a US or
18 a wider donor source.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I wanted to ask a few questions on
22 servicing of ministers and the Cabinet.

23 There was a meeting on 15 January which made the
24 decision to send land forces that led to an announcement
25 in Parliament a few days afterwards. Were you at this

1 meeting? Was this a meeting that you helped to
2 organise?

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Was this the meeting of Cabinet?

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is not altogether clear. It was
5 certainly a meeting at which the ministers were present
6 and there issued a briefing from CDS, but there don't
7 appear to be any papers.

8 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I don't think I was present. I saw
9 submissions, correspondence, from -- most of it from
10 ministers or ministers' private offices, but I don't
11 know whether I saw the minute or not.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is an interesting question as to
13 the preparations that were made for a very fateful
14 decision and I'm interested in the sort of submissions
15 that were being made for ministers: the options of going
16 in or not going in, sending land forces, at divisional
17 level or just at brigade level, the assessment of
18 operational risks. Were you seeing papers that were set
19 out in that form for ministers?

20 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I saw some payments. I have no idea
21 whether I saw -- it is not something --

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is really a question of what sort
23 of decision-making was taking place here? Were people
24 moving along on a set of assumptions that took them from
25 one step to another or was there a point at which there

1 is a deep intake of breath, a stocktaking and asking the
2 question: is this the right thing to do? Shall we go
3 ahead with this? What are the risks either way?

4 What was the point at which that sort of decision
5 was taken?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I can't answer the question as to what
7 exactly the point was, but just in terms of -- I mean,
8 the policy was very clear in relation to Iraq and
9 weapons of mass destruction, and it was priority and it
10 was a policy that was subscribed to by ministers
11 generally, collectively. There wasn't dissent from
12 that. There was concern about the Middle East peace
13 process, there was a concern about a whole range of
14 things and, as it were, the upset this might cause to
15 the Islamic world, to the Arab world, and there were
16 a whole range of things.

17 And when it came to submissions to Number 10, some
18 of the risks and the downsides and the concerns would
19 have been expressed. But, I mean, I don't know to what
20 extent there was -- that was done in a comprehensive
21 way.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to clarify on this, during the
23 course of March -- and this is happening
24 through February -- the inspectors in Iraq had not been
25 finding very much. The military were rushing to get to

1 Kuwait, but there were a lot of things that were
2 challenging on the logistics operation. We were trying
3 and failing to get a second Security Council Resolution.

4 Just in terms of the sheer due diligence, is there
5 a point in this process in which you are saying careful,
6 there are some scenarios here for which we were not
7 planning, we were not preparing and that before we take
8 a fateful decision, we just ask these questions, we do
9 our due diligence?

10 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Well, there were certainly conversations
11 that I had with Number 10, but was there a moment at
12 which the OD Secretariat put up its hand collectively
13 and said, you know, you should stop and think? I don't
14 think I can say that that was the case. We can
15 certainly say there were issues that needed to be
16 resolved, we needed to get a grip of particularly the
17 aftermath. You know, there were a range of issues that
18 were outstanding that we were -- that were tugging --
19 tugging the coattails of decision makers to say these
20 are things that need to be sorted out.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally on this, Lord Boyce
22 told us that the United States was waiting to hear the
23 result of the Parliamentary decision, and if Parliament
24 had decided not to go to war he was prepared to tell our
25 forces to stand down. Was that one of the contingencies

1 you looked into or prepared for in dealing with the
2 aftermath of such a decision?

3 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I don't think there was any doubt that if
4 that was the case, if there was, I don't know, a legal
5 basis, that could be -- you know, the Law Officers were
6 prepared to subscribe to, or that Parliament had voted
7 against, I mean, there was just no question that the
8 forces would stay put and would not be -- would be
9 ordered not to cross the start line. There was just no
10 doubt about that.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you think it was perfectly
12 practical at the latest stage of this whole enterprise
13 that we of the United Kingdom would have stood apart and
14 not gone forward?

15 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Yes, absolutely, no doubt.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: I think, looking to the lessons learned,
18 which this committee is tasked to do, the question we
19 have to try to answer eventually is whether there was
20 indeed a strong enough process of central direction,
21 political, official, military, over the whole show. I'm
22 not putting that so much as a question, but it doesn't
23 seem to me to be a question that answers itself.

24 What do you think?

25 MR DESMOND BOWEN: Overall direction. I mean, there was

1 overall -- I mean, there was clarity about what the
2 Prime Minister and the Cabinet wanted to achieve and,
3 I mean, that in a way was the task that I was confronted
4 with is pulling together across Whitehall the -- you
5 know, the means to enable that to happen. Ministers,
6 particularly those, you know, with lead
7 responsibility -- the three ministers from DFID, FCO and
8 MoD were writing to the Prime Minister in early March
9 saying, "This is where we have got to, this is what our
10 capability is" and, as it were, providing a sort of
11 formal, you know, statement of their -- you know,
12 commitment to fulfil the policy.

13 I mean, your sort of statement about whether this
14 was really -- I mean, this was adequate. I mean,
15 clearly one could -- you know, it could be arranged
16 differently and there could be, you know, different
17 processes in place. But the processes that were in
18 place were the -- I mean, the processes that the
19 environment had created, and some of that was, you know,
20 there was -- I mean, I was linked through to Number 10.
21 I mean, I wasn't an independent body and we were, you
22 know, pursuing a policy that the government had
23 endorsed.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think we may need to return to
25 this range of topics in the future. We might even want

1 to ask for a written contribution at some point. But
2 since the question remains, where we have to go on
3 nagging at it, can I ask: are there any observations
4 that you would like to make following this afternoon's
5 session that you haven't had a chance to offer?

6 MR DESMOND BOWEN: I don't think so. Actually there is one
7 point that I would make and it is about the legality,
8 and it is -- to some extent, it is not quite responding
9 to the point, but it is a point that was made earlier
10 about whether, you know, if the legal advice from the
11 Attorney General had been different, would we have said
12 no.

13 I just make a general point because I have been much
14 engaged in the deployment of forces and the use of
15 force. The Ministry of Defence -- and it is
16 particularly the Ministry of Defence and maybe
17 exclusively the Ministry of Defence -- you know, have
18 very clear rules about the undertaking of operations
19 within a legal framework, and not just the undertaking
20 of operations, but the undertaking of particular tasks,
21 you know, bombing missions, attacks, whatever they
22 may be.

23 On every occasion there will be a legal opinion. On
24 many occasions when we are operating in coalition with
25 others, we find ourselves having to say to coalition

1 partners, because we are closely engaged with them, that
2 is not an acceptable target or this has to be done in
3 a different way. That is a dialogue that goes on
4 absolutely constantly and nobody in the
5 Ministry of Defence has any difficulty about conveying
6 that view, that legal view. And if it means that an
7 operation or an undertaking has to be aborted, then
8 that's what happens. There is no question of, as it
9 were, saying, "Oh, well, there is a greater good to be
10 served by working with a coalition". The answer is you
11 don't do it because it is illegal, and that's not
12 something that there is any chance taken on.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: I think this is not time or, indeed, the
14 occasion to pursue it, but there is of course Kosovo as
15 a precedent and the grounds on which that enterprise was
16 undertaken with major international support but without
17 an United Nations Security Council Resolution or
18 a footing in international law as it then stood.

19 MR DESMOND BOWEN: But, I mean, my point is that there was
20 legal backing for that from the highest legal authority
21 in the UK. I'm talking not only about that, but also
22 about, as it were, the more minor elements, what looked
23 like more minor elements, but actually involved the loss
24 of life of maybe civilians, where if it is unacceptable,
25 we say we are not going to do it and we do not do it.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I asked for final observations, thank you.

2 What I would like to do is thank our witness and
3 those who have been with us this afternoon.

4 Tomorrow we have Sir Suma Chakrabarti as
5 Permanent Secretary of DFID in the morning, followed by
6 Dominick Chilcott -- and I, say for the first but probably
7 not the last time he is no relationship at all; indeed,
8 our names are not identical -- who, as we have heard,
9 set up the Iraqi Planning Unit in the Foreign Office at
10 the material time.

11 Then in the afternoon we have a session with
12 Sir John Scarlett in his role as chairman, at the time,
13 of the Joint Intelligence Committee, followed by the two
14 key commanders for the invasion itself, Air Chief
15 Marshall Burridge and General Robin Brims, and that will
16 conclude tomorrow's quite a heavy day's work.

17 So with that, thanks to everybody and that closes
18 the session.

19 (5.09 pm)

20 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)

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