

Monday, 7 December 2009

1

2 (11.30 am)

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MR EDWARD CHAPLIN

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning everyone and welcome.

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This morning we welcome back Edward Chaplin. Last

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Tuesday you gave us evidence on the development of

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policy on Iraq up to the point that coalition troops

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entered Iraq. But you moved on from that post in London

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to become the first British Ambassador to Iraq for about

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12 years, I think.

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MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes.

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THE CHAIRMAN: Not for 12 years in the post, but after

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a 12-year gap.

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MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: 13.

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THE CHAIRMAN: And you took on that post in 2004 until 2005,

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I understand. And it is in that capacity we are hearing

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from you today.

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For practical reasons, as, indeed, last Friday with

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Dominic Asquith, this is a little bit in advance of our

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straight chronological sequence and we will be hearing

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other witnesses covering the period from next week.

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I remind every witness that he will be asked to sign

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a transcript of the evidence to the effect that the

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evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate, and

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I will now handover to Sir Lawrence Freedman to begin

1 the questioning.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you. I think this morning you
3 are going to be looking at the British response to the
4 situation in Iraq from the middle of 2004 to the middle
5 of 2005, which was with obviously the time when things
6 were getting increasingly difficult.

7 When you arrived in Baghdad in June 2004, you had
8 obviously been dealing with the issue up to that point.
9 What made the most direct impression on you compared
10 with how things had looked from a London perspective?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: As you say, I was dealing with Iraq
12 although I took a couple of months off to prepare for
13 Baghdad, but that was a lot of briefings. So I knew
14 pretty well what the situation on the ground looked
15 like, but of course there was an important change as
16 I arrived because my arrival was timed to be just
17 after -- actually it was in early July rather than late
18 June -- the interim government under Dr Allawi had taken
19 over on 28 June. I arrived in the first few days
20 of July, so there was a completely new situation. So
21 no one knew quite what to expect.

22 The things that were familiar were the security
23 situation, which was actually in some ways not as bad as
24 people had imagined because people had thought there
25 would be an upsurge of violence to mark the transition,

1 but it was still pretty bad. But what you had, what the
2 most striking thing -- I suppose it wasn't a complete
3 surprise, but here you had a government which had been
4 put together basically on the basis of ethnic and
5 sectarian balance rather than on competence to carry out
6 various ministerial tasks.

7 But Dr Allawi was stuck with that. And I suppose
8 the other very striking thing was the sheer lack of
9 capacity in the Prime Minister's office and the other
10 ministerial offices to start the business of governing.
11 We knew it would be lacking because, of course, many of
12 the leaders, including Allawi himself, had spent many
13 years in exile and didn't have very much experience of
14 the business of government, but even so the sheer
15 dysfunctionality, if that's the right word, of the
16 ministerial apparatus was very striking and it was an
17 area in which we gave a lot of our help in the early
18 days.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Not long before you arrived, there
20 had been three particular events during April which had
21 coloured many people's attitudes to how Iraq was likely
22 to develop. That was the veiled (?) American effort on
23 Fallujah, the arrival of Moqtadr Sadr as a serious
24 political force with the militia, and the revelations
25 about what had happened at the prison at Abu Ghraib.

1 I wonder how these coloured attitudes to what was
2 possible in that period, particularly the arrival of the
3 Shias as a potentially violent factor in our position?

4 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I mean, those -- certainly those
5 first two issues, Fallujah and the Moqtadr Sadr problem,
6 dominated the first few months.

7 There was a crisis in Najaf, in southern Iraq,
8 in August, with an uprising inspired by Moqtadr Sadr,
9 which was settled by a ceasefire negotiated with
10 Sistani, and that ceasefire more or less held. So --
11 and I think the -- perhaps the broader point to make
12 about that sort of sectarian violence is to draw the
13 distinction between the, so to speak, internal
14 opposition, those who had stayed all through the
15 terrible years of Saddam Hussein and had been the
16 opposition there, which was the Sadrist movement on the
17 whole, who regarded those who were now mostly in power,
18 which were mostly exiled leaders, in a rather
19 unfavourable light, understandably.

20 They would claim -- and I had contacts with these
21 people -- that was part of my job, to be in contact with
22 as many different elements as possible to promote
23 national reconciliation, which was going to be vital.
24 But it was clear that they felt excluded from the
25 process and, therefore, thought that violence was the

1 only way to make their views felt.

2 Fallujah was another theme which carried right
3 through until November. As you say, there was the --
4 there was the battle in April and so that was unfinished
5 business, certainly unfinished business for the
6 Americans, but also for Allawi. And there was a lot of
7 discussion at the Ministerial Committee for National
8 Security, which both I and the US Ambassador,
9 John Negroponte, were members of, a lot of discussion
10 about how serious the problem was, what the risks of
11 action were, if and when to go in and deal with the
12 problem. And in the end I think what Allawi felt
13 compelled to act -- the reason he felt compelled to act
14 was because it was such a serious part of the security
15 threat.

16 Fallujah by October/November 2004 was, by all
17 accounts, a major terrorist haven. The numbers varied.
18 I know there were, say, thousands of terrorists, and it
19 was certainly a factory for car bombs, and a lot of the
20 violence, the increasingly sophisticated attacks that
21 were happening in Baghdad and central Iraq, were sourced
22 out of Fallujah. So there was that reason for going in.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We are now jumping ahead a bit.

24 That's in November.

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: The risks, just to finish on that point,

1 were also pretty clear, of which the major one was what
2 would this do to Sunni sentiment in the country and
3 would it scupper the chances of them taking part in the
4 elections in January 2005.

5 And I suppose since I have mentioned that, I should
6 say that the overall priority for the embassy -- I mean,
7 there are other priorities that I can come back and talk
8 about -- but the overall priority was the support of the
9 political process and making sure that elections could
10 take place on time at the end of January 2005. That was
11 the overwhelming priority.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And Abu Ghraib, which in terms of
13 the international opinion certainly had a major effect.

14 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think Abu Ghraib did huge damage to
15 the whole image of the enterprise and it took a long
16 time to recover from that. And that whole issue of
17 detainees, it wasn't one that took up an awful lot of my
18 time, but that was a constant theme with the ICRC and
19 others interested in the human rights --

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's the International
21 Committee --

22 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Of the Red Cross, sorry. I think it
23 took a long time to recover from that.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did your American interlocutors
25 respond to the situation which -- I mean, there were

1 other, obviously, stories about what British soldiers
2 may or may not have done, but there was nothing to
3 compare in terms of imagery to those that were coming
4 out of what had been Saddam's own prison.

5 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It was John Negroponte who arrived
6 almost spontaneously (?) with me. The US Ambassador was
7 very conscious of the damage it was doing to the image
8 of the US and of the coalition in Iraq, and I think
9 helped set in hand a number of improvements. But as
10 regards opinion in the Arab world, which was probably
11 the most critical factor, you know, the television
12 images replayed again and again and again I think did
13 damage, certainly.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You mentioned, when talking about
15 Moqtadr Sadr, the role of the Ayatollah Sistani. He is
16 obviously quite a critical factor, but never played
17 a very prominent political role. How important did you
18 see him at the time in terms of managing that side of
19 the sectarian equation?

20 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: He was a crucial figure and, indeed, if
21 he had disappeared -- because there were some worries
22 about his health at one stage while I was there --
23 I think most people thought that would have been a very
24 highly destabilising event because I think one of the
25 roles he played was to keep in check some of the more

1 extremist elements on the Shia side, including
2 Moqtadr Sadr. And he may not have been publicly very
3 prominent, but he was extremely influential in
4 encouraging the putting together of the Shia list for
5 the elections which, indeed, ended up with a majority of
6 the seats in the election.

7 So in terms of entrenching Shia majority rule, if
8 you like, in Iraq, at that stage, or at least giving
9 Shia parties the best chance of winning political power,
10 I think he was extremely influential. But he was also
11 a moderating factor. He wasn't someone, of course, who
12 dealt with ambassadors, but we did talk to a lot of
13 people around him.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Again, just to get the sense of
15 policy in the summer of 2004, what was the prevailing
16 analysis of what could be done to deal with the
17 deterioration of security, and in particular what was
18 seen to be the significance of the move away from the
19 CPA and the Coalition Provisional Authority to an Iraqi
20 interim government?

21 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: The move away from the CPA was an
22 important symbolic act. You had an Iraqi government led
23 by an Iraqi Prime Minister. Security, of course,
24 dominated their thoughts in terms of priorities, because
25 on that depends everything else. You can't do much

1 about reconstruction or standing up to public services,
2 and they were very conscious, this government, that they
3 would be judged by the electorate -- and they didn't
4 have very long -- they would be judged how effective
5 they were in improving the daily lot of Iraqis who, of
6 course, cared about that a lot more than they cared
7 about abstract constitutional concepts and so on.

8 So it was very much a priority, and the response to
9 what Allawi was most interested in was producing as
10 quickly as possible effective Iraqi security forces that
11 he could deploy to deal with the security problem.
12 That's not just army, but national guard and police.
13 And so that main task was in the hands of
14 General Petraeus at that time, who at that time was in
15 charge of the Iraqi-isation of forces.

16 But we did our bit as well, particularly, of course,
17 in the south, where our troops were with the training of
18 National Guard and police and quite a lot of the DFID or
19 of the aid effort went into -- both in Baghdad and in
20 Basra, went into the police force.

21 So that was the critical lack, if you like, having
22 reliable, effective, trained security forces to deploy
23 against these various forces.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to stay a little bit with the
25 interim government, it had been put together through

1 a complex process involving the UN and others. Did you
2 feel Allawi had a natural constituency within Iraq? Did
3 he have any personal authority?

4 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: He was seen very much as one of the
5 exiled leaders, so that's, if you like, a handicap. On
6 the other hand, I think he was respected as a tough
7 person who knew what he was about and realised security
8 was the main priority. And I think it was also
9 recognised that he was having to deal with a very
10 difficult situation.

11 So if you like there was a honeymoon period that
12 lasted perhaps most of the summer, but by the time he
13 got later on in the run-up to the elections, I think
14 people were disappointed that his government had not
15 produced more, particularly in improving public
16 services.

17 I think, just to give a sense of the number of
18 things on his plate, apart from security, which we have
19 touched on, and the sectarian violence there was
20 the political process. He put a lot of effort into
21 contacts with particularly the Sunni community to try
22 and persuade them to come into the political process.
23 There was the whole business of economic reform and
24 sorting out Iraq's finances, contacts with the IMF and
25 he wanted to put together a debt relief deal, which

1 indeed happened later.

2 He was very concerned about the neighbours,
3 particularly Iran and Syria, but also the wider region,
4 and wanted to get support from them for the political
5 process. So quite a lot of his time and effort went
6 into that. He did quite a lot of travelling overseas.
7 And then there was the -- it wasn't perhaps very much in
8 the news at the time but it was an important part of
9 what a new government had to treat as a priority, which
10 was the Iraq Special Tribunal and the trials of war
11 criminals, Saddam Hussein and so on, setting that up.

12 So he had a huge amount on his plate, but
13 actually -- of course most of his time was absorbed in
14 crisis management, so one shouldn't be too harsh on
15 judging his achievements or lack of them. He avoided
16 any major disasters, he did take the important decision
17 on Fallujah, which turned out to be the right decision,
18 I think. He did stick to, in the end, and deliver --
19 his government delivered elections with a lot of outside
20 support, including from ourselves. And that was really
21 the major event.

22 He also showed, I have to say, a lot of personal and
23 political courage in carrying out the job of
24 Prime Minister, a pretty thankless task at the time.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the criticisms of this period

1 is that the coalition accepted the sectarian divide and
2 in some ways reinforced it in the way that they dealt
3 with the different communities and in the setting up of
4 the way the elections were established. And Allawi was
5 somebody who notably tried to escape that.

6 Do you think he was handicapped by the fact that
7 politics had become increasingly sectarian post-Saddam?

8 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think that was a handicap. In an
9 ideal world, it would be nice to think that you could
10 have a fresh start and encourage non-sectarian lists to
11 link up. He did, as you say, try quite hard with his
12 own centrist, secular list, which didn't do badly. It
13 won 40 seats in the elections.

14 But in the end, I think that's another aspect of the
15 pack of cards that he was dealt on arrival. And looking
16 back, it is inevitable that for these first elections at
17 least, people were going to coalesce round the parties,
18 the individuals that they felt most comfortable with,
19 and those were going to be tribal and sectarian or
20 religious leaders. And so it was perhaps inevitable
21 that the result of the elections was rather decided on
22 a sectarian basis.

23 Not entirely. One shouldn't exaggerate it. There
24 was no clean divides in the political body in Iraq in
25 the sense there was Sunnis and Shias on every list. But

1 it wasn't until later, I think, the political process,
2 if you like, matured, and it is noticeable that the vote
3 for the major Shia list went down in the subsequent
4 elections in December 2005, because they too were
5 failing to deliver what people thought was really
6 important.

7 Also, of course, the Sunni, having boycotted --
8 which I think was a strategic mistake, but we can talk
9 about that -- having boycotted the January elections,
10 did get themselves into the subsequent elections and
11 showed some of the strength that they had.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to go on in a minute to that
13 and the interrelationship with Fallujah. Can we just
14 briefly perhaps, before we do that -- it is a very
15 important issue -- get your sense of the targets, and the
16 inspiration, for the developing violence within Iraq
17 during the first months when you were in Baghdad,
18 because it was changing at that time.

19 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, the insurgency -- and of course
20 there are two elements to this: There is the foreign
21 insurgency, the sort of terrorist groups coming in and
22 following their own agenda -- Zarqawi and his ilk -- and
23 a lot of other sort of foreign fighters; and there was
24 the internal insurgency fed by disgruntled, resentful
25 Sunnis. We talked last time about the results of

1 de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the army
2 feeding that.

3 But what they were targeting, I think they were
4 determined to prove that this was a government that had
5 could not succeed and determined to throw the political
6 process off track; in other words, to determine that
7 there could be no progress without them.

8 That would be the Sunni take, I think. The foreign
9 fighters were rather more negative than that. Their
10 political agenda perhaps was different.

11 So what they did was target people and
12 infrastructure, individual ministers and -- but once
13 they were better protected going down the chain,
14 assassinations of more junior people, a lot of
15 intimidation -- police, truck drivers driving fuel,
16 bowsers (?), that sort of thing -- and a lot of targeting of
17 infrastructure, which I think later became rather more
18 sophisticated. So instead of just blowing up a pipeline
19 which can actually be quite easily repaired, they would
20 blow up a pumping station which was more difficult to
21 put right, as I say, in order to prove to the Iraqi
22 population that this was a government that didn't have
23 the capacity to meet their needs.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Part of this, perhaps particularly
25 relevant for British opinion, was the start of hostage

1 taking. So we had in this period the Kenneth Bigley and
2 Margaret Hassan cases. How aware were you of the danger
3 to British nationals in Baghdad?

4 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Very aware. And, indeed, I think if you
5 looked at the travel advice at the time, it would be
6 "don't come anywhere near this place". They were
7 terrible incidents. I mean, terrible obviously for the
8 families, but terrible for the embassy in the sense that
9 we were very helpless.

10 Kidnapping was very widespread at the time. This
11 was often criminals rather than political. Of course,
12 as we have seen elsewhere, often criminal gangs will
13 carry out kidnappings of what they think are valuable
14 people, valuable in the sense that they can be sold on
15 to some political group. And I don't think we know even
16 now exactly who was behind either kidnapping. I would
17 have to refresh my memory.

18 I mean, they were different in the sense that
19 Ken Bigley, we didn't even know. He hadn't even
20 registered with the embassy, we didn't know he was
21 there. He was working with these two Americans for a
22 Gulf company. The first thing we knew of his existence
23 was when the news of the kidnap came through.

24 Margaret Hassan was different. In fact, I had met
25 her before when I was Ambassador in Jordan because she

1 worked for CARE Australia, a very effective NGO, one of
2 the few working inside Iraq before and after the
3 invasion. So I admired the work that she was doing and
4 the embassy kept in touch.

5 So that was, if you like, an even greater blow. But
6 just to explain -- I don't know if you want to go into
7 detail about this, but I probably cannot because what
8 happens when a kidnapping of a British citizen takes
9 place is you have set up a really discrete team because
10 this needs 24-hours-a-day attention. So that team was
11 led by my deputy and we had a lot of support
12 particularly coming out from London, experienced
13 negotiators and so on.

14 So after the initial phase, my job was really to
15 keep it in the minds of Iraqi ministers whom we thought
16 would could help, the army and the police and so on, and
17 do whatever else I could do to help.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What sort of response did you get
19 from --

20 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Very positive and, of course, this was
21 raised all the way to Allawi himself and it was raised
22 by ministers, but they didn't have the capacity to help
23 very much, I don't think. And, of course, they were
24 dealing at any one time with lots of other kidnappings.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We had no evidence ourselves of who

1 was holding her?

2 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think the assumption early on was it
3 was a criminal gang of some sort, but we never got very
4 far in pinning down exactly who was behind it and -- let
5 alone having contacts that might lead to some progress.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And in the aftermath of her murder,
7 we still seemed to have been in the dark as to what had
8 happened and, indeed, where her body was.

9 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Some time later some of her clothes and
10 possessions were found. We knew her husband as well,
11 who stayed on in Baghdad. So we would see him from time
12 to time. I don't know what the investigation --
13 continued investigation showed.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you. It may be an issue we
15 will need to explore in different ways.

16 If we then move on to the question of Fallujah, this
17 had been something of an embarrassment for the coalition
18 in April because the Americans had sort of set
19 themselves up to take the city and then held back
20 because of concerns about the violence that would
21 result.

22 Why was it different in November and were you
23 comfortable about the way the actual entry into Fallujah
24 was handled?

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It was different because the problem had

1 become more serious. I think I described earlier the
2 terrorist haven that it had become and the threat that
3 it posed, not just to the inhabitants of Fallujah but
4 many of the central cities where these car bombs were --
5 car bomb attacks were taking place.

6 So, if you like, the argument swayed backwards and
7 forwards between those who thought that you had to take
8 military action against Fallujah -- and of course there
9 were negotiation attempts right up to the last minute,
10 but in the end, if it had to be done, you had to take
11 military action in order to improve the security, in
12 order to allow elections to take place -- and the
13 contrary view, which was that if you went in with
14 military action with a lot of casualties on -- a lot of
15 civilian casualties, never mind the military ones, you
16 would so enrage Sunni opinion that the risk would be
17 perhaps an implosion of the Allawi government --
18 obviously lots -- many Sunni members of it and so
19 alienate Sunni opinion in the country, that they would
20 refuse to take part in elections.

21 And Allawi hesitated and there were long discussions
22 in the Ministerial Committee, but in the end - (and
23 Ramadan was a factor- it was thought not a good thing
24 to do during Ramadan) but in the end he decided it had
25 to be done.

1 Our own view was one of caution, tended to be
2 highlighting the risks and trying to make sure that
3 Allawi considered really carefully the pros and cons.
4 But in the end it was his decision, and obviously an
5 American decision, and the Americans of course concluded
6 that this was the right thing to do. And I think they
7 were proved right, in fact.

8 Our main involvement and the main thing we
9 emphasised afterwards was that if there had to be
10 military action, then the government needed to organise
11 itself to ensure there was rapid follow-up, looking
12 after displaced people, returning them as soon as
13 possible, looking after the humanitarian aspects. And
14 the part of the DFID team that was working closely with
15 the Ministry of Health was heavily involved in that
16 because, again, there was a lot of oral commitment that,
17 yes, this was important and should be done, but actually
18 turning that into action was more difficult and needed
19 quite a lot of support, and that was provided by some of
20 our experts.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But we weren't directly involved in
22 the attack itself?

23 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: We weren't directly involved. It was in
24 the aftermath; General Kiszely, who was by that time the
25 senior British military representative in Iraq.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will be talking to General Kizley
2 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, you can talk to him because he was
3 co-ordinating the humanitarian effort.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the consequences of that
5 arguably was the non-participation of Sunnis in the
6 election, or did you say it had other roots?

7 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think it was a factor, but I think it
8 was more complicated than that. We spent a lot of
9 time -- and this is probably an area where we were a bit
10 more active than the Americans, at least in the early
11 months and the lead-up to elections -- in our contacts
12 with the different Sunni factions and laying out to them
13 the arguments as to why we thought they should take
14 part. The main reason being that the point of the
15 elections was to elect a transitional assembly whose
16 main job was going to be drafting the constitution on
17 which there would then be a referendum in October and
18 further elections in December.

19 So we were underlining, if you like, the unwisdom of
20 excluding themselves from the process, denying
21 themselves a place at that table and, therefore, denying
22 themselves a part in that crucial bit of rebuilding the
23 state of Iraq.

24 I think there were a number of reasons why they felt
25 they couldn't take part: One was security; another was

1 I think they hoped until quite late on that the
2 elections wouldn't take place because of insecurity, and
3 I think they felt very sore and very excluded from
4 the -- not just because of the attacks on Fallujah, but
5 because of their exclusion from the process -- what they
6 saw as the government not paying enough attention to
7 their particular concerns.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was the effect of their
9 non-participation in terms of putting together
10 a government after the elections?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, it made it more complicated, but
12 in fact I suppose one of the results of our constant
13 lobbying of the new government -- well, before and
14 after, but of those who were forming the government
15 under Prime Minister Jaafari, was the need to, despite
16 the election results, despite the relatively low Sunni
17 participation -- of course it wasn't negligible, there
18 were quite a lot of Sunni members of parliament, but if
19 you like, what we were pressing for was to make sure
20 there was an adequate number of credible Sunni figures
21 in the new government, and separately an adequate number
22 of credible Sunni representatives in the Constitutional
23 Drafting Committee in the Parliament.

24 So if you like we were asking people to set aside,
25 up to a point, the results of what everyone agreed was a

1 democratically free and fair, reasonably well-run
2 election for the sake of the national reconciliation and
3 the future of the country.

4 And in the end, though it took a very long time --
5 and the delay itself, I think did some damage. But in
6 the end Jaafari and a Shia (inaudible) agreed to make
7 room for credible Sunni figures in the government.
8 I think later on, although that was, I think, mainly
9 after I left -- the constitutional process got going in
10 mid 2005 -- Sunni voices were listened to.

11 At any rate if you like the lesson the Sunni
12 community learned from that process was that they should
13 certainly join in the next round, so to speak, the
14 referendum on the constitution, and the elections at the
15 end that of year. And they were telling us that from
16 very early on after the elections.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Jaafari's coming to power, as you
18 say, took a number of months. Why was that? Were we
19 trying to play a role in expediting the process?

20 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, we were. It took a long time
21 because it was a very complicated process, because what
22 you ended up with in fact was a sort of government of
23 national unity. But the initial steps, if you like,
24 were to -- for the different -- the major winners to the
25 Shia list, to sort out amongst ourselves, because it was

1 something of a rainbow coalition, what the balance of
2 influence was going to be, who was going to take which
3 ministry -- assuming they were going to have half the
4 number of ministerial posts, how those were going to be
5 divided up. So there was a lot of internal negotiating
6 going on and we really had to wait for that to finish.

7 Then there was the Kurdish factor, and there was
8 a negotiation between the Kurds, who were the second
9 most important party, and a the question of whether they
10 were going to come in -- there was, I think an agreement
11 they reached with the United Iraqi Coalition, the Shia
12 list, which took a lot of negotiating. And then there
13 was the separate question of whether Allawi was going to
14 be part of the government or not.

15 So it was quite complex and that's why it took so
16 long. And in that process we and the American embassy
17 as well were in constant touch, though by now I think
18 John Negroponte left about this stage, so I suppose
19 I was perhaps more involved than I might otherwise have
20 been in talking to the leaders of the main parties who
21 had a say in the formation of the government to urge
22 speed, but also to urge visible signs of national
23 reconciliation so that everybody could play a part in
24 the new government and the drawing up of the new
25 constitution. And that included contacts with the Sunni

1 groups as well, urging them to be patient and to respond
2 to offers.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did Jaafari seem to you to have
4 a different set of priorities and competencies to
5 Allawi?

6 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: He was a very different character
7 compared to Allawi. He saw the political point of all
8 this and I think he in the end worked quite hard to make
9 sure that his government did have the right elements,
10 and I think the Sunni community ended up with about
11 20 per cent of the Cabinet posts, which wasn't far off
12 their share of the population.

13 But he was rather -- he had a rather different style
14 of government, and of course he was faced with many of
15 the same problems that Allawi was faced with. Security
16 was still bad. He had more security forces to play
17 with, the Iraqi-isation process was that much further
18 on. The services were still as bad. In fact, I think
19 the electricity supply was lower in the time of the
20 elections than it had been before the invasion. So that
21 is quite an indictment -- or perhaps it's tribute to the
22 success of the insurgency in knocking everything out,
23 because certainly a lot of money had gone into
24 rebuilding that.

25 So we had a lot of expectations to manage, plus the

1 constitutional process on top of that.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then just my final question for the
3 moment. As you are making an effort to incorporate the
4 Sunni more into the political process, them having
5 excluded themselves largely in January, what effect does
6 that have on our relations with the Shia community? Is
7 there a balancing act and were we losing some support
8 that may have been relevant to the unrest in Basra
9 later on?

10 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I don't think that there was that sort
11 of connection. I think most Iraqis regarded us as more
12 or less honest brokers. Of course, we had a long
13 history of involvement in the country. We were able to
14 make the point to the Sunnis that in 1920, when we had
15 had the mandate and had set up the very first government
16 in Iraq, the Shia had unwisely excluded themselves from
17 the political process and had paid the price for the
18 next 85 years. The Sunnis should not make the same
19 mistake.

20 So I think that -- and when I was talking, for
21 example -- I said I was in contact with a very wide
22 spectrum of different groups, but if you talked to the
23 tribal chiefs, the Shi'uk(?), they would always start
24 conversations with memories -- fond memories, they would
25 claim, of dealing with the British. As you know, Arabs

1 can get quite sentimental about this sort of thing. The
2 facts don't always bear out their memories.

3 So suppose there was some trust that this was
4 a country that we knew and, of course, we would talk to
5 all concerned. I don't think people held that against
6 us. I think what they held against us was different, it
7 was the way we had handled the run-up, particularly on
8 the Sunni side, the way we had allowed the Iraqi army to
9 be involved and the way we had set up the CPA and the
10 way we had set up the new government. And, again,
11 I mean, the people on the Sunni rejectionist side that
12 we had talked to had that real grievance with the exiled
13 politicians, and there was a real feeling that we were
14 familiar with of how easily conspiracy theories take
15 root in the Middle East. But there was a real feeling
16 amongst some of those rejectionists that this had all
17 been dreamt up between exiled politicians like Chalabi,
18 and the US administration, the neo-cons, and they were
19 just coming in to divide the country up and divide the
20 spoils. It was as crude as that.

21 But we always had a hearing. We may not have made
22 always enough impact, and the Iraqi Islamic party, the
23 most moderate Sunni party, which withdrew late in the
24 day, towards the end of December, I think agonised a lot
25 over what the right thing to do was. And even after

1 they had decided not to take part, they in fact left
2 their party's name on the ballot. They did actually get
3 some votes, even a few seats, I think. And they were
4 certainly still in contact with us going through into
5 the period for the formation of the Jaafari government.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Mr Chaplin, you were the director of
8 Middle East and North Africa before you went to Iraq
9 in June 2004. Perhaps you can tell us a little bit
10 about what were the UK policies in relation to Iraq at
11 that time and did it look relevant when you arrived
12 there, because you have given us the description of what
13 you found on the ground?

14 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think I probably gave last time quite
15 a detailed account of UK policy at the time, but the
16 objectives, if you like, that we set ourselves before
17 I arrived -- it was actually the early days of
18 July 2004 -- were firstly to support the political
19 process, especially the electoral process, make sure the
20 elections took place on time, the national
21 reconciliation that I have already talked about. That
22 was the first priority. The second was to play our part
23 in helping to build up Iraqi security forces, army and
24 national guard and police. The third was to play our
25 part in contributing to economic reform and

1 reconstruction, the restoring of public services
2 particularly in our area in the south. A fourth was to
3 support Allawi and the key ministries -- I talked at the
4 beginning about the incapacity -- just to get simple
5 things done in ministries. So we had a team helping
6 Allawi's office just to do simple things that a system
7 like ours takes for granted, but also in some other key
8 ministries, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of
9 Defence -- was a separate MoD team -- and the Ministry
10 of Health I mentioned in the Fallujah context.

11 And the last priority, though this was more for my
12 colleagues in post around the region, was to encourage
13 wider international support for the new government. And
14 there was an important conference in Sharm-el-Sheik in
15 Egypt in November 2004 to help gather international
16 support, and there was an important donors
17 conference in Tokyo, I think in early December.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: December of?

19 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: December 2004. Where, again -- this is
20 perhaps a good example of the sort of practical help we
21 gave. We helped the Deputy Prime Minister,
22 Barham Salih, who was the Iraqi representative to that
23 conference, draw up a development strategy to be
24 presented to donors because we knew the sort of things
25 that --

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What I really want to find out from
2 you is whether this policy that you had, was it relevant
3 to what you found on the ground or not?

4 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Those priorities, yes, they were
5 relevant to the ones that we set ourselves early on, and
6 the ones that I carried with me, so to speak, to Baghdad
7 were very much the relevant ones.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did those square with those of
9 the United States? Was there much alignment with the
10 approach that the UK had?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I think there was. We worked very
12 closely with them at different levels. Of course, there
13 is a lot of contact between London and Washington,
14 between Nigel Sheinwald, who I think you are going to
15 talk to as well, and Dr Rice. There was a lot of
16 contact between myself and John Negroponte, the US
17 Ambassador and the people working for us on both sides,
18 with different aspects. There was a lot of contact
19 between our military, because the senior British
20 military commander was the deputy commander of the
21 multinational force in Iraq.

22 So at all these levels we worked very closely. Also
23 in contributing to the sort of policy debate that went
24 on. So, for example, the major security problem from
25 which everything else -- resolving that was the key to

1 everything else. In the early days -- because you had
2 a new team on the US side: you had General Casey and
3 John Negroponte, and they rapidly saw that they needed
4 a new strategy. But the discussions for drawing that
5 up, the counterinsurgency strategy, they invited to us
6 contribute. So I attended some meetings of that with
7 some colleagues. So I think we had some impact there.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the different strategy that
9 was pursued by Casey and John Negroponte compared to
10 before and what was our contribution to that?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It was, if you like, a more holistic
12 approach, the recognition, which is easy to say but more
13 difficult to put into practice, that you couldn't just
14 deal with the insurgency by military means, you couldn't
15 treat it as a counter-terrorism problem. The
16 counter-insurgency strategy needed to be different, it
17 needed to include getting the political process right,
18 it needed crucially to include getting improvements on
19 the ground, changing the environment in which the
20 insurgents operate. That was the key. And that means
21 redirecting resources to projects which would have quick
22 impact, which would impress people, which would boost
23 the credibility of the Allawi government.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What kind of projects were they?

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Reconstruction projects, public service

1 projects.

2 There was that very large sum of money, you
3 remember -- \$18.5 billion, I think -- allocated by
4 Congress. Not an awful lot of it had been spent, so
5 I think one of the results of this new strategy was to
6 reallocate sums of money from that to what was seen as
7 the priority projects.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were we perceived differently to how
9 the United States were perceived on the ground?

10 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes. Of course, our area of operations
11 in terms of delivering projects on the ground was
12 largely confined to the south. I'm sure you will go
13 into that in more detail with the military commanders
14 and the consul generals because that was pretty much
15 a self-contained operation.

16 But we had impact there. I suppose the frustration
17 there -- but you will hear more about that from other
18 witnesses -- was that the south being relatively quiet
19 in this period, a relatively permissive environment, in
20 the jargon, was not a very high priority for the
21 Americans. They had this huge reconstruction programme.
22 But both on the military training side and on the
23 reconstruction side, not much of that was finding its
24 way down to Basra, and that was damaging because it
25 reinforced -- not only did we not have the resources

1 that we thought we should have to get on with
2 reconstruction in support of the political process, but
3 it also reinforced the feeling in the south that had
4 always been neglected under Saddam Hussein. And so, as
5 far as this could see, really nothing had changed: a new
6 government in Baghdad, Allawi in charge, but nothing is
7 changing down here, we are being neglected all over
8 again.

9 So in the end -- but I'm sure you will come on to
10 this in more detail with others -- we used some of our
11 own resources on things like military and police
12 training.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: With the balance of powers moving
14 from the CPA to the interim government, how did that
15 change the political dynamic in Baghdad?

16 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, it was a new start of a sort.

17 I think the problem was that as far as the public were
18 concerned, they wanted to see results and, if you like,
19 one of the crucial things that Allawi didn't get right,
20 on which we tried to help him, was the management of
21 expectations. I referred to that earlier, in my last
22 appearance. But, in other words, getting a coherent
23 message out to the public as to what was going on, what
24 the government's priorities were, why the public had to
25 be patient in waiting for improvements in public

1 services and so on.

2 But the dynamic was certainly different. The Iraqis
3 were in charge and of course they were very heavily
4 reliant on outside support at that stage. And there was
5 a -- of course, they were very keen to demonstrate that
6 they were in charge and that could lead to some
7 awkwardness in the sense that, for example, one of the
8 first things that Allawi did was to get some emergency
9 legislation put through to give him emergency powers.
10 That was necessary. And he used them in Fallujah and
11 elsewhere. But those emergency powers, although they
12 included an amnesty process, which obviously helped the
13 reconciliation process, also included the restoration of
14 the death penalty, which the CPA had done away with.

15 Of course, we and everyone else in the EU are very
16 opposed to the death penalty. That was not something
17 that troubled the Americans, so that was a particular
18 point where with the UK had to argue against this.

19 In the end, Allawi made it clear that on that issue
20 there was huge popular support for the reintroduction of
21 the death penalty, but he would listen to the arguments
22 it should be used transparently, that the system of
23 justice should operate more effectively and the number
24 of crimes for which people could be sentenced to death
25 should be fewer than in the days of Saddam Hussein.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Understandably, although you wanted
2 to be in the lead, but how did that impact on the way we
3 tried to help and influence? Did it change our policy
4 towards, and the way we worked with, the interim
5 government?

6 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: We had very close relations with him and
7 we responded as best we could to the various requests he
8 made. The most pressing, which I think I have
9 mentioned, was the functioning of his own office. So we
10 had a team there discreetly, because obviously we had
11 an Iraqi face on everything, just helping him organise
12 his office, organise his communications, get some order
13 into the flow of people and papers through his office,
14 preparation of decisions in Cabinet and so on.

15 All that, as I say, stuff that we take for granted
16 in our system simply didn't exist then.

17 And the same thing applied to his other key
18 ministries. And I mean, he made clear what his
19 priorities were and we did our best to respond, I think
20 is the short answer to your question.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did we manage to integrate the
22 military and the civilian policy, if at all, on the
23 ground?

24 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: In practice, by very frequent contact
25 between the military side and the civilian side. So

1 I would see John McColl and then General Kiszely at
2 regular intervals and his people would be in contact
3 with mine.

4 So things like security sector reform, we were
5 making the same noises, pushing for the same things,
6 including pressing, say, the Americans for some action
7 or lack of action. One example of that would be the
8 multinational force. The Americans had a very clear
9 idea of Sunni leaders who they thought were up to no
10 good and who they would launch operations against when
11 they saw the opportunity in order to arrest them and so
12 on. There was a risk that that, at certain crucial
13 stages, would cut across the national reconciliation
14 that we were promoting.

15 That's an example of where we would -- because we
16 were perhaps a little more conscious of that than my
17 American colleagues, we would go to the Americans and
18 say, look, this is not a good time to take action, it is
19 going to stir up more resentment in the Sunni community
20 just at the time when we seem to be making some progress
21 in tempting them back into the political process.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said earlier that it was very
23 much an era of sort of crisis management, in the way
24 that it was a breakdown in security and so on. How much
25 did that impact on the delivery of other objectives, you

1 know political and economic objectives, and how did you
2 try to sort of take that into account?

3 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I guess -- I mean, one of my jobs as
4 Ambassador was to coordinate the whole UK effort, which
5 wasn't just devoted to those sort of crisis management
6 or the security aspects but was also targeted on
7 building up capacity in other parts of the government
8 and helping them make sense of our dialogue with the
9 IMF, on things like the passing of a sensible oil
10 legislation and indeed to restoring our bilateral ties.

11 So there was a large team. There was 110 or so
12 UK-based people in the embassy, plus a lot of security
13 people, and another 90 down in Basra, and a one-man team
14 up in Kirkuk.

15 So, if you like, my job was to make sure that,
16 although a large chunk of my time might be taken on
17 helping with the crisis management and helping with key
18 things like keeping the electoral process on track, that
19 the other things that needed to be done, even if they
20 weren't a top priority, were still being addressed. But
21 inevitably the crisis management did have some impact on
22 those others areas.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you say a little bit about
24 capacity building. I mean, you had some staff. What
25 were you doing in the area of capacity building?

1 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, the main focus, which actually
2 carried through from the Allawi government into the
3 Jaafari government -- Jaafari had much the same
4 problem -- was a team led by DFID but with some input
5 from us and from the FCO -- and we were working closely
6 with the Adam Smith Institute -- as I said earlier, very
7 much focused on putting in place the sort of processes
8 and procedures that would allow a Prime Minister's
9 office to function effectively.

10 Then there was a similar team staffed by the
11 Ministry of Defence, in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence,
12 again very much focused on putting in place the
13 processes -- planning, budgets, the sort of nitty gritty
14 things but without with nothing much can happen and for
15 which there was very little Iraqi capacity or what
16 capacity there had been had disappeared. And then in
17 the Ministry of Health a similar team staffed by some
18 very good UK experts, helping the Minister of Health
19 draw up sensible plans.

20 So that was all, if you like, in central government,
21 and then down in the south there was again a lot of
22 capacity building going on, helping local governing
23 structures make sense of their administration, helping
24 them draw up plans, so, instead of just a general
25 complaint against the centre for not giving them more

1 resources, putting together sensible plans with which
2 could bid the centre to devolve resources and showing
3 what they could do with it and then following up and
4 actually implementing it.

5 So there was a lot of very nitty gritty but very
6 necessary help being put into the Iraqi machine.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Given the unrest, was there an
8 imbalance between the regional issues and what -- you
9 know, always looking at nationally, at Iraq, I mean,
10 were there sort of domination of the regions?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I mean, there was a problem about -- and
12 this is one area where I did play role -- in persuading
13 the central government to pay more attention to the
14 south, and the focus of Allawi's attention, inevitably,
15 was where there were most problems, which is in the
16 centre of Iraq.

17 Also, of course, he had his own views about Shia
18 clerics and Iranian influence and so on, which I think
19 were a bit exaggerated but certainly coloured his -- or
20 reduced his enthusiasm for doing very much for the
21 south. But he did respond and his ministers responded
22 and we did get ministerial visits down to Basra and
23 action, when necessary action had to be taken, by
24 someone in the central government in order to allow
25 something in Basra to happen, for example, re-opening of

1 the Basra airport. Then that's the sort of issue on
2 which the embassy in Baghdad would be engaged.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: As you reversed roles -- I mean, you
4 were sort of responsible for the policy in the UK and
5 then you were for ten months on the ground. What
6 impact, if any, did you have on the evolution of policy?
7 How much influence were you able to have (inaudible)?

8 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It was very joined up. I think we
9 had -- apart from more or less daily contact with
10 Number 10, with the Iraq policy unit, we had a system of
11 weekly priorities to agree on and whenever a policy
12 paper was going out to ministers, we in Baghdad and
13 Basra, as appropriate, would always have input to that.
14 So I think it was a very joined-up process. That part
15 worked well.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think you had enough
17 resources and means to turn the policy into reality on
18 the ground?

19 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I think we had enough people in
20 Baghdad and in Basra. I think other people have talked
21 about later on the lack of resources to carry out the
22 projects that we thought were necessary. But I think in
23 those early days -- we have just talked about lack of
24 capacity -- there were limits to what Iraq could
25 actually absorb in terms of money and assistance.

1 I think we had as much as we could. The one exception
2 might be that I think we were a bit slow to get going on
3 helping the Iraqi police. We were paying a lot of
4 attention to the Iraqi army and the National Guard and
5 so on, but in some ways restoring security depended very
6 heavily on standing up an effective Iraqi police force,
7 not least to deal with the enormous amount of criminal
8 activity. Never mind terrorist or political activities,
9 criminal activity had to be dealt with. But that was
10 something that -- and perhaps it is a good moment to
11 mention the amount of international help that was
12 starting to build up. So in my time there the EU sent
13 successive missions in order to find out what it could
14 do, and one of the areas that it decided it should
15 concentrate on was the rule of law area, both in the
16 justice system because the Iraqi justice system was
17 rather similar to those --

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And that came purely from the EU?

19 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It came from the EU with a lot of
20 nudging from ourselves. But that was one area, just as
21 on the officer training side we encouraged the NATO
22 training mission to take that over. So the
23 internationalisation of the effort was definitely one of
24 the key objectives.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And did we play a role in that, in

1 getting international support --

2 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I think we did.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did you determine what we should

4 focus on and what should the coalition partners focus

5 on?

6 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: We were focussing on, if you like,

7 everything, or everything was a priority for the

8 Iraqi Government as far as we could -- and I think

9 I have mentioned the priorities earlier on. As other --

10 as the international community, particularly post

11 elections, became more willing to get engaged on the

12 ground on Iraq, so we would point them in the direction

13 of different aspects. So the Italians, for example,

14 took the lead -- or the Italians were involved in, as

15 part of the coalition.

16 But the EU I have already mentioned and NATO and the

17 ICRC. They were all involved in different aspects.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, looking back on it, what do

19 you think worked? What didn't work? What could have

20 been done better? In retrospect, any observations?

21 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, I think we were quite -- we were

22 as effective as we could have expected to be in terms of

23 support for the political process. The key priority, as

24 I said earlier, which everyone agreed on, was to make

25 sure that elections took place on time at the end

1 of January 2005. I think we played quite a significant
2 part in ensuring that that happened.

3 We certainly did our bit in terms of building up the
4 capacity of the Iraqi Government. We did our bit with
5 the Iraqi security forces. We could have done more, we
6 could have done better, I think, on the police side, as
7 I have already mentioned.

8 Similarly on the reconstruction front, but mainly
9 down in the south, I think, certainly at the time that
10 I was there, the multinational force was held in very
11 high regard for what it was doing. Security problems
12 grew up later.

13 I think we succeeded -- and of course part of the
14 main job, being the first ambassador back after this
15 long gap, was to actually establish the embassy and
16 establish the right relationships with all the key
17 players, both inside and outside the government, and
18 I think we were quite successful in that and in
19 restoring the bilateral links and exploiting, if you
20 like, the enthusiasm of many Iraqis for restoring those
21 ties after a long absence, particularly, for example, on
22 the commercial side and in educational links, which had
23 always been traditionally very, very strong.

24 And I think we succeeded in maximising our impact on
25 what the Americans were doing, both on the military side

1 and on the civilian side, and it is interesting that --
2 I mean, General Casey rarely (?) welcomed advice from
3 General McColl and later General Kiszely. You can talk
4 to them about that, because he wanted a different view,
5 the alternative view from the one that the US system was
6 feeding up to him. So I think -- and it was the same
7 with John Negroponte. He was very open with me and
8 listened to carefully to views that we fed in. So I
9 don't want to exaggerate the influence but I think we --
10 I think that was the part of the operation that went
11 well.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Any observations on how you think
13 the policy could have been better coordinated at the
14 London end? As I said, you saw both sides of it. Any
15 observations on that?

16 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think, in comparison with the
17 run-up -- you know, the year before the invasion, which
18 we talked about last time, I think actually the policy
19 coordination, after we set up the embassy, was pretty
20 good. I talked earlier about the daily contact,
21 constant communication, ability to feed in ideas to the
22 centre. So I think that side of operation was quite
23 well joined up.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What worked before that?

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Do you remember I talked the last time

1 about the -- because there was so much focus on trying
2 to get the second resolution and so on, and basically
3 trying to avoid military action, there was less
4 attention given to the aftermath once we were there. It
5 had happened and everywhere was focused on the
6 priorities and the whole machine started to work rather
7 better, I felt.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, just a few more questions.

11 When we spoke on Friday to Dominic Asquith, he
12 mentioned, by the time he took over, the problems in
13 communication between Baghdad and Basra, the need to --
14 you couldn't get there by helicopter, it was quite
15 dangerous to move around and so on. Did you experience
16 those sorts of difficulties?

17 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: From that point of view I was there in
18 a more benign time. The environment in the south was
19 all right in the sense that, yes, you had to fly down
20 there, but you took the C130 down. But in my time, most
21 of the time you could move around by car, which I did,
22 although I used a helicopter to go to places further
23 away like Maysan, which I was also responsible for. So
24 that wasn't such a problem. And I visited -- I suppose
25 roughly every six weeks and was in contact in the same

1 way as I was in the south -- in Baghdad and, indeed, in
2 the north.

3 The north was even more permissive because, of
4 course, they had had a long period of autonomy and
5 looked after their own security. So, again, you could
6 move around by car rather than by air. So that wasn't
7 a particular problem.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you comfortable with the lines
9 of communication between Baghdad and the people in
10 Basra?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, we were in very close contact,
12 Simon Collis, who was the consul general most of the
13 time that I was there. He and I were in very regular
14 contact both by email and by phone, and when there were
15 particular problems which he needed my help on, he could
16 get hold of me very easily and I could try and get hold
17 of somebody in Iraqi Government to try and help. That
18 plus visits, and Simon would come up from time to time
19 to get some sense of how things were at the centre and
20 to put the southern view, if you like, to some members
21 of the government and similarly with the north. So
22 communication and contact was constrained in Baghdad
23 because -- I mean, I went out quite a lot outside the
24 so-called Green Zone, the international zone, because
25 many ministries were out there and you had to be careful

1 with security. But in the south and the north there
2 wasn't very much of a problem.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How good were your relations with
4 the various military officers sent by the UK?

5 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Oh, very close. I mean, they were
6 mainly with the senior British military representative,
7 in my time John McColl, John Kiszely and then
8 Robin Brims right at the end, which was perhaps one of
9 the issues, that the speed of turnover in the south was
10 even more. I think there were four different commanders
11 in my ten months in Iraq, in the south, which is quite
12 a rapid turnover compared to the Americans.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This is an issue that we have become
14 very aware of. Did you express a concern back to London
15 that there just seemed to be so many different people in
16 charge, one after the other, but quite a rapid turnover?

17 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I mean, as time went on, they
18 weren't neophytes because it turned out the person who
19 turned up as senior British representative in Iraq, in
20 Baghdad, had probably served as commander down in the
21 south, so knew the -- and our system is relatively
22 efficient. There was -- we made sure that continuity
23 happened. But I think rotating senior officers through
24 only sort of four to six months at a time is much less
25 than ideal; the Americans were doing two years or more.

1 So you do sacrifice a bit of impact.

2 On the other hand, he being a commander responsible
3 for an area as big as MND south-east, was very
4 taxing, very exhausting, so I suppose there is a limit,
5 but it is probably something worth looking at.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have a sense that our
7 performance in the south made a difference to how we
8 were viewed in Baghdad? So long as we seemed to be
9 making progress there, the security situation was
10 comparatively better than Baghdad?

11 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I think the Americans were happy
12 for us, so to speak, to get on with it in the south.
13 I talked earlier about some constraints because the
14 funding -- the share of this huge pot of \$18.5 billion,
15 we didn't think enough of it was coming to the south,
16 and it was quite slow getting sort of a US liaison
17 office, a proper one, set up in Basra to improve
18 communications. But the Americans had other priorities
19 in that period, which was understandable.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A different sort of question: how
21 much did you have the good sense or feel of opinion on
22 the ground amongst Iraqis? When we were talking
23 earlier, you mentioned conspiracy theories and concerns;
24 we have had discussions about criminal gangs, the
25 difficulty of founding out what had happened to

1 Margaret Hassan and so on, the aftermath of the Abu
2 Ghraib scandal and questions about people being picked
3 up. Did you have a feel for the shifts in terms of
4 opinion on the ground?

5 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: We were very conscious that inside the
6 international zone, the Green Zone, you were in
7 something of a bubble, but I and my colleagues,
8 respecting the security rules, got out and about as much
9 as we could because, as I say, many of the leading
10 personalities, party leaders and a good number of the
11 ministers were outside in Baghdad. So we did get out.

12 We were also in contact a lot by other means. Other
13 leaders came into the international zone, a lot of
14 meetings took place in the margins of the Parliament and
15 so on.

16 We had our quite sizeable local staff, who, of
17 course, would talk freely to us about what was really
18 going on on the ground, nitty gritty things like, you
19 know, lack of electricity, water and so on. So we had
20 some idea of that.

21 There was also, curiously enough, quite an
22 effective -- I can't remember who paid for it, possibly
23 the Americans, but a lot of polling went on, opinion
24 polls of Iraqis, and you can read those. So you were
25 able to track opinion on the way Iraqi opinion was

1 shifting so far as the political process, elections and
2 so on was concerned.

3 And the other thing worth remembering is that there
4 was a great explosion of media. This was one of the
5 free Iraqis' sort of joys of liberation, that at last
6 they had television channels, newspapers and so on.
7 There was a great plethora of them, in which people
8 could -- really could freely express their views,
9 something that made life a bit uncomfortable for the
10 government, although actually I think Allawi's main
11 concern was not about the local media and newspapers, it
12 was about Al Jazeera and their portrayal of what was
13 going on inside Iraq and what he regarded as incitement
14 to violence and so on. So we had quite a few debates
15 about that.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just following that up, how good
17 were the means of communication with ordinary Iraqis?
18 Presumably, you were having to work through the
19 political parties at this time and the political
20 leadership. Did we have our own lines of communication.

21 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: We had our own lines of communication
22 with lots of political figures, yes. Some of those had
23 been built up in the time of the CPA. So we inherited
24 those. Others we developed. People were quite keen to
25 talk to us, often, one felt, exaggerating the British

1 influence but that is sometimes the way in the
2 Middle East. But they were certainly very keen to make
3 sure we understood their views.

4 So, yes, we had a lot of contact, also with sort of
5 the rejectionist elements on the Sunni side, and indeed
6 on the Shia side. So I think overall we had
7 a reasonable picture of what was going on but, of
8 course, it could always have been improved.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then just the final question from
10 me, going back up to the higher level policy, if you
11 like. Sometimes one feels, looking at this, a sort of
12 disconnect between the rhetorical aspirations we held
13 out for Iraq, perhaps especially in March 2003, and then
14 the reality as it was developing over this period, and
15 over 2005 in particular things didn't really go in the
16 right direction.

17 It is basically an invitation to a reflection on --
18 was there a disconnect? Was it difficult to bring home
19 to politicians in Britain just how difficult things
20 actually were becoming in Iraq, and did you get a sense
21 in -- in a sense in the second part of your time in
22 Baghdad that things maybe were starting to slip away and
23 that the processes that had been set in motion were just
24 really not producing the outcomes desired?

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: No, I don't think, if you mean by "the

1 processes", our set-up in Iraq, with the embassy and so
2 on, the sort of help we were giving. I think we were
3 doing as much as we reasonably could. Of course one
4 could always, looking back, think of ways we could have
5 done better. In terms of the disconnect between
6 rhetoric and reality, I mean, of course it was easy
7 enough in early 2003 to set out, as I think happened
8 in January of that year, to Parliament some set of -- a
9 set of objectives that nobody could really quarrel with,
10 all the wonderful things that could be achieved in Iraq,
11 and -- but once we were actually there on the ground, of
12 course, we had to take account of what was really
13 achievable and, if you like, refine our priorities to
14 what was most important and what was achievable.
15 I think that process did happen quite rapidly.

16 Of course, the other thing that happened was we had
17 lots of visitors, so Hilary Benn, Development Secretary,
18 and Jack Straw as Foreign Secretary, and the
19 Prime Minister and many others, and officials from all
20 those departments were fairly frequent visitors to -- I
21 mean, not the ministers; they came once each in my time.
22 But there was a lot of contact on the ground and so they
23 could see for themselves, and I think that's one of the
24 things that improved the Whitehall coordination of the
25 whole effort; there were people sitting around that

1 table who had actually -- if they hadn't served in Iraq,
2 had actually been there, talked to the Iraqis themselves
3 and had a grasp of what was possible and what wasn't
4 possible.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I accept that you did what you
6 could, but had the country in some ways bitten off more
7 than it could chew, that the amount of effort that was
8 going to be needed in a situation that was
9 deteriorating, perhaps for reasons beyond your control,
10 more Baghdad-related than Basra-related, say -- that it
11 had just become too much, or gradually was becoming too
12 much to cope with?

13 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, increasingly, as the
14 Iraqi Government and then the second Iraqi government
15 got into gear, this was increasingly an Iraqi problem,
16 and as far as the political process was concerned,
17 outsiders could only do so much. I mean, as we made
18 clear from the very beginning, we were -- we could only
19 be there to hold the ring while the Iraqis worked out
20 amongst themselves how they wanted to to go forward, and
21 I suppose in a sense you could see that process
22 continuing even today.

23 In terms of what you were mentioning earlier,
24 I think we perhaps go back to the conversation we had
25 last time I was here about why we thought a second

1 resolution was so important, why we were trying to
2 convince the Americans that they had to have very early
3 involvement of the UN, because we did have some sense of
4 the enormity of the task, and indeed it was, of course,
5 enormous; scarcely anything was functioning as it needed
6 to -- I mean, to be fair, the Americans did rapidly buy
7 into that. We talked, I think, last time about how
8 rapidly after the invasion we had resolution in the
9 Security Council. We had another one, 1546, I think,
10 which mandated the multinational force and made
11 everything sort of -- put everything on a proper legal
12 basis and did mandate the UN to do various things, and
13 I worked quite closely -- very closely -- with the
14 special representative, who was appointed, Ashraf Qazi,
15 who had been the Pakistani Ambassador in Washington, and
16 he did a lot of good things. He was constrained because
17 of the terrible attack which had killed
18 Sergio Vieira de Mello and various colleagues. They
19 were constrained by security; they had to be very
20 cautious, understandably. He was rather frustrated at
21 the ceilings put on the number of UN staff he was
22 allowed to bring in.

23 But, if you like, going back to where we were before
24 the invasion, it kind of underlined the point that you
25 did need a huge international effort, and the longer we

1 were there, the more that became clear and, to be fair,
2 the more the international effort did gather pace, the
3 more actors got involved, as we have already mentioned.

4 But that is crucial, and the legitimacy argument
5 that we talked about last time is crucial, that you make
6 things a whole lot more difficult for yourself if, as
7 I have referred to in talking about some of the internal
8 elements, factors, if you go in and set up a Coalition
9 Provisional Authority, act in a way which is seen, not
10 just by many Iraqis, but by many people in the region as
11 not legitimate, not having proper international
12 blessing. It took us some time to recover from that,
13 and I think the lack of that did have a direct impact on
14 the security and therefore on the -- on the environment
15 in which insurgents and terrorists could operate
16 relatively freely and therefore on all the other
17 elements that were necessary to support the political
18 process.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So in fact by the time you arrived,
20 the issue was recovering from the decisions that had
21 been taken in 2003/2004?

22 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I would like to ask my colleagues
25 if they want to put any last questions. I've got one

1 thread I would like to tug on just a little more.

2 You have told us about the sustained and continuing
3 effort to build governmental capacity in your time:
4 finance, health, whatever, including, by the way, the
5 Iraq foreign ministry?

6 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: I just wonder if you could make an assessment
8 of the results over your period, in terms of the
9 survivability of the capacity that was being built
10 against all the political events, changes of political
11 leadership, just by (inaudible).

12 Was there an, if slow, nonetheless a gradual and
13 genuine increase in the capability of Iraq to govern
14 itself at the central government level?

15 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, I think there was progress, but
16 building capacity is a very slow business, as I'm sure
17 DFID witnesses will tell you, and depended quite a lot
18 on having the right people, not just in terms of their
19 qualifications but in terms of their ability to build a
20 relationship of trust with the individual minister
21 concerned, and of course, if the minister concerned then
22 changed, as happened after the election, you weren't
23 quite back to square one but you had to do that
24 rebuilding of trust all over again, and I think it says
25 something for the high regard in which our effort on

1 that front was -- how it was viewed, that when Jaafari
2 came in, he very readily accepted the suggestion that we
3 should use the team, slightly differently constituted
4 perhaps and possibly with different priorities, that we
5 had used with Allawi to transfer to support his office.

6 And I think with the foreign ministry and with other
7 ministries -- the Ministry of Finance, the
8 Ministry of Defence -- I think a lot of unspectacular
9 but very important work was done, and I can't say,
10 because I haven't looked into sort of how much of it
11 survived unscathed into the period after I was there --
12 but you can ask the other ambassadors, who were there
13 afterwards -- but my impression is that we did help lay
14 down the sort of more solid foundations for more
15 effective administration.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Sir Martin? Rod?

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just one or two questions. How much of
18 a threat did you and your staff live under while you
19 were there as Ambassador?

20 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Quite a heavy threat. I mean, but for
21 the political imperative -- this is not a place, not an
22 environment, in which you would willingly put diplomatic
23 and other staff, and of course there was a huge variety
24 of staff. The foreign office element was probably in
25 the minority.

1 It was a constant concern. By November, when we had
2 attacks on the route between the embassy and the
3 airport, we had to suspend all road movements between
4 the embassy and the airport, which meant you had to use
5 helicopters, which meant that -- and the Americans were
6 using helicopters so there was a lack of capacity. We
7 had to ask the Ministry of Defence -- and they responded
8 very rapidly, I must say -- to dedicate helicopter
9 assets to make sure that simply our staff could get in
10 and out, because the staff were on -- for obvious
11 reasons they were working seven days a week. Well,
12 I tried to make them work only six days a week but not
13 everyone obeyed that injunction, including myself. But
14 the system was that you would work for six weeks or so
15 and then have a two-week break. So there was, for
16 a staff of 120 or so, that meant a constant roulement,
17 and so having no road access between the airport and the
18 embassy was quite an complication and did make us think
19 about the numbers we should keep.

20 Security in the south was better -- I talked about
21 that, a more permissive environment -- but in both
22 places there was a lot of concern, particularly in the
23 early days, from stand-off attacks. So these were
24 mortar and rocket attacks, when people -- we talked
25 earlier, I think, last time, about the arms dumps that

1 were not probably guarded or dealt with. So almost any
2 group could help itself to a rocket or a mortar and with
3 minimal experience go and set it up in a suburb of
4 Baghdad some kilometres away and lob it in the direction
5 of the international zone and hope that it hit
6 something.

7 We were perhaps lucky that it didn't hit us. But it
8 was a very big concern, one that my deputy took the lead
9 on more than I did, but obviously I took a very close
10 personal interest. My own security was well looked
11 after by the Royal Military Police.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In your time were any of the staff of
13 whatever nationality under your command killed or
14 wounded?

15 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: No.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Different area of question: Did you feel
17 that, in the period we are talking about, the coalition
18 had enough troops on the ground to deal adequately with
19 both insurgency and security questions and with the
20 training of Iraqi forces?

21 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: It is difficult to judge and you should
22 perhaps ask a military man, who would have a better
23 opinion than I do --

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, if I may interrupt, the Chief of
25 the Defence Staff talked about the initial stage of

1 this, the American numbers as being anorexic and quite
2 inadequate for the task. You were there a year later.
3 Was it still anorexic?

4 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Well, the situation had changed. I
5 mean, I think -- if you like (inaudible) you shouldn't
6 have started from there. So indeed I would agree with
7 CDS that there should have been more troops on the
8 ground to ensure that basic level of security in the
9 early stages. Once you had lost that, then you were
10 really looking at a counterinsurgency strategy, which --
11 in which more boots on the ground was not necessarily
12 the biggest priority; you needed other things to happen.

13 I don't remember in my time either John McColl or
14 John Kiszely saying, "If only we had sort of more -- if
15 only the Americans had more forces here, we would be
16 able to do much better on the security front." I think
17 things had moved on -- moved beyond that. Of course,
18 later on, when things got much worse and there was the
19 whole debate about the surge, that debate had changed.
20 But I don't remember it being a crucial factor when
21 I was there.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I mean, when you were there, we were down
23 to a brigade-level contingent in the south region, which
24 is a very large area of countryside. Was there a debate
25 going on about actually drawing this down further

1 within -- this is within the British Government?

2 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: There was a debate going on about how
3 quickly you could hand over to Iraqi provincial control
4 but that was quite a bit beyond my time. It was just
5 being talked about in my time, but it was clearly some
6 way from becoming a reality.

7 The other major debate, I suppose, was whether more
8 of the civilian effort that the -- our troops were
9 involved in could be handed over to civilian people and
10 why more of that wasn't happening more quickly. But I
11 think -- but those issues became more urgent a bit
12 further down the track.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But at the time you were there were you
14 conscious of pressure from any quarters, military or
15 civilian or political on our side, to reduce our forces
16 in a hurry?

17 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: No, no, the people on the ground were
18 too busy getting on with the many priorities that they
19 saw.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you have intimations or forebodings
21 of a worsening of the situation?

22 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: No, I mean, my focus really was -- or
23 my -- I think the hopes of a lot of us were focused on
24 the idea that the elections would play a big part in
25 relegitimising the whole enterprise. So once you had a

1 fairly freely and fairly elected government in place,
2 that would kill the argument that was driving so much of
3 the insurgency, that this was a wholly illegitimate
4 enterprise. It was hard to argue. And indeed I think
5 that was the case: there was a sort of a bounce after
6 the January elections, in which some of the Sunni
7 rejectionists felt, "Well, okay, they have had the
8 elections and we have excluded ourselves and perhaps
9 that's a mistake and we should come in."

10 But there are many other things that you need to do
11 to change the environment in which the insurgency
12 operates, and that was to do with reconstruction and
13 managing people's expectations and so on, all the things
14 that I have already talked about, because if you think
15 about it, what does it take for a member of the public
16 to, if you like, pick up the phone to the police when
17 they see somebody preparing to carry out a mortar attack
18 from a few miles away on the international zone. Well,
19 it takes someone who feels some sort of greater loyalty
20 to the government than he does to the group that's
21 setting up the mortar. It requires him to think for
22 that that the government is actually on his side and
23 addressing some of his interests. So that's what I mean
24 about changing the environment, making it -- creating an
25 environment in which it is more difficult for terrorists

1 to operate.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just come back to the question of
3 reconstruction? You have talked of the, I think it was,
4 \$18.5 billion that the American congress had voted for
5 reconstruction. Did you feel that the United Kingdom,
6 as the number one partner of the Americans in this
7 exercise, put in a commensurate effort in terms of
8 financial and other resources, into reconstruction?

9 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think in my time -- I think I referred
10 earlier to there was a limit on the capacity of the
11 Iraqi system to absorb very large sums. I think in the
12 south we had set up programmes and were probably --
13 probably had as much in the way of resources as we could
14 sensibly handle put into the Iraqi system. I think that
15 issue of lack of resources was a bit later on, probably
16 after my time. It certainly wasn't a very -- I wasn't
17 being pressed daily by people down in the south saying,
18 "We really do need extra resources." I mean, only in
19 the sense that I think I have already mentioned of
20 resources that we hoped would come from that pot of
21 funds to help with training of the Iraqi army -- well,
22 the Iraqi National Guard and police, and a bit later,
23 from early 2005, the army were clearly not going to
24 come, or later, if at all, and therefore we did have to
25 find our own resources.

1 So on those particular issues, that's one example
2 where we did have to find some extra resources, yes.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So in this period, when the security
4 environment in the south, as you have said, was
5 relatively benign, did the British succeed in doing an
6 effective job there, in both our civilian and our
7 military capacities?

8 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think they did do a pretty effective
9 job. I mean, I can only judge by the reactions I used
10 to get when I visited, and of course you have to
11 amorph(?) for what people will tell the Ambassador.
12 They will sometimes tell him what they think he wants to
13 hear.

14 But I think there is no mistaking that in the
15 training of both police and National Guard and later the
16 army, there was a lot of -- and in the way that we
17 carried out different projects, there was a lot of
18 admiration for the way we went about it. I mean, again
19 a sort of rather unsung part of the effort was reforming
20 and reconstructing the Prison Service in the south, with
21 a lot of advice and mentoring, and the mentoring of
22 chiefs of police.

23 So in the activity which is very vital to keeping
24 and increasing consent of the local population, I think
25 we were well engaged and I think our efforts were

1 appreciated. You would have to talk to others about
2 why, later on, despite all those efforts and what I am
3 talking about as positive results, there was
4 nevertheless a deterioration in security.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The same would have been true in this
6 period for our performance in restoring services?

7 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: Yes, and I think, once the consent had
8 deteriorated, then, of course, we didn't have forces on
9 the ground to -- and there were other political
10 constraints, I guess. But that's something you need to
11 talk to William Patey and Dominic Asquith about, and
12 indeed the military commanders.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But if we had been drawing the bottom
14 line, say in the middle of 2005, about the time that you
15 left as Ambassador, on our performance in the south, it
16 would have been a record that we could have been fairly
17 proud of?

18 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: I think so, yes.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay, thank you.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Chaplin, on present plans this is your
21 last appearance before this Inquiry. That will be
22 a matter of relief to yourself, although not to us.
23 What I wonder is, are there any final comments you would
24 like to offer?

25 MR EDWARD CHAPLIN: No, thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: In that case, thank you very much for your
2 testimony, and that will conclude our session this
3 morning.

4 This afternoon, starting at 2 o'clock, we have
5 Major General Tim Cross, who was embedded in the
6 United States Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs,
7 planning for and then moving to Iraq, it is his
8 experience of the aftermath, and then later on in the
9 afternoon we have Desmond Bowen, who was the deputy head
10 of the Overseas and Defence Secretariat in the
11 Cabinet Office in London, who was at the heart of the
12 cross-Whitehall planning machinery during and after the
13 invasion itself.

14 So 2 o'clock here for Major General Cross.

15 Thank you all very much indeed.

16 (1.02 pm)

17 (The short adjournment)

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