

1 (3.50 pm)

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Let us begin the last session of quite a long
3 day and welcome to our two witnesses, Air Chief Marshal
4 Sir Brian Burridge and Lieutenant General Robin Brims
5 as, in essence, commanders in the field during the
6 invasion, if that's a fair summary of the roles.

7 I would like in a moment, if I may, to invite each
8 of you just to describe exactly, for accuracy, what the
9 role was. But by way of preamble, we have now heard
10 a number of witnesses discussing the events which led up
11 to the decision to take military action against Iraq in
12 2003, and the purpose of this session is essentially to
13 hear about the invasion itself.

14 Operations against Iraq began on 20 March, and while
15 this session covers a relatively brief period of the
16 United Kingdom's total engagement up to around the
17 middle of May 2003, it is of course a seminal event,
18 even a central event in the course of our involvement.

19 So what we will like to do is to cover the planning
20 and build-up to the invasion from your perspectives,
21 then the invasion itself, which is widely regarded as
22 having been a military success, and the transition once
23 it was clear that the Saddam regime was gone, to what
24 I think is technically known as Phase 4, aftermath
25 operations.

1 We recognise, as we have throughout this Inquiry so
2 far, that witnesses are giving evidence based on their
3 recollection of events. We, of course, check what we
4 hear against the voluminous stack of papers to which we
5 have access and which are still coming in.

6 I remind every witness that they will later be asked
7 to sign a transcript of their evidence to the effect
8 that the evidence they have given a truthful, fair and
9 accurate.

10 If, gentlemen, you would very kindly describe your
11 roles at the material time, that he would help.

12 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I was, from
13 February 2002 the Deputy Commander in Chief at Strike
14 Command of the Royal Air Force. As such, one of the
15 UK's three three-star commanders, operational
16 commanders.

17 In April 2002, I was designated as the joint
18 operational commander in waiting. I will explain.

19 From 9/11, the UK had positioned a three-star
20 officer at CentCom, at Headquarters CentCom in Tampa.
21 The first was the then Air Marshal Jock Stirrup, now the
22 CDS, for three months until January 2002. The second
23 was the then Lieutenant General Cedric Delves for three
24 months until the beginning of April.

25 At that point Afghanistan had stabilised to the

1 extent that the UK took the view that they would put
2 a permanent two-star officer there, who you have already
3 taken evidence from, and in the eventuality of needing
4 greater horsepower there would be a three-star
5 warned-off in readiness. I was that three-star.

6 Then in October of 2002, I was designated by the
7 Chiefs of Staff's Committee as the UK's national
8 contingent commander for any operations that might take
9 place in Iraq.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. General Brims?

11 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was the general officer commanding
12 the First (UK) Armoured Division. I took up that appointment
13 in November 2000 and I would have, under normal
14 circumstances, handed it over at January/February 2003,
15 but I stayed on in post and handed over in the middle of
16 May 2003.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. With that preamble, I will ask
18 Sir Martin Gilbert to open the questions. Martin?

19 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Sir Brian, I wonder if you would tell
20 us about your relationship with General Franks, when it
21 began and when you first began to discuss Iraq planning
22 with him?

23 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Okay. I first met
24 General Franks in this guise on 17 April 2002. I went
25 across to Tampa to conduct my handover from

1 General Delves and part of that was to meet the senior
2 staff at CentCom and General Franks himself.

3 We had a discussion of more than an hour ranging
4 particularly across Afghanistan, and I think four points
5 stick in my mind. The first was he was honest enough to
6 say that he had not been impressed by the quality of
7 joint warfare amongst the American armed forces in
8 Afghanistan post-9/11.

9 The second thing he said, and with which I agreed,
10 was that we had reached something of a plateau in
11 Afghanistan. Militarily we had secured the country and
12 with the help of Northern Alliance removed the Taliban.
13 But in terms of capacity building, in terms of the
14 restoration of the closest thing to normal life, we had
15 reached a plateau. I agreed with that, but then he said
16 we need some sort of interagency process to sort this
17 out.

18 That rather reverberated in my antennae. We, the US
19 and ourselves, had been through a number of operations
20 together in the Balkans since the early 1990s and
21 certainly the lessons from Bosnia was that any nation
22 that has been through the sort of disruption that
23 Afghanistan has been through would need the
24 reconstruction of institutions ranging from the
25 judiciary and a legal code right through to air traffic

1 control. So I was somewhat surprised by the statement
2 as if this was something being discovered anew.

3 We moved on to Iraq only briefly. We were
4 discussing in particular the No Fly Zones. You may
5 recall that at that stage the Iraqis were being quite
6 robust in seeking to entice coalition aircraft into what
7 we regarded as SAM traps, surface-to-air missile
8 traps, and we discussed that at some length. And then
9 I said what are your thoughts about intervention in
10 Iraq, and he said there is always an if, but it is true
11 to say that the US armed forces, particularly the US air
12 force, need about 18 months to reconstitute, rebuild
13 weapons stocks, retrain, et cetera.

14 And subsequently I spent a fair amount of time in
15 Tampa, I guess four or five occasions in 2002, getting
16 to know him very well. And, of course, from over the
17 period of late December we spent two weeks together in
18 Qatar in Exercise Internal Look, the rehearsal exercise
19 or simulation. Then subsequently we put our
20 headquarters side by side from 7 February until I handed
21 over command on 7 May.

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Going back to the summer of 2002, when
23 you began to talk about Iraq in some detail, what in
24 particular did you feel the Americans wanted from us?
25 Were there specific commitments that they would like us

1 to make? What level of commitment?

2 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: General Franks came
3 through London, as I recall, in mid May and he had an
4 informal meeting with the Chiefs of Staff, at which
5 I was present. And at that point he said something
6 along the lines of in terms of Iraq, it is not if but
7 when, and that was really the first time I had heard him
8 say anything with that degree of certainty.

9 In terms -- and he added that, in very non-specific
10 terms, we very much hope the UK will be alongside us.

11 We then -- it was probably late June when we started
12 at the operational headquarters of the single services,
13 Land Command, Strike Command and Fleet. We created
14 compartments of a very few people, ten people in the
15 case of Strike Command, to begin options planning for
16 Iraq.

17 At the Permanent Joint Headquarters likewise they --
18 or at least I only became aware of it when I was
19 indoctrinated into that compartment in June. At that
20 point the options being studied were relatively
21 straightforward, in that there could be a role simply
22 for the indigenous forces that we already had in
23 theatre, bearing in mind Operation Resinate was running,
24 which involved air forces and naval forces and
25 potentially the addition of some special forces. There

1 could be an option which consisted of a medium- to
2 large-scale air component, then the third option would
3 be all of that plus a division.

4 The -- I suppose towards July/August it became clear
5 that the campaign plan that CentCom had in mind had
6 northern access from Turkey, southern access from
7 Kuwait. The southern access from Kuwait was familiar
8 territory to them. It was a contingency plan that they
9 had worked in detail. The access from the north was
10 less familiar.

11 I think it was explained to you that the boundary
12 between European Command and Central Command was,
13 indeed, the northern boundary between Turkey and Iraq.
14 So --

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just interject? I'm sorry, you
16 mentioned Operation Resinate. That was what?

17 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Policing the No Fly
18 Zones and sanctions monitoring.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Including the embargo, as it were?

20 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Correct. And that
21 was the UK name for it.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

23 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: So it became clear
24 that if there was to be a northern access, it would be
25 welcomed if the UK would provide the division to come

1 down from the north. The force mix that they had in
2 mind at that stage was to use the marines from the
3 south, which was a role that they had certainly planned
4 and worked into alongside 5 Corps and then the
5 4 Infantry Division. And the "I" gives it a way, it is
6 a light division -- from the north and then there was
7 the need for a heavy UK division. So that was what
8 formulated in their minds.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: When the division was being formulated,
10 that concept, in terms of not if but when, were
11 particular windows of opportunity being discussed and
12 was there a sort of optimum timetable for action already
13 under consideration?

14 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: To the best I can
15 recollect, the period of early 2002 was in their
16 planning horizon. Again, this slightly surprised me
17 because not three months before I had had a conversation
18 with General Franks talking about 18 months to
19 recuperate.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In early 2003?

21 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Sorry, early 2003,
22 yes, sorry.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can you tell us something about the
24 importance of the exercise that you mentioned, which was
25 conducted with General Franks at CentCom just before

1 Christmas 2002?

2 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Indeed. Bear in mind
3 that at this stage all of our participation and planning
4 was without commitment and that was made absolutely
5 clear to General Franks, and he accepted that.

6 It wasn't a matter of him winking at me and saying,
7 yes, but we know you will be there on the day. It was
8 absolutely clear that the UK had a view about the
9 process that needed to be gone through.

10 In December, we both deployed our headquarters to
11 Qatar. He deployed a very large headquarters, part of
12 his Tampa set-up, with its own specially built
13 information technology, command and control system.
14 I deployed the headquarters staff that I was given --
15 and I perhaps need to digress.

16 In UK doctrine, we hold as part of the Permanent
17 Joint Headquarters a Joint Force Headquarters, normally
18 led at one-star level, of 40 people who can move very
19 quickly and go and work in Sierra Leone or anywhere else
20 at small scale. For this large-scale operation they
21 formed the core of my headquarters and I added to it
22 with a significant number of augmentees. So I had
23 a headquarters with live support of about 240 people in
24 Qatar.

25 We formed our headquarters ready for Exercise

1 Internal Look in December.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the respective American and
3 British perspectives with regard to the exercise?

4 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Sorry, what was the?

5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Our different perspectives.

6 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Right. If we were
7 going to participate, our end state would have been --
8 was to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. The
9 strategic end state for the US was to effect regime
10 change. That may sound a neat point, but it is
11 significant in gaining strategic alignment between two
12 capitals.

13 But the exercise was created as a command post
14 exercise to allow us to ensure our connectivity and our
15 coherence one up, so to our national capitals, and one
16 down, to our contingent and component commanders.

17 And the exercise was conducted using generic
18 capabilities for the forces involved and three slices of
19 activity were looked at in some detail. One I recall
20 with clarity was early collapse. You may know that we
21 were essentially looking at three possibilities:
22 A complete and early collapse of the regime; an almost
23 sequential collapse like a pack of dominoes or pack of
24 cards; or Fortress Baghdad, which would have led to
25 something not unlike a Stalingrad or a Grozny probably

1 even better.

2 And we looked at three slices of activity along
3 those sorts of scenarios to assess the effectiveness of
4 the campaign plan as well as our ability to deploy
5 decisions into our components. So it allowed us to look
6 at the nature of the targeting, the degree of --
7 dreadful word -- kinetic activity that we were
8 inspiring, the degree to which we would each meet our
9 own objectives. And maybe I should just talk about UK
10 objectives for a moment.

11 The overall mission that Franks saw for himself was
12 to conduct offensive operations in Iraq to overthrow the
13 Iraqi regime and -- the order is quite important -- then
14 eliminate WMD capability and eliminate the regime's
15 threat to the Iraqi people, and then eliminate Iraq's
16 threat to the region and to the US. Then the last
17 sentence: conduct follow-on operations to facilitate the
18 transition from peace to war.

19 That would be effected by producing as many problems
20 in time and space simultaneously for the regime to deal
21 with, such that they couldn't comprehend them and
22 couldn't react to them, hence the northern and southern
23 axis and hence high manoeuvre warfare with a lot of
24 embedded air power.

25 Fine. From the UK point of view, I recognised --

1 and most of my command colleagues recognised -- that
2 there was in the circumstances without a second UNSCR --
3 and bear in mind we didn't know whether there would be
4 a second -- there could be a set of circumstances in
5 which the only participators in this would be Australia
6 and the UK and the US. We were, therefore, major
7 stakeholders in the end state of Phase 3 -- and I have
8 no objection to talking about phases.

9 But the international community would judge their
10 amenability to participate in Phase 4 by what had
11 happened in Phase 3. So we wanted to be sure that we
12 made it clear both that the Iraqi people were not the
13 subject of our intent, but the regime; that we would be
14 extremely careful with our targeting so as to avoid
15 making reconstruction and the capacity building of the
16 country more difficult; and set the tone, as it were,
17 because in this case we are fighting amongst the people
18 and the people will draw conclusions about this force
19 that is in front of them from the nature of the violence
20 that they commit. It is as simple as that.

21 So that was the test case for analysing the
22 exercise.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Is that what you had in mind when you
24 told the House of Commons Defence Select Committee
25 in June 2003 that many of General Franks's staff -- the

1 words you used were:

2 "... would regard us as their conscience"?

3 What did that mean? Is that essentially what you
4 have just been saying?

5 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, essentially
6 that.

7 There are two aspects in that we use a different
8 approach to targeting. We are absolutely doctrinally
9 rigid. We use a template called strategy to task to
10 target. So that we can show an audit trail, and are
11 required to show an audit trail, from any target back to
12 the strategy, thereby passing through all the aspects of
13 the law of armed conflict such as discrimination,
14 military necessity, et cetera. We are required to do
15 that for our law officers in this country and we go
16 through that process with every target.

17 US colleagues were new to that as a discipline and
18 they did recognise the value of it because it made -- it
19 made the dialogue with the international community
20 a little easier.

21 Secondly, in being the conscience, as it were, quite
22 often there will be nuances even amongst the same
23 operational team on the front bench at CentCom. So
24 someone who is able to say actually, to me, it looks
25 a bit like this -- and I do remember on a couple of

1 occasions saying, "General, that may look okay in
2 Washington, but let me just tell you how it might look
3 in London or, more so, Berlin or Paris or wherever". It
4 is not to say they needed reining in, it is just to get
5 these nuances right they needed the input from someone
6 perhaps whose perspective was a little different.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you find them receptive to your
8 perspective?

9 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: General Franks was
10 gracious enough to say I had too many lawyers. On a few
11 occasions I took the trouble to explain why I had
12 deduced that which I had deduced over certain sorts of
13 targets, the use of certain sorts of weapons, so I think
14 it is fair to say that at least they took note.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you. Can I just ask now about --
16 and this refers also to General Brims -- when you knew
17 that we would be having to give up the Turkish option,
18 the northern option, and go to the south and how this
19 affected our planning. How did it impact really on the
20 preparations?

21 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: If I can start and
22 then General Robin will fill in a lot of detail.

23 First of all, logistically the lines of
24 communication through Turkey were difficult -- 600,
25 700 kilometres, mountainous roads -- but it was an

1 aspect that NATO knew well the US would support in terms
2 of logistic movement. It was doable, but I saw it as
3 complicated.

4 The south logistically was easier but more crowded.
5 Basing for aircraft was going to be difficult because we
6 needed to move the focus to southern airfields and it is
7 not only ramp space, but things as prosaic as the
8 distribution of fuel. Prince Sultan Air Base in
9 Saudi Arabia was pumping 4.5 million litres of aviation
10 fuel a day. Even Cyprus was pumping 550,000. These are
11 big numbers. So there would be a complexity of
12 compression.

13 Also on the logistics side by the time the decision
14 had been made our logistic shipping, some of it had
15 sailed, so we needed to divert that. On the other hand,
16 coming in from the south gave us the prospects of a
17 defined area, the UK box. That had certain advantages
18 from the point of view of, again, logistics because it
19 wouldn't stretch our lines, it would give us a degree of
20 autonomy, which would allow us at least to be masters of
21 our own destiny in terms of setting the tone in that
22 part of Iraq.

23 It also in a sense provided a less complex problem
24 for Phase 4, but what it did mean is Phase 4 for the UK
25 would start the minute we crossed the start line. So

1 the minute we crossed into southern Iraq, the General's
2 forces were in their box and that village that they just
3 passed is now in Phase 4 and that's why some people find
4 it difficult to talk about Phase 4. But, you know, that
5 is a fact.

6 Now, they were the overriding complexities, but the
7 General, no doubt, will give you the details on
8 planning.

9 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was first brought into the planning
10 in September 2002, but for the northern option, as it
11 was known, and I was then instructed that I should start
12 making a plan for what became the southern option.

13 I think it was 2 or 3 January 2003.

14 And from the analysis that had been made ahead of
15 me, (inaudible) I was given the force of 7 Armoured
16 Brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade and 3 Commando
17 Brigade -- 3 Commando Brigade, which was already, as
18 described, somewhat involved in earlier planning. And
19 we conducted the estimate on the first weekend
20 in January 2003 and I did it with the divisional
21 headquarters staff and, unusually, did it with the
22 commanders and key staff of those brigades and, indeed,
23 the joint helicopter force commander who was also
24 allocated to me, and with the commander of 102 Logistic
25 Brigade who was in fact a joint asset under the national

1 contingent commander but was in direct support of land
2 operations. And we conducted the estimate which I then
3 reported back to the Permanent Joint Headquarters and,
4 indeed, to the Commander-in-Chief Land, because I was
5 still at that stage under command of the
6 Commander-in-Chief Land.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were these the right forces for the
8 task which you had been set in the new area of
9 operations?

10 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, they were. In the whole planning
11 process -- and you would have the description to you of
12 what ended up as a box where UK could have effect -- the
13 size of the box and the tasks associated with it were
14 being -- there was give and take between the forces
15 available and the tasks.

16 So I thought that was a wholly respectable way of
17 doing it, so, yes.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Finally, before I pass on to
19 Sir Lawrence, how did you describe the readiness of your
20 force at the moment the action was to begin?

21 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We were ready. Readiness was described
22 prior to the any date being given. It was decided by
23 myself with the UK chain of command, and then with the
24 US, that when two battle groups of 7 Brigade, who were
25 the last brigade to deploy into Kuwait -- when two

1 battle groups were ready, then the division would
2 declare itself ready, because with the two other
3 brigades, 3 Commando and 16 Air Assault
4 Brigade, which were already ready, with the two battle
5 groups of 7 Armoured Brigade, we had sufficient to be
6 able to meet the mission and tasks set to us.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: From what date was that readiness clear
8 to you?

9 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I can't quite remember. I think
10 readiness was declared some time around 15, 16, 17, 18,
11 19 March. I can't remember the precise date.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I was going to come to this later
14 but you are in this at the moment. In terms of normal
15 preparations for a battle or a war, but in terms of what
16 you would have expected, would you have liked your
17 forces to have spent more time in theatre before they
18 actually had to go into battle?

19 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: From the point of view -- are you
20 asking the question from the point of view of having
21 equipment ready or the point of view of having more
22 planning time or mission rehearsal, or all three?

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All three.

24 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: All three? The answer is yes, I would.
25 And I guess most military commanders would answer like

1 that.

2 On the one hand, the need to get on with the
3 operation was quite clear to me and I think that was
4 being described already from the coalition
5 perspective -- secondly, we had a force building up very
6 publicly in Kuwait and it was a very rich target for the
7 use of a weapon of mass destruction which could then
8 change over who had the initiative. And thirdly, the
9 longer it was left, the hotter it would become and
10 fighting combat operations in the heat of Iraqi summer
11 potentially in full protective clothing was very
12 unattractive.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Could you have done it?

14 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, but I would have preferred not to
15 have done it. I think -- I'm not sure that I would like
16 to have done it in July and August. But if you had
17 been --

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Maybe May and June.

19 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I should just add
20 something from the point of view of the other
21 components.

22 The amphibious task group arrived in theatre in good
23 order. It has its own indigenous logistics. It had
24 worked up. It had done some practice landings in Kuwait
25 and it was ready, and it was ready by the beginning

1 of March. And my concern was whether they would be able
2 to maintain that readiness.

3 Air forces rouled in pretty much in the middle
4 of February and they had worked up. So they were ready,
5 and further time would not necessarily have generated
6 any greater military capability.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about in terms of things that
8 we have heard about, for example, the tracking system
9 and getting body armour to troops and things like this?

10 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We had broken the readiness and
11 preparation time which are the assumptions that we work
12 in under normal planning. We had done more and faster
13 to get ourselves ready to deploy. And in the process of
14 doing that there was an awful lot that had to be done in
15 a proper sequence. For example, we had to up armour on
16 tanks and that has to be done in a set sequence, and
17 then you need to be able to test fire them before you
18 can use them.

19 That all had to be done in a very short amount of
20 time. Additionally, we had to get into the -- into
21 Kuwait sufficient items of equipment, body armour being
22 perhaps one of the most publicly known about, and other
23 items of equipment. You then had to issue to the
24 troops, making sure that you had got the -- fitting tall
25 people, short people and so forth. And that is very

1 difficult to do and I was aware -- for example, of body
2 armour, I was fully aware that there was a problem with
3 the body armour and I ordered a redistribution of body
4 armour to those people most in need, and similarly some
5 other forms of equipment.

6 But to go back to your first question,
7 notwithstanding that, we were ready because I knew that
8 the troops understood the concept of operations that we
9 were going to conduct. That was very clear to me. And
10 although we had some shortcomings in equipment, the type
11 of operation that we planned to conduct and our
12 assessments of Iraqi armed forces and, indeed, their
13 likely courses of action led me to believe that we were
14 ready.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In a sense, this goes back to
16 something that we heard, I think, from Lord Boyce: that
17 the assumption was that the Iraqis would fight no better
18 than they had fought in 1991, possibly even less
19 effectively, and this gave us in a sense a margin that
20 we might not expect against other opponents. Is that
21 fair?

22 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I think that's a fair assessment of his
23 conventional forces and certainly those in the south.

24 I think some of his specialist conventional forces
25 around Baghdad, we would probably assess to be able to

1 fight a bit more.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But we weren't expecting to be
3 taking them on?

4 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: No, but we did expect unconventional
5 forces, we did anticipate the unconventional forces to
6 show, which they did.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If the enemy had been more
8 accomplished and with better equipment, you might not
9 have been so comfortable to say --

10 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Oh, indeed, absolutely.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If you don't mind going back to
12 little bit to 2002, both of you taking over in the
13 autumn of 2002, Sir Brian, you have mentioned the
14 assumption of an armoured division coming in from the
15 north and we have talked a bit about the north. But
16 there were other packages that were being considered.

17 Were you aware that it was as likely, or certainly
18 possible, that a much lesser package perhaps involving
19 a brigade rather than a division was something that --
20 was all you might be able to offer to the Americans?

21 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: In October of 2002,
22 if you had asked me to lay money, I would have said
23 package 2, just an air and indigenous naval and special
24 forces.

25 We looked at the campaign design that might take

1 only one UK division -- one UK brigade latched on to
2 4 Infantry Division coming out of the north. There were
3 two complexities there: one that the 4 Infantry Division
4 was a digital division and plugging a non-digital
5 brigade into it would have had complexities -- not
6 impossible, but it would have had complexities. And
7 secondly, given that the line of approach which is
8 essentially one division plus, coming down from the
9 north with the green line on the left, and four,
10 potentially five, Republican Guard divisions on that
11 green line, it left you --

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The green line, just explain?

13 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: With Kurdistan --
14 would leave you very light on the flank, and that was an
15 assessment of risk that I think I myself would have
16 articulated strongly to my command chain. That was an
17 aspect of risk which was beyond our proper appetite.

18 If we were going to do that, we needed to do it
19 heavy.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And how much did CentCom understand
21 that -- you said that they realised they may get nothing
22 at all -- but that there were these different options
23 being discussed in London?

24 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes. I mean, they
25 were reasonably -- I'm trying to recall the statement

1 that they received in August, but it made it clear that
2 they should -- there would be a menu of options which
3 we, the UK, would consider.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So though they had expressed -- you
5 suggest -- a preference for an armoured division coming
6 in from the north, they knew they couldn't rely on this?

7 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, absolutely.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: They were not taking it for granted?

9 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: They were not taking
10 it for granted.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was it fair to say, or perhaps you
12 can just describe -- because you have given us one quite
13 interesting factor in discussing the attractions of the
14 different options to the UK -- to the United Kingdom,
15 the vulnerability that the brigade might have. What
16 were the other factors that were weighing in terms of
17 the preference for package 2 or package 3?

18 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Risk and cost.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And package 3 would obviously be the
20 costly one.

21 Can I ask -- perhaps this is more a question to
22 General Brims -- the logistics issue, we have had some
23 discussion of a reluctance to have overt logistical
24 preparations. How difficult did this make your task?

25 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: As described, you have broken the

1 readiness planning assumption and you are not allowed to
2 do some ordering of equipment, it means that things are
3 going to be coming in at quite short notice to be
4 distributed in the manner I have described.

5 I think it is also reasonable to say over a period
6 of time before we even deployed, I was very aware, as
7 the commander of UK First Armoured Division, that our
8 logistic supply particularly for our armoured formations
9 was drawn very taut, and the sustainability of then
10 conducting operations was constrained by the amount of
11 logistics that we could flow in. So that was prior to
12 the actual deployment. That was a state that we have
13 been reporting in our normal life, and sometimes we
14 referred to it, sometimes as -- sometimes we were
15 hollowed out, and we had to do quite a lot of
16 backfilling in order to get ourselves to the readiness
17 we were at.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And you describe how in the start
19 of January you were given in a sense a new requirement
20 to come through the south. It seems very late in the
21 day, I mean, that the difficulties with the northern
22 option had so impressed themselves that you were now
23 asked to look at the south because, as far as we can
24 tell, the warnings that the Turks might not go along
25 with this were evident from quite early on.

1 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I agree. I think we
2 were complacent about the ease with which the new
3 Turkish government -- and they were new in every sense
4 of the word because many were brand new MPs -- I think
5 we were complacent over the likelihood of their
6 acquiescence.

7 If you remember the political situation at the time,
8 the UK was advancing their case particularly strongly
9 for EU membership. So whether that acted as a factor in
10 our believing this was possible, but with the benefit of
11 hindsight I think it would have been unlikely that they
12 would have agreed in the timescale that we had in mind.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this meant that you were given
14 quite a challenge in early -- sorry, in early January to
15 suddenly turn this round and think about quite
16 a different operational concept?

17 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: The operational concept was more or
18 less the same. The start point and the direction was --
19 direction advanced was different, but the planning that
20 we had done when we were thinking about the northern
21 options was fairly generic. But it gave me the
22 opportunity to really understand the overall plan from
23 General Franks, to meet all the other commanders, and so
24 it was -- yes, I felt that I was quite involved and,
25 therefore, the switch to the south was okay.

1 I should point out that, as -- although I was the --
2 nationally I was the Land Component Commander, in the
3 tactical sense I was a two-down tactical commander
4 because I reported to the commander of 1 Marine
5 Expeditionary Force, Lieutenant General Jim Conway. He
6 reported to the coalition Land Component Commander,
7 Lieutenant General David McKiernan, and he then reported
8 to General Franks alongside which Brian was.

9 So I was in a slightly different position, certainly
10 relative to the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force component
commanders.

12 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would just make two
13 points on the complexity. The complexity of manoeuvre
14 was much less in the south because we were constrained
15 in a box, and although initially it's classic manoeuvre
16 warfare, it wasn't as though we were seeking too it over
17 a very long axis.

18 The second, of course, the integration task
19 virtually went away because the General's integration
20 requirements with the Marine Expeditionary Force were
21 time bound, and so after three or four days then it was
22 an indigenous UK force.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the consequences of the move
24 to the south, at least as has been discussed in some of
25 the papers of 2002, was that it made it much more likely

1 that we would have a sector of our own to look after,
2 because the north was sort of autonomous in a way
3 already. And, therefore, it would give us more
4 responsibilities in that area.

5 Was that something you were cranking into your
6 planning?

7 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I was aware, even right at the start in
8 the north -- I was not clear what the post-conflict
9 activity was going to be. And when I made my plan to
10 come from the south, I reported then that I still didn't
11 know what the post-conflict activity was going to be. I
12 didn't know what we were going to be called and to whom
13 we were going to report.

14 It seemed to me this was a void. I was told in
15 early January, "Don't worry, there is a plan". Over
16 time it was clear to me that there wasn't, and
17 I continued to report it. In the end, we -- as I often
18 say to people, you have to play the hand you are dealt.
19 So we had to make the best plan that we could with what
20 we had for our bit of the Phase 4.

21 And at that stage, bearing in mind, as we came into
22 the Al Faw peninsula and into Umm Qasr and captured
23 them, both places with went straight into Phase 4. So
24 we had to make a plan and we had to get on with it. But
25 it was in isolation, I regret to have to say, of a wider

1 campaign, which was not present.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You were looking to the
3 United States for this wider plan or were you looking to
4 London for this wider plan?

5 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I would look to both.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You would look to both.

7 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: We essentially
8 devised a plan that would buy us time in the expectation
9 that the Phase 4 plan would catch up.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was that expectation realised?

11 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, it wasn't.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will come on to that again in
13 a moment. Can I just finish on the period up to
14 20 March?

15 The other consequence of going through the south was
16 that in a sense the Americans had to make room for you
17 in some sort of way. Was it also the case that the
18 Americans became more dependent for that reason,
19 I suppose, on our contribution?

20 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Well, I'll just speak
21 from a campaign perspective and then the General again
22 will pick up the detail. But first of all, we provided
23 somewhere between 25/30 per cent of the armour coming
24 into Iraq.

25 It is true to say that we did not share 25 per cent

1 of the risk, but nevertheless that was a potent force
2 and the requirement in that part of the campaign was to
3 provide flank protection from the regular army
4 divisions, one of whom was actually an armoured division
5 and reasonably capable, who were lodged on the Iranian
6 border.

7 So as the Marine Expeditionary Force steamed north,
8 then there was a need to protect their flank and that
9 was the nature of the initial task.

10 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Indeed, our principal task was to
11 protect the flank of the US forces as they advanced up
12 towards Baghdad. We did -- they did have to adjust
13 their plans to accommodate us in the south, they were
14 extremely generous in every respect in accommodating us
15 and they were responsive to some trading, as I said
16 earlier on, to make sure that the mission and the tasks
17 set to us matched the forces that we actually had.

18 So I think that was a very clear and very successful
19 part of it.

20 And, therefore, as well as the flank protection, we
21 also had to seize and protect the oil infrastructure,
22 and stopping the oil infrastructure being damaged,
23 wilfully damaged, was a key concern.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As it had been in 1991.

25 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: Yes, from the experience in 1991. And

1 we would have to be in the Al Faw because that's
2 actually the critical bit where the manifolds are that
3 take oil to tankers out to sea, and we had to capture
4 the port of Umm Qasr.

5 So with all that -- and there was a key bit of oil
6 infrastructure at Az Zubayr, which also had to be captured
7 and held.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My final question for a moment. We
9 have heard from Lord Boyce, confirmed by Desmond Bowen,
10 that the United States, Central Command was waiting to
11 get the results of our Parliamentary vote and that our
12 actual participation was not confirmed until the last
13 moment, and he would have been quite ready to stand you
14 down.

15 I would be interested first, was that your
16 understanding, and secondly, given what we have just
17 heard, how would you explain this then to the Americans
18 and what would have been the effect on their ability to
19 move forward as quickly as they did?

20 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: First of all, that
21 was absolutely the case. I was in no way convinced we
22 would do this until the last minute. If we were not
23 able to participate, they would have had to re-orientate
24 the air campaign to give more integration into their
25 manoeuvre from the air. Their advance would have been

1 slower and they would have -- as they did, bypass
2 Baghdad, but one wonders when they would -- sorry,
3 bypass Basra. One wonders when they would have got back
4 to Basra.

5 So it would have been a difficult problem for them.
6 But they had a plan, known as the Generated Start, in
7 any event which saw the Marine Expeditionary Force
8 coming up from the south and punching north and then
9 being reinforced on a single axis by 5 Corps. So they
10 did have a plan to fall back on, but it would have been
11 difficult.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there discussion between you and
13 the Americans about the possibility that Britain might
14 not, at the last moment, be able to participate?

15 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Yes, I made it
16 absolutely clear that the way things will be in the UK
17 is this and there will be a House of Commons vote, the
18 outcome of that will depend on whether the
19 Prime Minister agrees that we should participate. And
20 I have to say all I had in return was, "Yes, we
21 understand your system, we absolutely understand your
22 system".

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And they had made preparations, they
24 understood that they could go ahead without us?

25 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I mean, Mr Rumsfeld

1 put that in the public domain in a rather, dare I say,
2 clumsy way, but nevertheless they did have a plan which
3 was an existing plan away.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could move on to Basra and to
5 Phase 4. When you decided that you could take Basra and
6 it was possible, what did you believe you would be
7 responsible for inside Basra and how long did you think
8 your resources would last to carry out that
9 responsibility?

10 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: You are talking about post-conflict
11 mode. Of course, it would have been more than just
12 Basra; Basra City, but it would have been Basra
13 province, and indeed the other provinces which we were
14 in, because we were sitting in this UK box, as the area
15 of operations covered about three provinces.

16 We produced a generic plan and one of the first
17 things I did when I realised that we had in fact got
18 into Basra and we were controlling the city, is I got
19 together through an individual I approached and asked
20 him to form a provisional council from which we would
21 then use the Iraqis to help us organise Basra, both city
22 and, at that stage, province because we were sitting in
23 there. And that's what I started doing.

24 I needed to have Iraqis who understood how Basra
25 worked or didn't work in order to get it up and running

1 because it was beyond our immediate competencies.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Is that what you meant or did you mean

3 more when the concept of Basra being an exemplar --

4 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: It was never my words. I was told to

5 make an exemplar. I was doing my best for it to be an

6 exemplar.

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What did you understand by it?

8 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I understood what I needed to do was

9 try and get the Iraqis to take control of their own city

10 and their own province as fast as possible with our

11 help, to demonstrate to them that we weren't coming to

12 occupy them. Of course, de facto, we were under the law

13 of armed conflict, but I wanted to give the impression

14 that this was their country, which we were giving back

15 to them, and we needed their help to rid them

16 (inaudible) with them, weapons of mass destruction and

17 get their oil working for them.

18 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I think those who

19 describe the prospect of Basra becoming an exemplar were

20 seduced by a number of factors, such as Basra as a city,

21 say, versus Baghdad, Basra as a city of 1.25 million,

22 Baghdad, 6 or 7 million, racially reasonably

23 homogeneous, Shia population, a population who had

24 suffered significantly under Saddam throughout the

25 Ba'athist regime, but particularly in 1991, good

1 indigenous resources, plenty of water and oil.

2 So on the face of it, people might have thought this
3 was relative straightforward. I didn't personally
4 subscribe to that view, but that's how the exemplar came
5 about.

6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the particular difficulties
7 you found and how did you report them, as it were, back
8 to London to deal with them?

9 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: When we first got into Basra, it took
10 about a day of combat activity to get in there on
11 6 April. By 7 April, with we were in and we were
12 reasonably well with received.

13 There was -- there was some looting. There was --
14 there was basic theft going on, thieving banks, for
15 example, but it wasn't perhaps as bad as what I observed
16 later on in Baghdad in that sense of the meeting. And
17 there were bits of the -- not just the city, but the
18 province and, indeed, just into the next province --
19 which had taken control of themselves, sometimes in
20 a rather unattractive way and sometimes in a very
21 acceptable way. So we had to balance out these things,
22 and I found myself and my military staff and my -- I had
23 an MOD policy adviser and an FCO policy adviser and they
24 were crucial to me, helping me organise these things.
25 But what I really needed was something much more

1 significant in terms of -- somebody who would be what we
2 would call a cultural general, did eventually call
3 a cultural general. I really needed that and I needed
4 some people with experiences of running large cities.

5 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: As well as all that,
6 I think we were shocked by the state of the
7 infrastructure: The quality of the water distribution
8 system, the inadequacy of power distribution, the age of
9 the power stations. One was powered completely on crude
10 oil straight from the oilfield.

11 This was an aspect that we hadn't had a good handle
12 on and it was somewhat bizarre to find us building
13 a pipeline to ship water from Kuwait, the driest of the
14 Gulf states, into Iraq. But that is exactly what
15 we did.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did London respond to these needs?

17 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I perhaps just need
18 to backtrack slightly.

19 Back in probably September/October, on one occasion
20 when I was at Tampa we were briefed by the US State
21 Department on 22, I think, work streams that they had
22 been conducting. This struck me as reassuring. I can
23 see some lessons of Bosnia here.

24 The teams they had put together consisted of people
25 who delivered these same sort of services in the US and

1 this is everything from agriculture through power
2 distribution, et cetera. So they are experts who
3 actually do it. There are academics who understood the
4 differences in Iraq, there were government officials,
5 there were Iraqi emigres. So there was some work being
6 done. It was beyond conceptual. It was reassuring.

7 What there wasn't was any sort of chapeau sitting on
8 the top pulling these levers. Now, of course we then
9 find that responsibility moved from the State Department
10 to the Department of Defence in the period -- it is
11 difficult to define exactly when, but by the first week
12 of January it had moved at what I know to have been
13 Mr Rumsfeld's insistence.

14 What we didn't understand is that when it moved,
15 none of the ideas and none of the people moved with it.
16 So initially we were living under an illusion that this
17 body of knowledge that we had got to know about did not
18 exist. And London too were probably under the same
19 impression: that this body of knowledge that we had
20 talked about was no longer going to be deployed.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A week into the war when irregular
23 forces started to make themselves felt -- and, again,
24 perhaps more with the Americans, but with us as well --
25 an American General famously observed, "This is not the

1 enemy we war-gamed against" -- were there many surprises
2 for you in the way that the campaign actually developed?
3 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: You know that in
4 doing our mission analysis and campaign planning we come
5 up with courses of action that the enemy might take, we
6 then ascribe a most likely and a most dangerous. We
7 knew that his own emotional centre of gravity was
8 Baghdad. We knew that he would not simply let us drive
9 down the gates of Baghdad. So we knew he would slow us
10 down.

11 He had two -- given that his regular army was not
12 well configured for this, his Republican Guard had been
13 planned to form a ring around Baghdad. Beyond that, he
14 had two tools that he could use: one, weapons of mass
15 destruction; and the other, irregular warfare, in
16 a sense to try and draw us into urban warfare.

17 He had developed the view that western militaries
18 don't do urban warfare. He had also developed the view,
19 so I'm told, that the notion of large numbers of
20 civilian casualties -- he had a Grozny vision in his
21 mind -- would --

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Grozny being Chechnya.

23 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: The idea that the
24 world's media would show this terrible destruction
25 which, in his rather warped perception, would put him on

1 the moral high ground. So he wanted, if he could, if he
2 can lure us into urban warfare using irregular forces,
3 making it as complex as possible not to be able to
4 deliver on our setting the tone to avoid significant
5 amounts of damage, never mind collateral damage, damage
6 at all, then that's what he did.

7 What we didn't know was to what extent he would
8 front load those southern cities, Basra in particular,
9 and we subsequently recognised he put small elements of
10 the Republican Guard in amongst the Ba'ath militia, the
11 Al Quds and people such as that, to do two things. One
12 is to make them militarily more effective and the other
13 is to put the frighteners on the 51 Division people who
14 had effectively melted away, and they were coerced into
15 getting back into their equipment.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So General Robin, when you are
17 talking or planning, as I understand it, initially
18 taking Basra possibly for some of these reasons was not
19 part of your plan?

20 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: We would have to eventually take it,
21 but it wasn't a task to do at the outset because it
22 wasn't necessary to take Basra to achieve the flank
23 protection. But it would eventually be necessary for
24 the coalition forces to be in Basra, so to put it like
25 that.

1 But we did plan for Basra. I think in hindsight
2 I would say that the conventional forces thought
3 slightly less strongly than we might have expected, but
4 we didn't expect very much and they were slightly less
5 than that actually in the event, in the south.

6 And we did expect irregular forces in their various
7 ways and they probably fought more voluminously and
8 venomously than we had anticipated, but certainly within
9 our ability to deal with. And I was -- I think we were
10 all very conscious of the assessment that you have just
11 had described, what with we thought that Saddam Hussein
12 would try and get us to do. Ringing in my ears was,
13 from diplomats, British diplomats, "Don't trash Basra".
14 It seemed to be very sound advice. So we held off and
15 we didn't go, we didn't get sucked in first to Az Zubayr,
16 which is a city of about 100,000, which was strongly
17 held, and we conducted a focused operation and
18 eventually got into it. And then on 6 April were able
19 to go into Basra with as minimum amount of fighting as
20 I think could possibly have taken place.

21 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: One of the drivers in
22 that decision-making was the -- to build the perception
23 in the Iraqis -- the minds of Iraqi people that what
24 they saw happening in Basra was the tone for the whole
25 thing. So Basra in a sense conceptually was the

1 outskirts of Baghdad. So we wanted to set the tone in
2 order to use it as part of our information operations
3 campaign.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks very much. I'm very
5 conscious of time, but I just want to have three quick
6 questions.

7 The first is going back to this Phase 4 question.
8 You have given us a very clear understanding the
9 military view of Phase 4, it is part of your campaign
10 and it is when civilian areas are in your control, the
11 fighting has moved on elsewhere.

12 Was that understanding of Phase 4 shared or
13 appreciated in London? Did they think it was something
14 that happened when the war was over?

15 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, I think they were
16 sophisticated to understand well enough particularly
17 once we had gone to a box, and it was quite clear that
18 we were not going to advance beyond the northern
19 boundary of the box, then they had to accept that there
20 would be a time period when we were very much engaged in
21 Phase 4 activity whilst there were still two corps
22 steaming north to Baghdad.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If they understood that, were they
24 giving you the support that you needed? Now, you really
25 suggested not that you didn't have lot of civilian

1 support immediately with you. Is that fair?

2 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I will ask

3 General Robin to talk about just one example, which is
4 finance. But the impression -- and I have to say I have
5 some sympathy for the Ministry of Defence. I just don't
6 think they could get strategic traction. I don't think
7 the machinery of government in London was in a shape,
8 phase or form that they could get traction.

9 I know that the nature of the way in which the US on
10 this occasion ran an operation was different from the
11 way they had run during Bosnia. In this case, the line
12 of command was very direct: It was President, to
13 Rumsfeld, to Franks and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were
14 very much out on one side, and that's perfectly
15 permissible. That's absolutely the way it is defined in
16 title 10 in US law. But it did mean that the normal
17 dialogue that we had endlessly through Bosnia -- and
18 I was the principal staff officer to the Chief of
19 Defence Staff at the time -- so the endless dialogue
20 that we could have with the joint staffs in the
21 Pentagon, which allowed us to grapple and influence on
22 these things was -- I perhaps wouldn't go so far as to
23 say it wasn't available, but it was made very much more
24 difficult.

25 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: As described, I had

1 a Ministry of Defence policy adviser, a Foreign and
2 Commonwealth Office adviser. I also had a Department
3 for International Development adviser who was an
4 integral part of my headquarters and gave me assurance
5 that the reporting was all being done. I saw some of
6 the reports leaving my headquarters.

7 I didn't see a result coming back. I don't think --
8 and I could be wrong, but I don't think during my time
9 in Basra I received any UK finance to help the
10 reconstruction at that stage. I think that the initial
11 finance to help the reconstruction all came from
12 Baghdad, ie it was American or it was Iraqi money from
13 Baghdad coming down, for example, to pay policemen.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about in terms of staff, for
15 example, from DFID or --

16 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: I had a different cell inside my
17 headquarters.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And the final question: we have
19 heard that you were able to plan for the operation you
20 eventually conducted starting from January, that people
21 were getting ready. You considered yourself ready, just
22 as -- in a sense just in time. If the operation had
23 been called a week before, you wouldn't have been able
24 to claim readiness.

25 Can I get a sense of the risks that we were taking

1 at this stage? For example, if there had been
2 a chemical and biological weapons attack, if the enemy
3 had fought harder. We got away with it, but was this
4 good luck or good management?

5 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would like to say
6 of course it was good campaign management, but the --
7 just -- I mentioned that the other lever that Saddam had
8 at his disposal, as well as SAM, was weapons of mass
9 destruction. Be under no illusion we believed that he
10 did have tactical battlefield weapons with chemical or
11 biological tips. He had used them previously both
12 against the civilian populations in Halabja and he had
13 used them against the Iranian army down on the Al Faw
14 peninsula.

15 So -- but what we did know was that this wasn't the
16 same as fighting through the central front in Warsaw
17 Pact days when the entire battle space would be drenched
18 in chemical agents. This was relatively limited. This
19 was the sort of capability that normally you would
20 choose to manoeuvre around, rather than have to consider
21 a complete change of tactic in the way that we did in
22 the days of the Cold War.

23 So -- and we were happy with the level of individual
24 protection, and I take from that not only suits, and it
25 is well recorded that had some of the suits were out of

1 their perceived shelf life. They had to be tested and
2 extended, and the same with cannisters, inoculation
3 programme and the taping of NAPS tablets. So we were
4 clear what we were up against, and we were contented
5 that we could deal with that element of risk.

6 As for routine combat power, it would have been very
7 difficult for those divisions to have been mis-assessed
8 in that we could with tell from reconnaissance that
9 their equipment was rusty, we could tell that they
10 hadn't trained, we could tell that there was a high
11 desertion rate and he had no air power.

12 So in terms of conducting all arms manoeuvre
13 warfare, he was pretty badly placed. So I would have
14 been surprised if we were surprised.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Does that mean it is rather
16 dangerous to draw any particular lessons from this
17 experience because you can't rely on such weak enemies
18 in the future?

19 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: We can certainly draw
20 some lessons from it, and mostly they are lessons about
21 your own performance. But you couldn't -- you couldn't
22 derive your entire equipment programme, your doctrine
23 and, therefore, your tactics on the basis of what we saw
24 out of the Iraqi army.

25 The Republican Guard was a different matter. They

1 fought in the Karbala Gap, they fought with great
2 motivation, and in fact commanders did actually command
3 to the point where one of the battle group commanders
4 was rotating round his forces in a beaten up Peugeot
5 because that was all he had available. But they got the
6 best out of them.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: General Robin, do you have any sense
8 of lessons learned.

9 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: There are two bits I would just add.
10 One is because we thought that his weapons of mass
11 destruction, he was trying to hide them up to the last
12 moment, he would have to then assemble them to use them.
13 Therefore, the quicker we did it, the less likely --
14 which meant that we went with ground forces ahead of an
15 air campaign and most people were anticipating a rather
16 longer air campaign. We also did that so that we could
17 seize the oil infrastructure, because if there had been
18 a long air campaign, he might have taken the initiative
19 and destroyed them.

20 So for those two reasons that you have worked out --
21 the campaign plan has started taking account of these
22 things in a wholly respectable way, and therefore --
23 I think you asked me the question earlier on, were we
24 ready, yes, we were in the circumstances we assessed at
25 the time.

1 I wouldn't necessarily say we were ready if it was
2 a different set of circumstances. Some risk has been
3 taken then, but also in terms of the readiness and
4 preparation time that we need to set and the
5 sustainability that we need to set of our forces before
6 we even start on a campaign, wherever it might be.

7 That needs to be, I think, factored in.

8 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: I would like to add
9 to that, otherwise I don't think you will end up with
10 a complete picture.

11 One of the values of internal military exercises
12 in December was that we were able to assess the degree
13 to which we were inviting ourselves to be strategically
14 exposed.

15 There were a number of facets to that. Obviously
16 weapons of mass destruction was one; obviously the oil
17 fields from the point of view of a military encumbrance,
18 an economic regeneration issue and an ecological
19 disaster was another. The scud missiles,
20 surface-to-surface missiles, in the western desert which
21 he had used in 1991 against Saudi Arabia and Israel were
22 another very significant aspect. Also, there was the
23 extent to which international opinion may -- what would
24 it be from December, what would it be in March with or
25 without a second resolution. And the campaign that we

1 tested had five days of ambiguous preparation and force
2 flow, 11 days of unambiguous force flow, 16 days of an
3 air campaign and then 125 days of full-up manoeuvre
4 warfare.

5 In doing that exercise, certainly I and my team and
6 the team of mentors, US mentors, all came to the same
7 conclusion that that was an area of high risk in terms
8 of strategic exposure. And from the end of that
9 exercise onwards, we gradually compressed activity, and
10 ultimately, as you know, we launched a precision attack
11 on a regime target in Baghdad, then began the ground
12 campaign, and then began the air campaign in order to be
13 able to deal with those vectors of strategic exposure
14 all at once.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Last questions, Usha?

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: No.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just one, I think, from General Brims.

20 Sir Brian said earlier on that from the moment we
21 crossed the start line we were effectively going into
22 Phase 4, and we heard earlier from Dominick Chilcott
23 that in his perception, our responsibility, the UK's
24 responsibility, for managing civil affairs in the
25 southern region of Iraq evolved as an unintended

1 consequence of the fact that we were in charge of this
2 military box, which was part of the reason why the
3 capability to fill that void, to handle that task,
4 simply wasn't there. And one has seen that meetings to
5 discuss how we should address this were only happening
6 after the invasion, some of them about the time that you
7 were about to take Basra.

8 Recruiting really only got going in May for civilian
9 volunteers to come out and do what was needed. You had
10 these small cells. Your DFID cell, I think you said
11 consisted of one person. By 9 May there were
12 34 volunteers under training, the first batch of 22 were
13 only going to go out on 13 May.

14 So none of this had been prepared for in advance in
15 a proper kind of way. What is the lesson to be learnt
16 from this in terms of the way that decisions are
17 integrated between a military operation and the
18 post-conflict civilian tasks?

19 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: The reporting of the lack of the plan
20 and, therefore, the resources to conduct that plan were
21 made for the south when I produced the estimate in the
22 first week in January. What thereafter happened with
23 that, we I don't know. But in the UK -- and I think one
24 would have to follow up that to learn the lessons, but
25 I am afraid I don't know.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You identified it in January, but the
2 decisions clearly had not been taken by April
3 effectively?

4 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Correct, and the
5 reason was that there wasn't a cohesive leadership or
6 machinery of government that would address that problem.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But there should be.

8 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: Of course, and that's
9 what the doctrine of the comprehensive approach seeks to
10 do. It should not be a matter of either opinion or mood
11 of the moment as to whether government departments
12 participate in a military operation or not, they have
13 a duty to. We are putting our forces on the line, we
14 are given a task endorsed in a democratic political way
15 and there can be no shying away from that.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So in an ideal world, as your forces
17 rolled forward through Iraq, you would have had civil
18 contingents rolling at a safe distance, but pretty close
19 behind them, ready to take over the task that you found
20 yourselves having to do yourself weeks and months
21 afterwards?

22 LT GEN ROBIN BRIMS: In an ideal world, I think I should
23 have been planning alongside a senior civilian
24 representative at ambassador level. It might have been
25 a consul general, because of being in Basra and not in

1 the capital, who would have been part of the planning
2 with me ab initio.

3 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: But we were not
4 alone. We should remember that the NGOs were operating
5 very soon after the General's forces crossed the start
6 line and bits of southern Iraq were declared permissive.
7 The NGOs were in there, but they were configured
8 principally in case there was a humanitarian disaster
9 and, of course, there wasn't a particularly difficult
10 humanitarian problem.

11 Nevertheless, we should respect the fact the NGOs
12 were there on the day.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just ask a question.

14 Sir Brian, you said earlier that there was a direct line
15 of command in the United States, you know, and that made
16 things better for them, is that what you are suggesting?

17 AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR BRIAN BURRIDGE: No, I think it
18 probably made things worse for them. They will argue
19 perhaps, based on their own experience, better or worse
20 from an US point of view, from a London point of view it
21 made things much worse. It was much more difficult to
22 get the dialogue at the military strategic and ground
23 strategic level that we had begun to take for granted in
24 our experience through Bosnia when working with the
25 Americans.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: We have heard and learned a quite a lot this
2 afternoon. We realise there is more military testimony
3 that we need to hear and will be hearing. I wonder, are
4 there any final comments either of you would like to
5 make for this afternoon? If not, it would always be
6 acceptable and welcome to have any final thoughts on
7 paper if you have them on reflection. But if not now,
8 then we shall be hearing a number of other military
9 witnesses over the next days and weeks, and so I think
10 what I will do is thank both of you very much indeed,
11 and trail the fact that we shall tomorrow be pursuing
12 the same themes, in particular on law, order and
13 security in the aftermath, with both military and
14 diplomatic/political witnesses, which, as it were,
15 brings together your final observations, I think.

16 So with that, thanks to yourselves and to those who
17 have been here this afternoon in the room. I will close
18 this session now.

19 Thank you.

20 (5.15 pm)

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

22

23

24

25

