

1 (3.45 pm)

2 LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR GRAEME LAMB

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Before the final part of today 's sessions we
4 are jumping forward in time to September, I think, 2006,
5 when General Sir Graeme Lamb took up the post of senior
6 military representative in Iraq and also deputy
7 commanding general for the Multi National Force, I think
8 it is correctly described.

9 It is worth nothing that General Lamb's period in
10 Baghdad in this phase coincides with that of
11 Dominic Asquith, from whom we took evidence last week.
12 I'm not going to repeat the preamble I offered at the
13 beginning of the main session, but my remarks at the
14 beginning of that last session do apply equally to this
15 one.

16 And so what I would like to start with is just to
17 ask you, General, I mean, you went to Baghdad in
18 September 2006 and I imagine in your mind were memories
19 of, if not, indeed, lessons learned from, the experience
20 in the south-east and I wonder if you could lead us into
21 the Baghdad posting with what was in your mind as you
22 went to it.

23 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I got the call from the then
24 CJS at the time, General Jackson, who said, "Good news
25 and bad news, Graeme". He said, "The good news is we

1 are going to make you a three-star," which amazed
2 everybody in the British army by some margin. And then
3 he said, "The bad news is it you are going back to
4 Baghdad". I then corrected him and said since I was
5 only of some vague use, actually what best suited me was
6 at the front rather than at the rear, that there was no
7 better place for me to go. So I was actually quite
8 delighted to pick up that thread on the basis that, you
9 know, this is a fight that we are in and my sense is
10 that -- and it has not changed one jot even as I find
11 myself in retirement back in Afghanistan -- this is
12 a campaign of the day.

13 These two conflicts we find ourselves in are ones
14 where we, as a nation, have been tested, challenged and
15 it is where we have put our name. And so, therefore, to
16 finish well and finish properly and do the right thing
17 on a bad day is, in my view, part and parcel of where
18 it's at.

19 So going back to Baghdad, in my view, was something
20 that any soldier would embrace, and marching to the
21 sound of gunfire wasn't just something that Napoleon or
22 Wellington did in his day, it remains true today.

23 The second thing was I was going back amongst old
24 friends. There was a show again for the command of
25 2003. So it was Petraeus, Odierno, Martin Dempsey and

1 myself all back in town.

2 So there was a depth of experience that -- and
3 trust, which is not -- which is not given. It can't be
4 taken, it can only be given, a relationship of trust which
5 I sensed would bear well, and it did, in what was going
6 to be challenging times.

7 So that was the basis of me then deploying to
8 Baghdad. I was originally on for six months, that was
9 extended to just nearly a year by the time I came back.
10 But, again, I saw that as no obligation other than duty.

11 As far as -- what did I carry with me? I think Iraq
12 is an interesting reflection in so much as I went from
13 the war to civil disorder to an insurgency on steroids,
14 to sectarian violence, the likes of which I have only
15 seen in a few parts of the world like Rwanda and the
16 worst of the Balkans, in a very short space of time. So
17 the idea that as we discussed in the previous session
18 there was some certainty that you could develop a clear
19 plan against these hugely changing dynamics, I think is
20 one that is worth a reflection.

21 But it is -- it is general hindsight and, therefore,
22 we have a certainty afforded us now which was not the
23 case at the time as these things unfolded.

24 So in many ways what I took to Iraq was -- I don't
25 speak Arabic, but I do understand the sort of cultures,

1 and so my sense is that it was an experience of having
2 spent time in the Middle East and in particular in Iraq,
3 and then a sense that there was a fight that -- or
4 a campaign here that was worth finishing. So that was
5 the basis under which I then approached.

6 I have always had an -- I have an appalling memory,
7 which is probably self-evident from this morning's
8 rather poor reflections, though I haven't actually said
9 I can't recall quite as often as Ollie North did, I
10 think, during his hearings. But in many ways I've
11 tended to approach the problems in front of me rather
12 than say this is what I did somewhere else.

13 So, therefore, one draws upon one's experience to,
14 therefore, take -- and that's what I did this time round
15 in Iraq.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think that is the cue then to
17 turn to Sir Lawrence for the questions.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much. With that
19 backdrop, perhaps you can just describe your role when
20 you went back to Baghdad, and how did you locate
21 yourself within both the American scene there, your
22 relationship to the British operations still in the
23 south and back to London?

24 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Sir, I was pretty clear that I was
25 a DCG and --

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Which is a deputy --

2 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Deputy commanding general, not from
3 ego or am I not looking good in charge of these broader
4 responsibilities, but that was the role that was placed
5 upon me.

6 I would say that probably 85 per cent of my energy
7 therefore went towards that function rather than being
8 fixated by I'm a British officer, and therefore need to
9 be somehow taking an exceptional view on British forces
10 which made up just one of the divisions within
11 a troubled country.

12 You might -- you know, it is for you to judge me,
13 whether that was right or wrong, but that was the
14 position I took. I was very clear that I needed to
15 establish my credentials if with the Americans. I know
16 them pretty well and they know me reasonably well.

17 I had not worked closely with General Casey before
18 but I needed to establish those relationships in a way
19 that they saw me as contributing to the campaign,
20 because my condition at that time was that we, UK -- to
21 go back to an earlier observation -- were boxed Basra,
22 boxed the four provinces, had seen those four provinces
23 very much as the beginning, middle and the end of our
24 contribution. Whereas from my perspective the
25 contribution was clearly one of a campaign which we were

1 engaged in.

2 We had a smaller number than the Americans in the
3 way of force numbers, but we enjoyed 50 per cent of
4 the political equity and the political risk, and the
5 risk to the nation and our name and a whole raft of
6 other associated that went with these endeavours.

7 So, therefore, from where I sat, the importance was
8 to contribute to the success of the campaign and with it
9 set the conditions for the success that Britain should
10 enjoy for its contribution. So that was the primary
11 focus.

12 So in many ways -- so the last division I went and
13 saw when I took over was the British division, and that
14 was by absolute design. What I did not do was overly
15 interfere with spending a huge amount of time talking to
16 Richard Shirreff or Jonathan Shaw, who were the two
17 general officers commanding down there, to find out what
18 they were doing and in many ways how I could help.

19 By that time, there was a fairly clear and well
20 established relationship, one I wouldn't necessarily
21 think was one I would endorse, but it was the one that
22 existed, which was a relationship whereby in many ways
23 the GOC was talking directly back to London and to PJHQ,
24 I was informed, was aware of what was being discussed.
25 But just as its other divisions from other nations

1 were -- and brigades and the force levels were talking
2 back to their own capital cities, in my view that was
3 part and parcel. What was important was I concentrated
4 on the wider role of the overall campaign.

5 And that is very much how I approached the 12 months
6 when I was there. I had a responsibility obviously
7 to -- and I reported once a week back to CDS in the form
8 of a fairly short, pithy note that just tried to capture
9 what I sensed was the -- my reading. And it was very
10 much a one-man -- one person's view with a very small
11 staff, had a very good Pol Ad in the form of
12 Paul Lincoln sitting with me in Baghdad. But in many
13 ways, it was just trying to capture where I sensed campaign
14 in America was going on the basis they were driving
15 a great deal of this. And while our focus may have been
16 somewhat different from a UK perspective, actually what
17 was important was they understood how we could best
18 contribute to the campaign, rather than seeing it as
19 some isolated activity in four provinces down south, and
20 the like. But my sense was that is where UK had drawn
21 itself to for various reasons over the time that I had
22 been out of the country, before I returned.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That more or less describes how you
24 would see your objectives at the time. It was looking
25 at Iraq as a whole, working closely with all the forces,

1 obviously including the Americans, rather than having
2 a particularly national role at all?

3 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, and that is just -- I suppose
4 you might say, you know, who I am, that -- and the same
5 applies in Helmand. You know, we can win in Helmand,
6 but lose the campaign. We won't succeed in Afghanistan
7 through Helmand alone. Helmand is a very important part
8 of a broader campaign. What is important is the broader
9 campaign succeeds. And in this case, in Iraq the
10 hardest nights in many ways were further north. We had
11 a very complicated situation down in Basra, Maysan was
12 complex, but the truth of the matter is that it was the
13 Anbar, Baghdad in particular, the Sunni belt and Mosul,
14 which was -- it was all going to go back to Mosul at
15 some point in time. And then the broader politics of
16 Sunni, Shia and Kurd in the arrangements that I found
17 myself.

18 Specifically my responsibilities were as the DCG,
19 and that is exactly how General Casey treated me. He
20 was very comfortable when he went out of country that I
21 sat and represented. He was out, for instance, over the
22 Christmas period when we conducted operations against
23 the Iranians in Iraq, and he oversaw the execution of
24 Saddam. So the responsibility was pretty clear.

25 Specifically, he asked me over and above the normal

1 duties of, therefore, helping him was to deal with the
2 energy issue, and so that was really sort of how to get
3 power up and running and the like, and the issue of the
4 early stages of the engagement.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much. Martin?

6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You arrived in Baghdad in
7 September 2006 and last week Dominic Asquith described
8 to us the summer of 2006. I think he used the phrase
9 "the battle for the soul of Iraq". Could you describe
10 to us the situation in Iraq when you arrived and perhaps
11 how it had changed since 2003?

12 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes. The insurgency, as I alluded
13 to it, had moved on to steroids. You can buy insurgency
14 and there was still, you know, considerable sums of
15 money that (a) I think remained from that which had been
16 squirreled away from the previous regime, and shouldn't
17 forget -- and I remember going into Baghdad in the very
18 earliest days and I think the following day the
19 Americans found \$640 million in loose change in various
20 boxes. So there was large sums of money that had been
21 pushed away outside the country and was still fuelling
22 the insurgency.

23 There was also the internal dynamics. Baiji oil
24 refinery, for instance, north of Basra. I think we were
25 losing \$1.3 billion worth of refined product a year,

1 which is a considerable amount of money.

2 Now, some of that was going to criminal and
3 corruption, but in many ways some of it was also being
4 ploughed back into the broad insurgency. And if haven't
5 got a job and you need to feed your family, you don't
6 really give too much to really an American or a Brit,
7 then the answer is it is quite easy to buy somebody up,
8 to buy IEDs, to hold caches and the like. So there was
9 a sense of -- the whole insurgency had grown.

10 I arrived at the time that I think there was an
11 intelligence report that had been leaked from the
12 colonel from the US Marine Corps out in Anbar which
13 suggested that they had lost a province. It was couched
14 in those sort of terms.

15 As I recall, the Americans in Anbar were, I think,
16 the US marines were experiencing about 80 attacks a day.
17 The governor, Mahmoud, was besieged in the Green Zone in
18 Baghdad. His council had either gone to Jordan or had
19 been killed. Ramadi was broadly lost. There were no
20 policemen in Hit. The Fallujah Business Association,
21 I think, had 23 members. You know, that was the sort --
22 so -- oh, and Al-Qaeda had claimed Anbar as a califate.

23 So it was going south, I think, in August 2006, in
24 that sense.

25 Further up north, things were slightly better

1 although Mosul always remained potentially -- as it
2 still does today -- an unstable piece of real estate,
3 and Baghdad just was in the throes of beginning to get
4 the full measure of the vehicle borne IEDs and the
5 attacks that were being placed upon it.

6 Down south my sense was that we were under a fair
7 amount of pressure. The -- General Sheriff had put
8 together a plan, as I recall, called Op Sinbad, which
9 was trying to take the best of what Pete Chiarelli,
10 General Chiarelli, had done in Baghdad, which was the
11 SWET(?) programme of water and electricity, basically
12 essential services, and doing a great deal within
13 Baghdad, which he was set upon and General Shirreff was
14 trying to match that down in Basra with US funding,
15 again, to enable that.

16 General Chiarelli had done that when he had been
17 a divisional commander and he was repeating it now as
18 a corps commander. He probably had that opportunity in
19 that first time as divisional commander, but actually
20 the situation had got worse. So it was quite difficult
21 to try and pull back consent and goodwill when people
22 were seeing an inevitable outcome which was further
23 chaos and difficulties looming.

24 And finally, of course, I found myself in a place
25 where, in -- you know, in times short, I, at the end of

1 2008, both the UNSCOM would be completed and there would
2 be a -- the President would find himself -- he would
3 have done his second tour. So time was not on our side.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You mentioned further chaos and
5 difficulties looming. Were you concerned about the
6 possibility of actual defeat?

7 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I'm not sure I was so concerned
8 about defeat. I think what I was seeing was a very
9 serious situation, one where my sense was that the
10 Americans were committed on a campaign plan that they
11 were putting huge amounts of effort into, and one should
12 not in any way underestimate the energy that was going
13 into their programme in Baghdad to improve essential
14 services and bring real differences to a pretty -- very
15 much broken structure, which -- you know, but deep
16 engineering rather than just superficial change.

17 My concern was that with all the -- their best
18 endeavours, that that it wouldn't necessarily produce an
19 outcome that would make a change in the overall
20 campaign, which was at that point in time, in particular
21 out in Anbar, not going at all well.

22 My sense was that Britain, at an earlier stage, had
23 probably found itself where it was looking towards
24 following through on the PIC, which was the handing
25 over of provinces, and then setting its conditions for

1 leaving. And my sense was the overall campaign did not
2 lend itself to one where one could see a successful
3 outcome.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can you tell us something about
5 casualty levels and how they were affecting morale?

6 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: The casualty levels were pretty
7 extreme. Every day we would come up and I would sit --
8 the Americans had this formal briefing every morning
9 which lasted about an hour, at some ridiculously early
10 time.

11 So one with sat through that. But it was, as one
12 would expect, hugely important because over time you
13 began to get very clear trends. What was a very clear
14 trend was the pressure and the damage that was being
15 caused upon the force itself. You know, I would go
16 across to the medical -- the CASH, the medical facility
17 in Baghdad, and just talk to the nurses and the doctors
18 there. And one was seeing, you know, every day,
19 multiple numbers of young men and women coming in in
20 pretty desperate states in just trying to hold together
21 this quite difficult campaign at that point in time.

22 And it wasn't just the coalition that was taking
23 these hits, it was obviously the Iraqi army, the Iraqi
24 police and, most importantly, the Iraqi people. These
25 large -- these vehicle borne IEDs were killing -- they

1 happily will kill hundreds of people. And they, by
2 design, were being presented in a way that got more
3 sophisticated as time went on, where they would create
4 an explosion or two, and it would herd people into an
5 area where they then had very much larger vehicle borne
6 IEDs with the clear intent of killing innocent civilians
7 in gross numbers, in order to get effect a this sense of
8 failing and a failing nation.

9 On a number of occasions we had to just shut down
10 the city, so there was no vehicle moving at all. If you
11 think of London shutting all vehicle movement as
12 a necessary precaution because we had very clear
13 intelligence that a number of very large vehicle borne
14 IEDs were going to be presented.

15 So that was the sort of situation that one was
16 presented with, and it wasn't so much that people were
17 feeling a sense of failure or that the -- the campaign
18 was -- it was a sense that people were working as hard
19 as they could and it didn't look like we were going to
20 get out of the hole.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I first ask you what you sensed
22 the British priority in all of this -- I appreciate what
23 you said about your role in Baghdad, but what was your
24 sense of the British strategy in September 2006?

25 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Again, I think that what I was

1 seeing was -- all I was sensing was, if you take
2 the situation I have just presented, that this was not
3 going particularly well, the campaign, and therefore it
4 was a case of setting the conditions to hand over to the
5 Iraqis and a sense that there was not much more we
6 could do.

7 So it wasn't a sense that we were reinforcing to
8 build on what we had -- we were unable to convince both,
9 I think, public and politician back here that the --
10 that by merely putting more numbers, more money, more
11 effort into the campaign that was running, in the
12 conditions that they were in, that the outcome would
13 then, you know, put us through a turn, that things would
14 get better.

15 It was very much a case of accepting that this had
16 been an extremely hard fight, and therefore how do we
17 hand over in reasonable order. But very much that was
18 my sense.

19 So it was -- it goes back to, I think, a comment
20 that -- I think it was General Freddie or General Andrew
21 made this morning: it was about looking to leaving
22 rather than to succeeding.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And to some extent that was the
24 American strategy as well?

25 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes. The idea of transition was

1 very much the term that was being used. The problem
2 that America was seeing at the time I arrived was they
3 were recognising that their course of transition both in
4 their ability to improve and train the Iraqi army and
5 police so they were capable of, therefore, holding
6 stability, security in a country, was not without its
7 difficulties and they may not succeed there.

8 In fact, there was every indication that they
9 thought they couldn't succeed then. The sense was that
10 the Iraqis wished that level of sovereignty and
11 authority, and with that somehow it would reduce the
12 level of the violence.

13 There was four real threats in many ways, I think,
14 against the stability that we faced: One was crime and
15 corruption; the second was, depending who you talked to,
16 it was either seen as those with another agenda, if you
17 were talking to the Shia, but to a Sunni it was the
18 Iranian interference and threats that were being
19 presented; the third was the Saddamists, not Ba'athists,
20 but those that in fact continued to unpick any sense of
21 success; and obviously the fourth was Al-Qaeda and this
22 sense of the extremist movement underpinned by the Sunni
23 insurgency that was sitting out there, and then all of
24 this wrapped up into still remaining some quite serious
25 sectarian issues.

1 In February of that year, of course, we had the
2 Golden Mosque had been destroyed and that had taken Iraq
3 into a very dark place. It very quickly saw Shia and
4 Sunnis beginning to contest -- and one should not forget
5 when you look at Baghdad before and then you look at
6 Baghdad during the Saddam era and then Baghdad
7 afterwards, you can see that the Sunni belts were not
8 something that was a natural status. They had been
9 created by Saddam for good reason about establishing an
10 authority and responsibility around him.

11 So they were being contested by Shia, and just
12 generally bad practice and evil intent. But the
13 sectarian piece overlaid all of this following the
14 bombing of the Golden Mosque, which sort of unhinged
15 this opportunity for people to take sectarianism forward
16 to a new and different level.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Against this backdrop, was there
18 ever much chance that the -- did it seem to you there
19 was much chance that the Iraqi security forces could be
20 forged in such a way as to be able to take over?

21 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: No, and that was the genesis of,
22 therefore, see if that was -- I used the term call it
23 a third way, but whether there was a way through this,
24 which in many ways was, therefore, the issue of
25 recognising that in the time that remained, if you take

1 the end of the UNSCR in 2008, change in presidency at
2 the end of 2008, but if you looked at the throughput
3 that General Dempsey -- because he was running MNSTC-I
4 at the time, which was the organisation that trained and
5 then equipped the Iraqi army -- that at the speed he was
6 operating at -- and he was spending some considerable
7 volume of money every month to deliver humvees, new
8 equipment, training programmes, a throughput of
9 individuals. But the maths was one that did not -- in
10 my mind, did not see that you could create the police
11 and the army to a level of Q2, quality and quantity,
12 that would be able to contest an insurgency that was
13 working rather well against unfolding sectarian
14 valuation which was on the threshold, in my view, of
15 beginning just to unpick everything to where then
16 revenge, retribution, retaliation would have been very
17 much the watch word of the day, and passion would have
18 taken over. And one would have seen events that we can
19 recall from 1969 back in Northern Ireland, just people
20 acting without thought or conscience. If you did that
21 on a national scale, then we would have found ourselves
22 in a very difficult position.

23 So my sense was that we did not have the time to
24 prepare those forces to the quality and quantity
25 required to be able to challenge the insurgency that was

1 really in many ways unsettling. And then allowing that
2 to be driven, which then was taken by opportunity by
3 both Iranian, Iraqi crime -- organised crime and
4 corruption and this sort of what I call legacy of the
5 old former regime, the Saddamists rather than
6 Ba'athists, who continue to want to seize opportunity
7 out of this chaos because they do rather well in these
8 conditions.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was the view of the Iraqi
10 government? Presumably you were able to talk to
11 Prime Minister Malaki at this time?

12 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I think I established fairly
13 reasonable relationships, and again, acting as the
14 deputy one carried, therefore, a fair amount of "wasta"
15 with various politicians. One established -- I worked
16 well with both the Kurdish side, as well as making
17 a relationship with the Sunni and the Shia.

18 My view was that it was very early days. Here was
19 a government that had not long been formed.
20 Prime Minister Malaki had found himself fired into the
21 position which he was not expecting, greatness was
22 thrust upon him. He suddenly came -- and arrived there
23 in many ways, one shouldn't forget, with the Sadrism
24 trend vote, which got him the seat to where he then
25 found himself.

1 I had long discussions with Dominic about Malaki,
2 which we both had sort of -- just we weren't in violent
3 disagreement but we had difference of opinion. My view
4 was I thought Malaki was perfect.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Why?

6 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Because he didn't speak English.

7 He was a bit like Tommy Cooper, he didn't quite fit into
8 his body, but when I talked to many Iraqis, both inside
9 the country and outside, and people outside in the Arab
10 fraternity, you know, they all had one view: that Malaki
11 was an Iraqi, you know, and that was not unimportant.

12 He had spent his time in exile in Syria, as
13 I recall, and I had -- I quite liked him, actually.
14 I thought here was somebody that was given a very
15 difficult challenge and he was -- he was manfully trying
16 to stand up and take the post.

17 One shouldn't forget both in Iraq and places like
18 Afghanistan there is, notwithstanding that people would
19 turn round and say, "He only just got in" or "He wasn't
20 chosen", that having got the position of prime minister,
21 that he then represented -- of which watching cabinet
22 meetings -- that they defaulted to the Prime Minister.
23 There was no question about trying to undermine or
24 circumnavigate. You know, the system had come through
25 and said he was the Prime Minister and, therefore, he

1 was the Prime Minister. And my view was he did a manful
2 job at what was a very difficult time as he tried to
3 struggle -- because he forget indebted to the Sadrist
4 trend, he gave them Ministry of Health, the Ministry of
5 Transport, and I can't remember the other one. There
6 were three principal ones.

7 They ran them really badly. They took them as
8 almost fiefdoms to their own interests to exhort money,
9 to use money and all the rest, and you could sense the
10 disappointment. But he had a debt of honour and,
11 again -- something which, you know, we shouldn't
12 underestimate in these sort of societies and these
13 cultures -- a debt of honour which he felt duty-bound to
14 see through, which he did.

15 And it wasn't blind obedience. It was a sense that,
16 you know, they had to just -- and he had to check on
17 a number of occasions, so eventually he could turn
18 around and say, "I have given you this course of action,
19 you know, I've done my part and you have now failed me
20 and so, therefore, that's where we now stand."

21 But my view was that the individuals I came across
22 Barem Salah, Mam Jalal, Talabani, these were people that
23 were not lightweights in understanding their own kind,
24 and the like.

25 So, yes, I established, I think, good and

1 respectable working relationships with politicians.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Against this background, in
3 January 2007 President Bush announced a new strategy for
4 Iraq which would lead to a surge of some 20,000 extra
5 American forces. I wonder what was your view of this
6 strategy. Had you been involved in its preparation?
7 Did you think it would work?

8 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Because the engagement piece,
9 I watched in September/October time, I think it was,
10 when Sheikh Sattar had stood up a force -- again, you
11 know, often misunderstood -- you know, an initiative
12 supported by Prime Minister Malaki where he gave money
13 in order that they could set up a force in order to
14 bring some order back to Ramadi. So -- it was about
15 300-odd or so he was empowered at that point in time to
16 look at.

17 My view was that given my earlier observations that
18 I didn't think there was the time to be able to improve
19 the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police in the timescales
20 that were remaining, against this sense of a situation
21 that was unfolding on the wrong side of progress, that
22 this just represented an opportunity which was the one
23 that was the third way, which was this idea of
24 reconciliation and, you know, dealing with, in this
25 case, the Sunni insurgents.

1 And, therefore, that was something that fell within
2 that bailiwick of myself. The conditions had really
3 been set in many ways by the US marines who had been out
4 there for some considerable time holding the line in
5 Anbar and demonstrating to both friend and foe, you
6 know, to go back to earlier comments, you are judged in
7 this part of the world by your actions, not by what you
8 say.

9 And so they were being judged by their actions of
10 acting against all sorts of provocation, acting
11 reasonably, of not acting badly when they were attacked,
12 and not just responding with overwhelming and violent
13 force, but actually trying to understand who had
14 attacked them and then contain their responses, down to
15 just dealing with those that had come through, that,
16 therefore, these opportunities began to emerge out in
17 Anbar that the issue of reconciling the Sunni insurgent
18 and an opportunity to also reflect across on the other
19 side, which is to reconcile and understand better what
20 people had blindly called -- saw Jaish Al Mahdi as
21 a single entity, which was not the case -- the Shia
22 militia -- that there were large components of these
23 forces, in our corporate view, that could be reconciled
24 back into society and were fighting well for a bad
25 cause. And so that was part of the work I was doing at

1 the time, as we went through 2006.

2 So by the time of 2007, I was really quite
3 comfortable that I could see a way through the problem
4 that was -- and there was always that time lag between
5 events at the front, given the fact that we see all the
6 intelligence from the high side through to the sense and
7 smell and feel of the souk or individual relations, that
8 the time lag is always then one that comes back into
9 capital cities that just draws a little slower. They
10 get information, but you just cannot get a tangible feel
11 of either success or failure that, in this case, I was
12 pretty confident that, as we went into October --
13 into December, that I could see how this thing could
14 unravel from a reconciliation point of view, which would
15 then move component forces from the insurgency away from
16 Al-Qaeda and what they were currently doing to somewhere
17 else. And the same with those elements in the
18 Jaish Al Mahdi, by understanding better that
19 organisation which the intelligence community had done
20 a great deal of work on in trying to understand that
21 there were those who were following the old father
22 Moqtadr, you know, through to members of the OMS, through
23 to in fact those that followed Moqtadr himself, rock
24 star status -- he could call out a large crowd a bit
25 like the Rolling Stones -- through to then those who, in

1 fact, just took on the mantle of the Jaish al Mahdi, but
2 were actually there for criminal purposes, and those
3 that in fact were quite clearly connected to Iranian
4 influence and direct funding in order to -- but all --

5 So understanding how these organisations worked,
6 therefore, in my view, gave us a position -- my sense by
7 January 2007, I was reasonably comfortable and confident
8 that we could -- we could work our way round the problem
9 that many people were seeing at the time and deliver
10 both with the surge a sense of a change in dynamics and,
11 therefore, in fact regaining the initiative very much to
12 our advantage.

13 We were also at that time beginning to understand
14 the networks, the (inaudible) networks in Baghdad and
15 how we would take those apart at the same said time. We
16 started to introduce concrete -- Sir John will remember
17 this well from Ireland, that you do have to separate the
18 individual and, more importantly, the vehicle from the
19 crowd. And, therefore, the use of concrete T walls and
20 all the things that don't look particularly attractive,
21 but actually deliver a demonstrable effect, and stop
22 this sectarian sense of, you know -- that where both
23 sides will just attack each other harder, all that was
24 beginning to change by that time.

25 So my view was that the surge was something which we

1 could have probably taken advantage of all those little
2 1 per centers had the surge -- because it just
3 demonstrated, against the odds, resolve. And if war is
4 a battle of wills, then counterinsurgency, which we know
5 is the darkest and the infernal place in Hell itself, is
6 the resolve of everyone's will.

7 So, therefore, that changed the dynamic in many
8 ways --

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This resolve of will,
10 Dominic Asquith said there was no question that the
11 United Kingdom would be part of the surge. Did you
12 discuss this with the UK in terms of providing some
13 demonstration of British will to increase numbers or was
14 that never likely?

15 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I mean, all my -- and I think you
16 have seen all those weekly reports which I would fire
17 back to London, sort of captured my sense of -- which
18 people saw as blind optimism, as I recall, and everybody
19 doubted by at the end of 2006. And they had good reason
20 too challenge that.

21 But my sense was that what I did not get was a view
22 that we were still very much looking towards the course
23 we had set ourselves upon and, therefore, it was --
24 because, again, there was a time lag in the sense of
25 trust me -- which is always dangerous -- it is going to

1 get better, was one of which we were set on a course.

2 I think what happened was we began to then check
3 that course, because America asked us to on the basis of
4 the wider campaign, which was the important part for us
5 as an organisation, as a country, to recognise that this
6 wasn't Americans just asking, this was about the
7 coherence of the campaign to reinforce that resolve to
8 maintain our part in something where they had made
9 a significant contribution of force.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So our contribution was not to go
11 down rather than to go up?

12 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Correct.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And by the time that you left, was
14 your confidence growing?

15 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I was reasonably comfortable
16 that by that time -- because I left in about -- I think
17 it was July -- July 2007 -- that one was seeing at that
18 point in time large elements of -- you know, all the
19 indications in the discussions I was having with some
20 unsavoury people that the chunks of insurgency and
21 chunks of elements within the Jaish Al Mahdi were
22 looking for other courses of action rather than one
23 which was just rather desperate.

24 I do recall when the two minarets were then blown
25 up, and I can't remember the exact date but it was

1 about March time, I think, so almost a year later, of
2 which the assumption would have been that one would have
3 seen again the same level of violence, the same sort of
4 cathartic moment of anger. But of course the shrine was
5 both Shia and Sunni, which was interesting.

6 But what was fascinating was as that occurred there
7 was almost an immediate calling from the coalition, from
8 the political authority, from the tribal chiefs, from
9 the religious authorities saying, "Don't go there, let
10 us not return to where we have been this last year".

11 So if you add all that together, then my view was
12 that as I was leaving Iraq, I was reasonably confident
13 that we were in a very much better place. Not that this
14 was going to provide, you know, an easy solution or
15 a definitive answer or outcome to Iraq, but what it
16 would do is provide Iraqis with choice, which my view
17 was in -- in August 2006, they did not have.

18 It was going south. By the time I left in
19 July 2007, my view was the situation was stabilising,
20 the insurgency in this case you had Ansar Al Sunna,
21 Jaish Al Islami, Jaish Al Mujahideen, the 1920 Brigade,
22 you had all these individuals in various guises now
23 beginning to contest Al-Qaeda and see them for what they
24 were.

25 That was, therefore, having a significant impact.

1 By the time I left in July, I think attacks in Anbar
2 were down to less than ten a day. The telling metric in
3 many ways was -- I think it was about February time,
4 January/February time of 2007, when the US marines went
5 from about -- I think it was about sort of 20 weapons
6 caches and ammunition IED caches they were finding in a
7 period that suddenly that jumped to about 114. And it
8 wasn't their intelligence and it wasn't they had better
9 dogs or they didn't have some new techno kit. It was
10 because the locals were saying, "It's over there, son,"
11 which showed a behavioural change, which is the part
12 that really mattered.

13 So by the time General Petraeus went back and gave
14 his hearing, he was able to present that sense that, you
15 know, it is hard but not hopeless and we can see how
16 this is unfolding.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My final question is what you have
18 been describing is in a sense a policy from the
19 multinational headquarters in Baghdad, and you have
20 given us an indication of how the UK fitted in with that
21 in terms of not doing less rather than doing more, but
22 I wonder if you have got any sort of reflections from
23 your time -- I mean, lessons from your period in 2003.
24 What lessons you would be drawing for the UK from this
25 period of 2006/2007?

1 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I suppose my sense is that, you
2 know, had President Bush not committed to the surge,
3 then all that I have explained would probably not have
4 happened.

5 It showed both a political will, which was not one
6 that all his advisers were saying, "This is the course
7 you should take". It also saw the, you might say,
8 that -- this stoic sort of containment, this holding the
9 line that General Casey had held and then
10 General Petraeus's arrival with an unleashing and
11 looking at a new way of how to move the campaign to a
12 different way, embracing reconciliation, which was in
13 many ways -- and I have used the term before when I said
14 that the most difficult element in Iraq to reconcile was
15 not the Shia militia or the Sunni insurgent; the most
16 difficult people to reconcile in Iraq were the
17 Americans, with the idea of reconciliation, the idea of
18 dealing with somebody with blood on their hands. And
19 the answer is, "Who didn't have blood on their hands?"

20 When you drop a 500-pound bomb into a compound, the
21 answer is there is a lot of blood on the hands. And
22 just get over it. The answer is these things, they had
23 to finish -- they have to finish in dialogue, they have
24 to move to somewhere where you just don't bash each
25 other.

1 It is not about winning and losing, it is about
2 setting the conditions for progress and change, and all
3 of that -- that was -- that was the belief of the
4 American. They had not given up on this campaign. They
5 were in no sense leaning backwards and looking for -- no
6 doubt there were some that you could see that were maybe
7 inclined to take the sum of their fears.

8 I think the credit to the UK was in recognising some
9 change and, therefore, it did not pursue blindly let's
10 depart. Did it match America? No, in that sense of
11 commitment, in the sense of here is a campaign that we
12 should pursue. I sense, therefore, that
13 General Richards, a campaign footing, in many ways now
14 driven to Afghanistan, was one that we had not gone on
15 to. We were just continuing to do our duty and doing
16 the best we could do in Iraq rather than seeing that --
17 how we could push harder, pull longer, demand more of
18 our own people in order to what I call add to the
19 campaign.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were you able yourself to engage in
22 persuading us not to pursue the let us depart strategy?

23 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: I think, you know, a lot of people
24 will turn round and claim all sorts of things. My view
25 is that I would hope that some of those -- the

1 discussions I had with individuals, the sort of blind
2 obstinacy that I applied, the -- had a part bearing
3 upon those at least to hold steady. But what mattered
4 was how people had acted and then this whole range of --
5 you know, Britain's contribution was not just in Basra,
6 it was this whole range of staff officers spread, which
7 the Americans give us extraordinary access, and
8 therefore, in fact, extraordinary influence, within
9 their own internal machinery to be able to -- and if one
10 acts well there, then you can --

11 So many people, you know, were part of that sort of
12 hold the line, this will get better, trust us. That's
13 a huge ask because you have all the internal pressures,
14 domestic pressures from the UK that are being presented
15 here and you have got a few people that are (inaudible)
16 and just saying it will be all right. You know -- it
17 is -- I get the sort of what I call the challenge
18 represents, but many people then presented that.

19 One of the seminal moments was when I was sitting
20 down talking with a very senior cleric, one of the
21 emirs(?), and they tend to be the sort of operations
22 officers, of one of the insurgent groups who said, "You
23 are a force of occupation, understand this, and we
24 resist a force of occupation because it is quite clear
25 that you challenge our faith and our way of life and,

1 therefore, we will fight you for however long it takes,
2 generations upon generations. It is the nature of our
3 faith."

4 And then they have come and said, "But we have
5 watched you very closely for the last three and a half
6 years -- that was the US marines, the US military, the
7 army -- just stoically going through, holding the line,
8 taking casualties but acting well." So one tends to
9 gauge things often by the Abu Ghraibs and all the rest,
10 which are dreadful. I have no difficulty with that.
11 But so what you miss out on is this extraordinary
12 courage of young men and women acting really very well
13 in the most diabolical of circumstances and uncertainty.
14 And they have done that for three and a half years, of
15 which the comment was, "We have watched you for three
16 and a half years and we have talked about this in Syria,
17 in Saudi Arabia, in Iraq and we have come to the
18 conclusion that you do not threaten our faith, nor
19 threaten our way of life, Al-Qaeda does."

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

21 Usha, would you like to ask a last question?

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I don't have any questions.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

24 Right, just to round off, you stayed on beyond the
25 expected length of tour under not unwilling compulsion,

1 I suspect?

2 LT GEN SIR GRAEME LAMB: Yes, I have a very understanding
3 wife, and the answer is it was exactly the right place
4 to be.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. We have had a long-ish day already,
6 thank you very much indeed for your testimony. It has
7 been a valuable day for us. We are grateful for it.
8 And I'm also thankful to those who have been attending
9 through the day on and off.

10 Our next hearing starts tomorrow morning at
11 9 o'clock, not ten, and we will be seeing
12 Sir John Sawers in two roles: as private secretary in
13 10 Downing Street with responsibility for foreign
14 affairs, and then in his role as UK Special
15 Representative in Iraq. And the first part of our
16 session tomorrow will cover Number 10's perspective on
17 the state of UK policy in Iraq in 2001, going back to
18 the beginnings, and then the evolution of policy in that
19 year. And we will look at the policy reviews initiated
20 by the UK and US Governments in 2001.

21 We have had some testimony already, but this will be
22 from, I hope you won't mind my saying, the horse's
23 mouth. And the second part of the session will cover
24 the UK's objectives for Iraq and the implementation of
25 them as seen from Baghdad in those crucial months May

1 to July 2003.

2 And with that, and with thanks again to those
3 present and to our witness, I will close the session.

4 Thank you.

5 (4.37 pm)

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

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

FINAL