

1 (11.30 am)

2 GENERAL SIR JOHN REITH

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for appearing before us today,
4 General Reith. I know we have set out the arrangements
5 for your appearance by letter, but it is probably just
6 worth my running through them at the start. There are,
7 as you see, no members of the public in the hearing room
8 for this session and it is not being recorded for
9 broadcast. However, after the session, we will be
10 publishing a transcript of the evidence you give, so
11 that, at that stage, your appearance before us will
12 become publicly known.

13 Before the New Year, we heard from a number of
14 military officers involved at senior levels in the
15 planning of operations against Iraq, including the Chief
16 of Defence Staff at the time, Lord Boyce, and one of
17 your deputies, General Fry. So this session will cover
18 2002 up to and beyond the invasion, covering the period
19 of your tenure as Chief of Joint Operations.

20 I remind every witness that he will later be asked
21 to sign a transcript of evidence to the effect that the
22 evidence they have given is truthful, fair and accurate.

23 With that, I will hand over to
24 Sir Lawrence Freedman. Sir Lawrence?

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sir, I think the easiest way to

1 start is perhaps if you could just take us through how
2 you became aware of the potential need for planning
3 in -- for military action in Iraq, and your awareness of
4 the American plans. It would probably be best if you
5 just take us through from the start.

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: May I just start by giving you the sort of
7 mood music at the time and our situation with the
8 Americans at the time, so you get a better
9 understanding, if that would be helpful?

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Please do.

11 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: If I can start with the
12 PJHQ/CENTCOM relationship; I had about 40
13 people who were working with CENTCOM, about 20 as
14 embedded staff and 20 with my liaison team with the
15 headquarters at Tampa, and that was in place because of
16 ENDURING FREEDOM and we were doing NORTHERN and SOUTHERN
17 WATCH as well over Iraq. So we had been involved with
18 them really since just after the twin tower bombings.
19 So that was all in place.

20 I also ought to explain that the Goldwater Nichols
21 legislation meant that Tommy Franks, as the
22 Central Command combatant commander, worked directly to
23 Sec Def and bypassed effectively the joint chiefs in
24 Washington. He also had direct access to the President.
25 So -- and we really didn't find out the significance of

1 this until we were well into the planning, but,
2 basically, from London, from the MoD, they had
3 significant difficulty getting information on the
4 planning, because in Washington they really didn't know
5 either.

6 Therefore, PJHQ and myself became the conduits,
7 for flow of information as to what the Americans were
8 doing, into the MoD.

9 I had a very good personal relationship with
10 Tommy Franks. I had been Chief of Staff of the
11 British division in the Gulf War in 1991 and had worked
12 very closely with the Americans then, and the Americans
13 very much work on, who they know, do they trust somebody, is
14 he of the right calibre for them to work with. So
15 I forged quite a good relationship with him, and, in
16 fact, he jokingly used to call me his deputy commander,
17 and I was very much seen by the Americans as the UK's
18 global combatant commander.

19 Then if I can give you the other little piece to
20 bring the picture together, and that is the defence
21 crisis management organisation. The PJHQ was actually
22 effectively part of the MoD, but in a different
23 location, and we had a very, very close relationship
24 with, principally, the commitments area within the MoD,
25 but also linked into all the other branches and

1 departments as well, to the extent that every single
2 paper that we produced at PJHQ was staffed through the
3 staff in the MoD before it went under my signature into
4 the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and we had a VTC every
5 morning: and clearly I was on regular VTCs for the op
6 Chiefs of Staff meetings and for the Ministerials. So
7 it was a very, very close relationship.

8 So if I can turn now then to the planning, and I'll
9 try and take you through it, how it really evolved.

10 I have to say that it was dynamic. From my perspective,
11 as the Chief of Joint Operations, it was like playing on
12 a field where the goalposts were moving all the time but
13 the field was changing shape as well, and so it was very
14 dynamic and evolutionary.

15 The Americans had plans in place for the invasion of
16 Iraq. CENTCOM had produced them after 1991 and they had
17 exercises every so often, where they actually went
18 through, obviously not physically, but on paper --

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Headquarters?

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, headquarters-type exercises for
21 the invasion of Iraq. My team in Tampa, in May 2002,
22 were picking up rumours and saying that there is some,
23 "no foreigner", planning going on inside CENTCOM.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was?

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: That's in May 2002.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's May, but you hadn't picked up
2 anything before that?

3 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Not before that.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just pull you back a bit on
5 that? Because there is a meeting at Chequers, I think
6 just before the Prime Minister goes to Crawford, where
7 Alastair Campbell, in fact, reports in his diaries about
8 Tommy Franks' view from "our military man based in
9 Tampa", which I think was Cedric.

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: It would have been Cedric at the time,
11 yes.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And CDS was there and I think
13 Tony Pigott as well. So what were they reporting on?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Cedric never gave me anything relating
15 to Iraq. I presume that Cedric, again, had credibility
16 with Tommy Franks, [REDACTED],
17 and he may have given an opinion, but it would have been
18 a personal opinion, but he never actually raised it as
19 an issue with me.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about the relationship between
21 CDS and his opposite number in the States? Might some
22 information have come through that way?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I think probably unlikely, knowing
24 that, you know, the planning was all being done at
25 CENTCOM, and I presume that CENTCOM had been authorised

¹ Section redacted on grounds of national security

1 to do the planning by Sec Def, but it may not have gone
2 through the joint chiefs.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you were unaware?

4 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I was unaware, until May 2002, when, as
5 I say, at that stage it was just rumours.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You weren't asked prior to Crawford
7 for any information about the American plans?

8 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, I wasn't.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were you aware that this meeting had
10 taken place before Crawford?

11 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I mean, I wasn't aware of Crawford
12 until somebody mentioned it to me yesterday. So I think
13 that probably puts it in perspective.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So from your point of view it wasn't
15 until May?

16 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Until May 2002.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's interesting. So can you take
18 us forward from there?

19 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sorry, just -- because, after
21 Crawford, there were requests for military planning to
22 start on our side. So were you aware of new
23 instructions coming through, that you should start
24 thinking about it?

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, and the way that we started the

1 planning was I got a phone call from David Wilson in
2 CENTCOM on 4 or 5 June to say that we had been offered
3 the opportunity to participate in the American planning
4 for a potential invasion of Iraq.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So did you have any conversations
6 with Tony Pigott about that?

7 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: That was late evening when I got that
8 phone call. I rang Tony Pigott the following morning --
9 it would have been 6 June, I think, and I said we had
10 been given this offer. What was the position? Could
11 I go ahead or not?

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did he tell you that he had been
13 thinking about Iraq since April, that there had been any
14 planning going on in -- at the Whitehall level?

15 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: He didn't mention it to me, not to my
16 recollection anyway.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This is quite important. So from
18 late April to early June, you had no formal
19 instructions --

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- from Whitehall to start preparing
22 plans or thinking about planning with the United States?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct, and I, in fact -- it was on --
24 I'll check it. It was on 25 June that from the MoD
25 through Tony Pigott, I got authority for planning with

1 CENTCOM, but without commitment.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So take us back to the -- what you
3 knew through your own channels, what was your
4 understanding from May of what the Americans were
5 thinking?

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: As I say, all they were doing was they
7 were pulling off the shelf their previous plans and
8 updating them.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you surmise that it might be
10 sensible for you to start pulling off the table --
11 pulling down your previous plans and start --

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We had no previous plans for invading
13 Iraq. We had not developed any plans since 1991.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So did you think it might be
15 sensible to start conceptualising what your plans might
16 look like?

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I'm a great believer that you don't
18 start things racing until you need to, and, of course,
19 you know, we were quite busy as a headquarters anyway,
20 running our elements in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and so
21 forth.

22 So once I got -- clearly, once I had been approached
23 and asked, would we be interested in participating,
24 clearly we then started thinking about it, but I didn't
25 start any formal planning until 25 June.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So again to be clear, the approach
2 came from David Wilson and he informed you we had this
3 invitation and you then spoke to Tony Pigott to get
4 a view as to how you should --

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: How we should go forward.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: For the record, David Wilson is who, at this
7 point?

8 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: He was the SBMA in Tampa.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Senior British Military ...?

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Adviser.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Adviser, thank you.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then you got the go-ahead on
13 25 June?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So for those weeks in between, were
16 you thinking about, if you were going to be involved,
17 what sort of things you would wish to say and do?

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The difficulty was that I didn't know
19 what the Americans were planning at that stage, and so
20 I could only look at, with the commitments we had got,
21 what we might be able to do in terms of force levels,
22 but nothing else really.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So when you were told that you could
24 go, what sort of arrangements did you make and what sort
25 of ideas did you develop for the submission you might

1 make?

2 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Okay, what I did was I set up what we
3 called the Warrior group. It was because we were based
4 at HMS Warrior in Northwood and it was a small combined
5 planning team. I put them in a separate section
6 of the bunker from the rest of the headquarters and they
7 started the planning.

8 I should say that, within PJHQ, we had combined
9 planning teams for each of our operations and the system
10 we worked was you have a combined planning team that
11 works on a 24-hour basis with a shift system and they
12 act as the interface between the operation in the field
13 and the main staff in PJHQ, and, therefore, they feed
14 information backwards and forwards and obviously work
15 with the staff in PJHQ to formulate plans.

16 So I formed this combined
17 planning team, the Warrior group, as they were called.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Give us an idea of the numbers of
19 people involved.

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: There were about ten, and it was led by
21 a full colonel.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did they relate to the Tampa
23 exercise?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Again, they were in contact with the
25 liaison staff and David Wilson in Tampa.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So what sort of submission --

2 I mean, its idea was that David Wilson was going to give
3 a short presentation. So were you discussing what sort
4 of presentation this should be?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We -- what we were doing in those early
6 stages was very much exploratory. We had to establish
7 what the Americans were thinking and we then had to look
8 at, if we were going to participate, how we would fit in
9 with them.

10 We didn't really put any planning package into the
11 MoD until early September, in fact, about the 13th,
12 I think it was, 13 September. I submitted a paper into
13 the MoD, which looked at the initial packages, and I'll
14 give you a feel for how broad it was at that stage,
15 because package 0, was just special forces, package 1
16 was using the in-place forces -- that was from
17 SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH and ENDURING FREEDOM, as
18 well as special forces -- package 2 was a medium-scale
19 maritime and air package with the elements from
20 package 1, and then package 3 would have been package 2
21 plus a land option. So very broad brush at that stage.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Scaling the land option at that stage?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: At that stage, not scaled, and I'll --
24 as we progress, I'll explain how it was refined as we
25 went along.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can we sort of just look at this
2 from July to September period?

3 How did you -- Tony Pigott was doing his own little
4 exercise in London. What were your communications with
5 him on the way that his thoughts were going and CDS's
6 thoughts were going?

7 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We talked every day, but not just on
8 Iraq. One has to understand that all these other
9 operations were running as well.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Other things were going on.

11 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: So if there was something specific,
12 then we would discuss it. So thinking in London would
13 have had influence from me and our thinking would have
14 had influence from London.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But how were these three or four
16 options, if you include the zero one -- how were they
17 developed?

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: As time progressed -- because it
19 started as a very, very tight group -- one had to widen
20 it, as you'd start refining and getting into more
21 practical detail.

22 So I had been speaking, for instance, to DSF,
23 Director of Special Forces. I had been talking to
24 CinC Land, CinC Air and CinC Fleet. So we were giving
25 their -- their staff were then giving us more detail and

1 more information that we could draw on to start
2 developing the packages.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How were you discussing these with
4 the Americans?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I probably only spoke to the Americans
6 every couple of weeks and --

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would you speak directly to
8 Tommy Franks?

9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Occasionally, but more normally it
10 would be me going across on a visit or whatever and then
11 I'd get a chance to have a session with him. I think
12 probably only once or twice did we actually have
13 a telephone call together.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So David Wilson was still largely
15 carrying the burden of keeping in touch with American
16 planning --

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct, which was his function.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That worked to your satisfaction?

19 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: It worked very well.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So as you were developing these
21 options, were you trying to fit them in with what you
22 assumed to be American plans, or what you had optimism
23 was a reasonable account of American plans?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I think the Americans didn't
25 necessarily know what they wanted to do at these early

1 stages. I'm talking about it being evolutionary. If
2 I recall correctly, it was us, in fact, us that suggested
3 that they might go for a northern option first off,
4 because they were looking at everything coming from the
5 south, as it had in 1991, but, of course, in that
6 northern option they had something like, I think it was
7 between six and eight divisions, Iraqi divisions, lined
8 up along the end of the Kurdish zone, which, of course,
9 wouldn't be fixed if everything came from the south,
10 which meant that they could then be brought south and
11 influence what we might be wanting to do.

12 So we had suggested that it might be worthwhile to
13 have a second axis coming in from the north. So that
14 was just one development during that period.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How and when did you make that input
16 into American planning?

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I can't tell you, Lawrence. At the end
18 of the day, there was continuous dialogue ongoing and
19 I really couldn't, hand on heart, tell you exactly when.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The American options were sort of
21 well developed by the end of July 2002, generated staff
22 and standing start and so on. So was it before the end
23 of July? Just to get a sense of timing.

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I can't recall it. I can't recall.

25 You see, you say they were well developed, but they were

1 only well developed in outline principles, they weren't
2 well developed in terms of planning.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Perhaps it is useful at this point
4 just to establish the differences between the levels of
5 planning. I mean, there is a sort of basic concept that
6 we are talking about here and then there is a who does
7 what when.

8 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, exactly. But the basic conceptual
9 stuff, of course, is primarily at the strategic level,
10 and that would have been, you know, MoD business, and
11 the more detailed stuff was the operational level which
12 was my business as CJO.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay, were you given much of a sense
14 of resources that were likely to be available?
15 Obviously, your different options have quite distinct
16 resource implications.

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I knew I had visibility of what the UK
18 could do in terms of resources, but what I didn't know
19 is what the UK would be willing to do, and that's why we
20 had such broad packages. So that I was giving the
21 maximum flexibility into the MoD so that the Chiefs of
22 Staffs and Ministers could discuss this and obviously
23 come up with sensible solutions.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Because obviously a key issue in
25 this is the contribution of a division. There was some

1 discussion before the conference at Tampa about what it
2 is we could suggest or imply to the Americans about what
3 would be able to provide. Do you recall those
4 discussions about how far we could go?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I tended to be very candid with
6 Tommy Franks and I made it clear that there was no
7 commitment from the UK. He used to rib me regularly
8 that he was having to produce two plans, one with and
9 one without the UK, but that he couldn't conceive that
10 America's closest ally wouldn't go with them into Iraq
11 if they went. That was his perspective.

12 So, as we were developing plans --

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you respond to that?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I responded to it. I mean it was all
15 done in a very jocular way, but I responded to it that
16 nothing in this life is certain.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As you have indicated, there were
18 ways in which we could have been involved that didn't
19 involve the full division.

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct, absolutely. But I had no
21 authority and I had no knowledge whether we were going
22 to commit, so I couldn't actually say to him, "It's all
23 right, my friend, I'm with you, we will be there".
24 I couldn't do that. So throughout this whole process
25 I was saying to Tommy Franks, "This is what we could do,

1 but I can't guarantee we are".

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In Tommy Franks' assumptions was he
3 assuming a division?

4 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, I need to take you through the
5 evolution because --

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Please do.

7 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: -- there were a whole series of papers
8 and it kept changing.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay.

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Okay? So there was that package then.
11 Then in November --

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If we are going to move
13 beyond September, I think I will hand over to
14 Sir Roderic Lyne for that. I just want to take you --
15 let's say to the point at which you are presenting these
16 in September.

17 When -- perhaps you could just tell us how you made
18 the presentations in September and what sort of response
19 you were getting.

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We had a weekly operational Chiefs of
21 Staff meeting every Wednesday, which I normally did by
22 video teleconference with London because it is
23 a nightmare getting in in the mornings for 10 o'clock
24 from Northwood. It meant I had to leave at 7.00.
25 Occasionally, if it was really important, I would go

1 personally, and I think on this particular one I went
2 personally and I presented -- I put the paper in several
3 days before to the chiefs and I then presented it to the
4 Chiefs of Staff Committee and it was debated, and I have
5 no record at that stage -- and I have tried to find --
6 what their decision was at that stage.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was your recollection of the
8 discussion?

9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The -- I think that they certainly were
10 looking towards package 2 and possibly package 3.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sorry, just to be clear, this is on what
12 date?

13 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: This was back in mid-September,
14 13 September.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The 13th, yes.

16 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Again, this is quite important. So
18 the chiefs, as they discussed it, were content with this
19 significant air and sea component? The issue was really
20 whether --

21 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We would go with a land component, and
22 that was because of other commitments.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So at the time, you have obviously
24 still got Afghanistan. There is also the possibility of
25 Operation Fresco.

1 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: That came up just a little bit later,
2 but, yes, that's in the next stage of the planning.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So that wasn't part of the concerns?

4 LORD TURNBULL: That wasn't at this stage. We had Bosnia,
5 we had Kosovo and we had Sierra Leone, and, of course,
6 Northern Ireland still.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So we had a number of other
8 commitments.

9 In your recollection, what were the -- were there
10 differences amongst the chiefs? Were the army, for
11 example, more keen on sending a division?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: In the Chiefs of Staff Committee,
13 clearly each Chief of Staff will represent his own
14 service and will try and give you a sensible approach
15 from their perspective. Clearly that has to then be
16 brought together into, shall we say, a coherent picture
17 at a joint level.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The view of the army as to what
19 would be sensible?

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I really -- I don't remember at this
21 stage, but I certainly -- I wouldn't have recommended
22 less than a brigade, clearly, because a brigade can be
23 a cohesive package. Anything less, you have great
24 difficulty supporting.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So from your point of view, what

1 were the advantages and disadvantages of a division --
2 of sending a full division?

3 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I really don't understand what the
4 question is.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Sorry. We have got -- are you just
6 presenting options, or do you have a preference amongst
7 them, and, if you have a preference, how do you present
8 the pluses and minuses? I'm particularly interested
9 again with the option 3.

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, when one produces a paper of this
11 nature, one has to give a balanced approach of
12 advantages and disadvantages for a series of options and
13 potentially sub-options and how they will impact on other
14 things ongoing, and that is what I did.

15 I mean, clearly I would have a personal preference,
16 having been a practitioner for, at that stage, what,
17 35 years and having been in the first Gulf War and on
18 other operations, and, you know, if I was given
19 a choice, I would have gone for a full division because
20 a full division comes as a cohesive, capable package,
21 with all the logistics it requires and all the combat
22 support it requires.

23 If you go for less, you have to produce a brigade
24 package taking elements from a division to make the
25 brigade viable. So you know, it is on that sort of

1 basis.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you present this in terms
3 of -- we don't have to worry about 0 and 1, but in terms
4 of 2 and 3, how would you have presented the pluses and
5 minuses with those two, taking account of your own
6 preference for a full division?

7 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I would have -- I'm having to do this
8 off the top of my head now, how I would have done it.
9 I'm not saying it was done exactly as I'm saying.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Understood.

11 LORD TURNBULL: But I would have had to have looked at other
12 commitments and refit programmes for equipment and all
13 these sorts of things to come up with what could be
14 done.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So your approach was largely to the
16 extent that you, more than anybody else, have a sense of
17 the full range of pressures on British forces at the
18 time, what spare capacity there is for yet another major
19 operation, perhaps rather than working up from the
20 bottom and saying what is it that we would really need
21 to provide?

22 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Part of my charter as the Chief of
23 Joint Operations was to give politically aware military
24 advice. You know, it is very easy for a military man to
25 say, "This is what has got to be done, we have to have

1 a full division", et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, but
2 that won't necessarily fly when you bring in, you know,
3 the political ramifications of that.

4 So, therefore, I would look at all the angles and
5 then produce for the chiefs and Ministers a package, and
6 a series of packages, with the pros and cons of each
7 linked to all of our other commitments invariably with
8 costings so that they are aware of the cost,
9 confirmation that the forces would be available and
10 clearly confirmation that, once we got into the more
11 detailed plan, that the plans were viable.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So there is a whole range of things
13 obviously you are picking up.

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in a situation where the
16 Americans are developing plans with or without us, then
17 it must be quite hard to say what is essential. The
18 criteria are going to be different than if this was a UK
19 stand-alone operation, say Sierra Leone.

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: As I say, the goalposts were moving and
21 the field was changing. So we were adapting as they
22 were developing their plans.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How much as a part of this was the
24 so-called northern option, which you have indicated you
25 encouraged the Americans to look at?

1 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: What happened with the northern option
2 was that, when we had suggested it to them, they then
3 came back and said to us, "Well, perhaps the UK could do
4 the northern option as a discrete entity."

5 We then started looking at the northern option, at
6 PJHQ.

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you give us an indication of time
8 again?

9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I got a briefing on the northern option
10 from my own staff on the 18 September, having done
11 operational analysis on it, and it was clear that we
12 couldn't do it on our own, even with a full division.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Though we might have preferred to.

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We may have preferred to.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It just wasn't an option.

16 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: It wasn't feasible. The line of
17 communication was very difficult and very long. We
18 didn't have the logistic capability to do it on our own,
19 and so, therefore, we would have had to have had support
20 from the Americans for that, and the force levels
21 against what might be a raid in the north, we couldn't
22 do it on our own either and we'd have needed an
23 additional American brigade or brigades to support us.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So just to conclude before I hand
25 over to Sir Roderic, when you got this briefing, you

1 were really very dependent upon this being -- if this
2 was going to be the way that we would go, how that
3 interrelated with American plans. If they didn't want
4 to go that way, then there would be no point?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, and we went through a process over
6 time where I spoke to Franks. We hit the difficulty of
7 the CENTCOM/EUCOM boundary, Turkey being in the European
8 Command area, so then I was actually having to talk as well
9 to EUCOM.

10 We also -- and I remember a conversation with
11 Franks, where he wasn't overkeen on EUCOM supporting,
12 because, in terms of resources, EUCOM would be calling
13 for resources in the north to support us, that he would
14 be calling for in the south to support him, and so we --
15 that debate was developed as well.

16 There was a need -- because of the amount of forces
17 that would be required for those lines of communication,
18 there was a need for a corps headquarters to actually
19 take command of all of those assets, and the Americans
20 didn't have a corps headquarters that was available and
21 they suggested to us that we might want to provide the
22 ARRC, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

23 The difficulty was that the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps
24 isn't just a British headquarters, it is actually
25 effectively a NATO headquarters with only 60 per cent of

1 the staff being British. So that was going to be very
2 difficult to release from NATO.

3 So the north was quite a difficult area and
4 certainly, over time, and particularly, as with the
5 Turkish elections, and really the -- my sense of a lack
6 of enthusiasm by the Turks for us necessarily to come
7 through Turkey, then, you know, for me, as the planner,
8 it became less and less attractive as an option.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we will have some more
10 questions on that in a moment.

11 Just finally, at this stage, as somebody thinking
12 about the operational implications, did you want to be
13 able to get your logistics moving? Were you looking at
14 reservists and so on?

15 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, is the answer.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What success did you have in that?

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, there was a reluctance to do
18 things which would be seen in the public eye, and so,
19 you know, things that I sensibly, as a military person,
20 would have done much earlier, were just moving backwards
21 bit by bit.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You started making these requests
23 presumably in September?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Around that period. I think probably
25 it would have been October.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: October. Okay. I'll hand over to
2 Sir Roderic.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to make sure I have fully
4 understood this whole northern option story before we
5 come back to other bits of the picture.

6 I mean, we start off with us suggesting it to the
7 Americans, as you say, partly because it was going to
8 help to fix those six to eight Iraqi divisions in the
9 north. Then, as the discussion goes on, the Americans
10 aren't very keen on it and there are divisions also
11 within the UK side as to whether or not this is a good
12 idea, because of problems that you have mentioned,
13 including logistics, the amount of force we need, the
14 headquarters element and all of that.

15 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, I didn't say the Americans weren't
16 keen on it. The Americans were keen on going through
17 Turkey right until the bitter end. In fact, 4 ID, which
18 was their most sophisticated division, remained afloat
19 in the Mediterranean after we had started actually
20 coming out of Kuwait, in the hope that the Americans
21 would get the entry through Turkey open.

22 They, in fact -- 4 ID then came in very late behind
23 everybody else. We were already at the gates of Baghdad
24 before they were disembarking in Kuwait. So the
25 Americans were very keen on it, but they had initially

1 suggested that we might want to do it.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We ended up, ourselves, not favouring
3 that because it raised quite a lot of difficulties for
4 us.

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We couldn't do it on our own anyway and
6 I -- as the planner and the adviser, I was unhappy with
7 the logistic support that was required and the tenuous
8 lines of communication to actually get our logistic
9 support to our forces.

10 It was very, very tight, and, even when we got to
11 coming out of Turkey, our entry into Iraq was quite
12 difficult, it was very mountainous there, and we were
13 going to have to break south and use the River Tigris as
14 our protection on our left flank to stop any forces
15 interfering with us as we headed south. So, to me, it
16 wasn't an attractive military option for what would have
17 been, at best, a division plus.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But nevertheless, we and the Americans
19 persisted with this. This was the lead idea for
20 deployment of British forces in the operation -- until
21 about the turn of the year 2002 to 2003. We only
22 formally abandoned it in January 2003 because the Turks
23 wouldn't let us in.

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, I mean, there was a whole series
25 of things. It went on because the Americans were

1 looking at how they could support us to go through there
2 and so forth. I have given you a truncated view of the
3 whole period. So all these things went on over time.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How seriously did that distract you from
5 planning for what we eventually did end up doing?

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The -- by mid-November, I had already
7 been discussing the potential for the south and
8 I submitted a paper with new options, with Turkey as one
9 option, but with three potential courses of action in
10 the south, one to go under 5th Corps on the main effort,
11 one to go under the Marines, the Marine Corps, as another
12 option, and the third to be independent as a second
13 echelon force to basically deal with anything that the
14 main effort and the Marines bypassed to get to Baghdad,
15 and, as it transpired, that last option was really how
16 we then developed thereafter.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is very much the problem of the
18 moving goalposts and the shifting field that you were
19 talking about earlier?

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you submitting UORs for what was
22 required -- might have been required for a northern
23 option and then needed rather different UORs for
24 a southern option? Was that one dimension?

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I didn't submit UORs. The single

1 services submit the UORs, because it is their -- they
2 are required to deliver to the Chief of Joint Operations
3 fully trained and equipped people. What I did was; we
4 screened the UORs to ensure that they were necessary
5 before the MoD approved them. So that was the process.

6 The -- the northern option was primarily heavy,
7 whereas the southern options were going to be composite,
8 but heavy if we went with the main effort. So -- when
9 I say "heavy", armour, armoured forces.

10 So there was a slight adjustment, but, of course, at
11 that stage, we weren't going to trade anyway, and so, by
12 the time we went to trade with the UORs, we had actually
13 refined them more to the south.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. I think I'm ready to park the
15 northern option, but before I do so, can I just check
16 that none of my colleagues want to raise any more
17 questions on this?

18 In which case I would like to move back to the
19 interaction between the political environment and the
20 military planning dimension, which is something we have
21 discussed with others and was clearly one of the
22 difficulties in this.

23 You said that your job was to provide politically
24 aware military advice. That's the way you put it. As
25 one moves from April 2002 through to the summer and

1 autumn, looking at the political environment, you will
2 presumably have been aware that we were getting closer
3 and closer, the Americans, and, indeed, the
4 British Government, towards taking tough action directed
5 at Saddam's regime, just reading the newspapers.

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes and no. I think, if my
7 recollection is right, at the time we were really
8 concerned that containment was not working. We had been
9 trying containment for a decade, and during my time as
10 CJO, we were having more and more missile launches
11 against our aircraft, we were having Iraqi flights in
12 breach of the UN Security Council Resolutions and they
13 were attempting to put in fibre-optic links for their
14 air defence system so that we couldn't actually even
15 pick up that they were going to release missiles at us.

16 So there was a genuine concern -- I would almost
17 class it as a fear -- that we were going to have
18 aircraft down in Iraq, and there was a frustration with
19 that. So there was that as a background, but there was
20 also the background that there was a UN process ongoing
21 and that we -- you know, we would have to allow the arms
22 inspectorate work to go its course. So all of this was,
23 you know, within the planning and affecting the planning
24 as well.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just on containment not working, what you

1 describe is the No Fly Zones becoming more difficult to
2 implement --

3 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- and fears that we would lose an
5 aircraft. In general, had containment prevented
6 Saddam Hussein from presenting a credible threat to
7 neighbouring states and the region, as he had done
8 before 1991?

9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I think that's difficult to assess with
10 any accuracy. I think they had had an effect, but
11 I think, over time, he was growing more and more
12 confident that he could find ways to, shall we say, work
13 around the Security Council Resolutions.

14 Of course, we had not -- the Security Council
15 Resolutions for protection of the Marsh Arabs had not
16 worked, and, you know, the marshes had been drained, and
17 when we arrived in Basra, we found ghettos around Basra,
18 where all the marsh Arabs were living in the most
19 appalling conditions, and, of course, we did find mass
20 graves and things later as well.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's part of the internal dimension of
22 Saddam, but were you being advised, for example, that
23 his military capabilities were growing at this stage or
24 that they were still being contained?

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, we weren't in any way affecting

1 his redevelopment of his land forces and the rebuilding
2 of his armed forces, and the very fact that he was
3 putting up illegal flights was because he was trying to
4 redevelop his air force as well.

5 So, as I say, he had a growing confidence in trying
6 to re-exert his position.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the sort of assessments on which you
8 were basing your plans, the assessments about his
9 military strength, did they tell you that his ground
10 forces were likely to provide significant resistance and
11 that they were growing in strength, or, conversely, that
12 they were, to a degree, degraded as a result of 1991
13 onwards?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: By the time we had reached 2002, which
15 of course, was 11 years on, his land forces were just
16 about up to where they had been before, not necessarily
17 with some of the more sophisticated equipment that they
18 had had before, because they hadn't been able to import
19 it, but as, you know, Soviet-style manoeuvre divisions,
20 quite a lot of them were still relatively capable, but
21 not necessarily with the best equipment.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This was a capability above all to defend
23 Iraq rather than to project power?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, I mean, tanks can defend or
25 attack, and so, you know, that's a matter of intent

1 rather than capability. So his forces were configured
2 to do either.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Turning to the September 13th
4 presentation, what interested me about what you said was
5 that between -- well, before September 13th, we have
6 heard from others, there had been quite a lot of
7 discussion between MoD and the Cabinet Office and
8 Number 10 about possible force packages.

9 Had that discussion anticipated your presentation?
10 Were you aware of it from your very close contacts with
11 Whitehall?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, I mean, yes, we were developing
13 the packages. Clearly we were talking on a regular
14 basis. So it would -- you know, it would have been
15 factored in the packages.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Some of this was being put down on paper
17 ahead of you working up the detail?

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, I mean, that paper, as I said, we
19 had a system of staffing where all of the work that we
20 actually produced for Chiefs or Ministers had been
21 staffed through my headquarters and the MoD.

22 Staffing a paper could have taken four weeks, for
23 instance, and you know, the drafts would have been
24 moving between the various headquarters, taking input
25 from everything that was incoming at the time.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. Just going back to General Franks,
2 and the sort of expectations he had, what message do you
3 think he would have been sending up to Washington when
4 they said, "What do you really think the Brits are going
5 to do?", if they asked him in June/July?

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, from what I have given him, he
7 didn't know. He hoped that we would be with them and
8 he -- you know, he knew that we had certain niche
9 capabilities they wanted and he knew that we had other
10 capabilities, you know, up to a division on the land
11 package, but, of course, air and maritime capabilities,
12 which could be employed.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. Let's move the planning process
14 forward, really from September onwards. Can you take us
15 through what happened next? You were about to talk
16 about November.

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes. 31 October, I got the green light
18 on that there would be a land package, and then, on
19 18 November, I put a paper to the Chiefs of Staff on the
20 land package. At this stage, Turkey was uncertain. We
21 had realised that there was a need for the corps
22 headquarters and we had this EUCOM/CENTCOM competition
23 on resources, which I mentioned. So I produced the four
24 courses of action, one still for the north because it
25 had not been discarded at this stage, and three for the

1 south, as I mentioned, and that was a manoeuvre
2 division, either one option under the 5 Corps, the other
3 under the Marine Expeditionary Force, which was also
4 a corps, or to be the second echelon.

5 That was where we stood at that stage, and we then
6 went into discussions with the Americans on how they
7 best saw, if we had a land package, you know, where it
8 would be best employed in the south if we were to come
9 into the south. So we had now moved from the Americans
10 thinking we are definitely going to do the north to
11 maybe we should be doing the south, and we went through
12 that process.

13 It was during this period, November/early December,
14 when I had a discussion with Geoff Hoon, because we had
15 been, as you mentioned, saying that we needed ships up
16 from trade, we needed UORs, we needed mobilisation of
17 the reserves and so forth, and it had kept being put
18 off.

19 I actually briefed Geoff Hoon that, you know, we
20 had -- this was early in the week that we had until
21 Friday to go to trade for ships; otherwise, we wouldn't
22 meet the window that the Americans were potentially
23 looking at before the real heat of the summer came in,
24 in 2003.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That window was ...?

1 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The window was from sort of
2 mid-February to the end of March, and, as I explained to
3 the Secretary of State for Defence, ships up from trade
4 takes between two and six weeks to get the ships in
5 place, then you have got to load them, then they have
6 got to sail, and it was about 12 to 14 days' sailing to
7 get round into the Gulf region, or about nine to ten
8 days to get up to Turkey.

9 He said to me, "You have been telling me, you know,
10 week by week, that we have to do this, and now you are
11 telling me you are giving me another deadline". I said,
12 "This is the deadline". He said, "You know, we need to
13 keep our options open", and I said, "Well, actually, if
14 we don't go to trade by the end of this week, then we
15 don't have any options, we are not going". He then went
16 to the Prime Minister and we were then authorised to go
17 to trade.

18 But it was -- there was a reluctance, as I say, to
19 have any form of committal and anything that was public
20 at that stage.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: So that was much wider than the matter of
22 shipping? It applied to other factors, the call-up of
23 reservists?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, but, of course, shipping -- it
25 became very apparent that we were considering going,

1 once you start getting ships from trade. I explained,
2 because he also said to me, "Well, we still, at this
3 stage, don't know if we're going to go through Turkey or
4 the south", and I made the point that the ships can
5 loiter.

6 When you hire a ship from trade, you hire it for
7 three months, whether you like it or not. So,
8 therefore, they could loiter in the eastern
9 Mediterranean with the equipment and go either north or
10 south through the Suez Canal.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you have any concerns that we might
12 not be allowed to go through the Suez Canal?

13 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, I didn't, the Americans had a very
14 close relationship with Egypt and they were confident
15 there would be no restrictions.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: When was this discussion with the
17 Secretary of Defence?

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I think it was in December.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you got the green light at that point.
20 But at what stage did Franks move himself to Qatar?

21 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Relatively late, to be honest. I'm
22 just trying to -- I think he eventually -- he went
23 across -- he was going in and out on a regular basis,
24 but he -- when he moved there permanently, it couldn't
25 have been until probably November/December, and he was

1 still then spending quite a lot of time back
2 in Tampa.

3 So if I can put it in perspective, he, as
4 a combatant commander, regularly had to give briefings
5 into Congress and the Senate in Washington and he would
6 probably, even when he was committed forward, would have
7 been spending at least half his time back.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But his official headquarters for this
9 operation moved from Florida and Tampa to Qatar before
10 the end of the year. How did that effect us? Did that
11 affect our ability to interact with him? At what point
12 did we decide to send Air Marshal Burr ridge to Tampa?

13 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We moved the NCHQ, national contingent
14 headquarters as it was called, because we were
15 a contingent in a coalition, forward -- it got its
16 initial operating capability on 8 February and that is
17 when Brian Burr ridge went forward. The headquarters in
18 Qatar, CENTCOM forward had moved in quite a lot earlier
19 as CENTCOM forward. So he had split his headquarters
20 and kept it split and he moved between the two.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This was partly because we had done
22 a training exercise there and he never went back again
23 and we had been out there, too, involved in that, but
24 hadn't established ourselves permanently from that point
25 on.

1 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: As I say, it was 8February. The
2 training exercise was late January. So it was very
3 close. What I found was that it was an evolutionary
4 move, in terms of responsibilities from Tampa across to
5 Qatar, and over time my information from the SBMA at
6 Tampa reduced in terms of quality. Therefore, we put
7 liaison across into Qatar and then we moved in the NCHQ
8 and co-located it with CENTCOM forward.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. I think we have now sort of
10 reached the final stage of the build-up from early 2003,
11 though -- and as you say, by now we are becoming
12 increasingly clear that we are going to the south but no
13 final decision, no final commitment that we were
14 actually going to be taking military action because of
15 what is happening on the political front, but I think at
16 this point --

17 THE CHAIRMAN: I think I'm going to intervene and ask how
18 best we can use what time we have got. One
19 possibility -- we can break now for about ten minutes
20 and then go on to quarter past, twenty past one, if
21 that's possible. I think that would be better, we'll
22 make better headway.

23 So let's break now and come back in no more than ten
24 minutes and go on 1.20/1.30 pm, but no further than
25 that. Thank you.

1 (12.31 pm)

2 (Short break)

3 (12.40 pm)

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's resume. Sir Lawrence?

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can we just clarify the definitive
6 statement on what the British were going to do and how
7 it fitted in with the American plans? You basically had
8 this sorted by the end of 2002, but there was a meeting
9 where the Prime Minister was briefed, and others, in the
10 middle of January 2003, if that's correct. I think
11 Rob Fry did the briefing?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, I know that on 16 January in 2003,
13 I had a discussion with Tommy Franks and I told him that
14 we still obviously weren't committed necessarily to
15 execution, but that the Prime Minister had approved
16 a composite, 1 Division package. So that was the mix,
17 that we eventually ended up with.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you influence this final
19 decision? Were you just still presenting the force
20 packages and leaving it for others to decide, or had you
21 now focused very strongly on a particular option?

22 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: On 6 January, I had submitted to chiefs
23 and ministers a paper which gave the option of either
24 just the Amphibious Task Group to the south or
25 committing with a composite division of approximately

1 30,000.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was -- and how did that fit in
3 with the American plan at the time?

4 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The Americans, of course, had been
5 planning away, not necessarily with us, and so they had
6 to then consider how they were going to use those
7 elements from the UK.

8 At that meeting with Franks on 16 January, we
9 discussed Phases 2 and 3. He agreed that 3 Commando
10 Brigade would actually be the best capability to attack
11 into the Al Faw peninsula between the KAA and the SAA
12 , and his feeling was that 7 and 16 Brigades
13 could probably secure the oil fields releasing the
14 3rd Infantry Division and 1 Mar Div, the Marines, for
15 the main effort. So we would then have a discrete box
16 in southern area.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this meant that the Americans
18 were relying quite a bit on what the British were going
19 to be doing?

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: It eased them considerably, and
21 I mentioned earlier, but we did have a lot of niche
22 capabilities that they wanted. I don't know if you want
23 me to cover those now, or I can cover them later.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Let's see how we are doing for time
25 because I think we have some idea of the niche

1 capabilities, but I am keen to get some sense of how the
2 Americans viewed the situation in which you had been
3 telling them all the way through that it was wise for
4 them to have two sets of plans.

5 Now we were offering to take quite an important role
6 in the south, releasing their forces to do other
7 business, were you still suggesting that they needed two
8 sets of plans?

9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: At this stage, as I said, I told him
10 that the Prime Minister had agreed to the package, and
11 so, therefore, you know, I'm making an assumption that
12 he now expected us to participate.

13 I would also say in this conversation that I had
14 told him I was unhappy with the way the planning was
15 going.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Because of delay and hold-up?

17 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, because they were going into 'shock
18 and awe', and we had been -- we, the British, in the
19 planning had been very much the custodians of, "Let's
20 worry about Phase 4".

21 So we got on to Phase 4 in our discussion and I made
22 the point to Franks -- because at this stage they were
23 going to go rather as they had done in the Gulf War in
24 1991 -- they were going to go with a fairly extended air
25 campaign followed by a land entry-- but I made the point

1 that the oil fields were absolutely essential for
2 Phase 4, to provide revenue to Iraq for its
3 reconstruction, and, therefore, we needed to secure the
4 oil fields rather than have them destroyed.

5 I also made the point to him that the more china
6 that we broke, the more we would have to replace
7 afterwards. So I left him with those thoughts, and,
8 actually, between that meeting and obviously when we
9 went in, they changed the phasing of the plan so that
10 there was an early land entry.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This is important, obviously, in
12 terms of Phase 4, because there are a number of phrases
13 you have just used which I would like just to go over
14 with you.

15 Just in terms of what you have just said, this is --
16 what you do in the Phases 2 and 3 that are going to
17 affect Phase 4. That is, it is about using our air
18 assets and what you destroyed through your air attacks
19 and waiting until you have got a more permissive
20 environment before you put in your land forces, and you
21 are saying, if you are not careful on both of those
22 areas, you will be in trouble for Phase 4?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I mean, we had a fairly long
24 discussion. I made the point that, you know, we were
25 going in as the liberation of Iraq, we were actually

1 going for a regime change, not to try and destroy Iraq,
2 and, therefore, we needed to be very selective in our
3 targeting to ensure that we were only taking out the
4 command and control of the regime, and not, as the
5 previous time, where we had taken down every bridge and
6 so forth, which, of course, you know, caused huge
7 damage, much of which was still not repaired when we
8 went in in 2003.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you get a sense that this was
10 a dazzling new insight to him? Shouldn't he have been
11 concerned about these things already?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: He listened, and clearly he took note,
13 because he made the changes. I have to say that my
14 American counterparts were very much sort of
15 combat-oriented. The American development of the
16 American armed forces has been different to that of the
17 British armed forces and they didn't have the benefit of
18 years in Northern Ireland.

19 So they, at that stage, were very much in combat
20 mood looking at Phase 3, but, as you rightly said, one
21 has to look beyond Phase 3 to know what to do in
22 Phase 3.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you described the UK as
24 custodians of Phase 4, what did you mean by that?

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: In the planning, at every opportunity,

1 we had been feeding in the need to start thinking about
2 Phase 4 and considering that in Phase 3, and what are we
3 doing about Phase 4, and I was continually getting from
4 Tommy Franks that the Americans had thought about
5 Phase 4. There was a huge organisation in Washington
6 looking at it. They had a multimillion -- I think
7 billion contract with Bechtel, and that it was all going
8 to be all right.

9 Well, we know what happened.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But -- I mean, we now know what
11 happened. Were you worried about what might happen?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I was looking at Phase 4, at that
13 stage, primarily at humanitarian assistance immediately
14 after the combat phase, and in the build-up I had got
15 authority for £2 million a month for humanitarian aid
16 and an initial start-up of £20 million for quick impact
17 projects, which I know you have been briefed on by other
18 people before.

19 So I was content that I had that money available.
20 We had already started. For instance, Albert Whitley,
21 who was my liaison officer with the combined force land
22 component command in Kuwait, had been dealing with the
23 Kuwaitis and they had already laid a water pipe right up
24 to the border from water sources in Kuwait, which we
25 almost straight after the -- we had moved through on the

1 combat phase extended up to Um Qasr, so that we could
2 provide fresh water into southern Iraq. So there were
3 a series of things going, but they were all related to
4 the humanitarian assistance.

5 All of our intelligence assets were looking at the
6 combat phase. They were all looking at, you know, the
7 Iraqi forces. What they weren't looking at was the
8 infrastructure, and I have to say that, when we arrived
9 in there, I was amazed, you know, at the fact that it
10 was completely broken. I would say probably there had
11 been no investment in the infrastructure for at least
12 20 years, and we found, you know, the state of the
13 electricity power supply was outright dangerous and you
14 had main pylons held together with bolts and all sorts
15 of systems, which, you know, in a modern society
16 wouldn't be allowed at all.

17 So what we found when we arrived was that we weren't
18 just having to deal with humanitarian assistance, we
19 were having to, as best we could, kick-start the
20 reconstruction for the essential services.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But if we go -- that's obviously
22 very relevant to what we are considering, but what we
23 are talking about at the moment is the period leading up
24 to the war. Your view of the -- of Phase 4 was it was
25 actually quite short-term, making sure that the

1 aftermath of military operations -- that people could be
2 looked after. It wasn't at this stage about thinking
3 about the reconstruction of Iraq?

4 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You mentioned also the box, the idea
6 that the British would have their own box. When we look
7 at the evidence that we have received, what one sees is
8 that this box becomes our area of responsibility when
9 you do get to Phase 4.

10 Were you aware of this as an issue in the planning,
11 that it was necessary to be aware of the possibility of
12 us taking over a chunk of Iraq and this being our
13 particular responsibility?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Again, at that meeting on 16 January,
15 Franks had suggested that, if we did go through the
16 south, as we were doing, that we could take
17 responsibility for the Basra region. It was just broad
18 at that stage, and he said it would set the lead for
19 other nations.

20 I had said to him then that, obviously, I would need
21 to get ministerial approval for that, but he was looking
22 to beyond the combat phase and how they were going to
23 manage Iraq after the combat phase, because clearly, you
24 know, he didn't want the American troops tied down in
25 Iraq for an extended period and he was looking to other

1 nations, and at Tampa, of course they had what they
2 called the Trailer Park, where they had representatives
3 from about 40 nations who had been involved with
4 Enduring Freedom whom he had been briefing on
5 development of Iraq and was going to say, "Once we
6 have taken down the regime, would you be willing to come
7 in and assist?"

8 So he was suggesting that we could have a lead in
9 the south and set an example for others.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you feed that back into
11 Whitehall?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I put a report from that whole
13 conversation into the MoD.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This was still mid-January?

15 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: This was 16 January.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That was 16 January. Were you
17 engaged with other parts of Whitehall, DFID, for
18 example, in trying to work out how this would be
19 operationalised?

20 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We -- there were -- there was
21 a seminar -- I'm just trying to think -- on Phase 4, in,
22 I think, about February. I'm just trying to see if
23 I can find where I wrote it down.

24 What we found, though, was that DFID were a little
25 reluctant because DFID -- and I had worked with ODA and

1 I had worked with DFID on other operations. When the
2 change occurred and DFID became a Department of State in
3 its own right, they developed a completely different
4 ethos to the ODA, and they, in many ways, almost acted
5 as if they were a really large international
6 organisation but on reconstruction and development, not
7 on immediate humanitarian aid.

8 They saw very much that immediate humanitarian aid
9 would lie with various expert NGOs that could move in
10 quite quickly and do things immediately, whereas theirs
11 was a long-term view on things.

12 So we worked -- FCO, MoD and DFID -- to try and
13 bring together a sort of package and a concept for
14 Phase 4. But, as I say, all our work beforehand in some
15 ways was wasted because we didn't realise that we were
16 actually really going to have to be involved in the
17 reconstruction and development rather than the
18 humanitarian aid.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you fit in with the Iraq
20 Planning Unit?

21 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Only that my staff were working with
22 them and keeping them up-to-date on how the military
23 planning was going and how they could then integrate with
24 us, you know, once the combat phase was over.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I now just take you through the

1 preparedness of the British forces for the operation?
2 If you look at the documents in 2002, it seems a stretch
3 to get anybody there in place. You have told us of your
4 conversation with the Secretary of State for Defence
5 about the need to take urgent decisions, otherwise, you
6 wouldn't have an option at all.

7 So did you -- how concerned were you that British
8 forces would be arriving into position, not really
9 prepared for what they were going to take on?

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: In terms of readiness and training,
11 I was quite happy. We selected 7 Brigade because all
12 its units had gone through the British army training
13 unit at Suffield during the previous summer period. So
14 they were the most highly trained of all the
15 armoured brigades at the time, and that is quite onerous
16 training and very effective.

17 3 Commando Brigade and 16 Air Assault Brigade, as it
18 was then, they both were part of the JRRF, the
19 Joint Rapid Reaction Force, and they therefore
20 maintained a high standard of training and readiness on
21 a permanent basis.

22 We did have some time when people -- because, of
23 course, you load a lot of equipment, but you can still
24 do training afterwards, when the equipment has gone,
25 because you fly your people afterwards to meet the

1 equipment. So training was ongoing in UK and Germany,
2 once, obviously, we had the green light, and I had that
3 green light, I think -- I couldn't do anything overt
4 before 6 January, but, thereafter, we were able to
5 train.

6 3 Commando Brigade, the amphibious group,
7 trained in Cyprus on the way. They actually stopped and
8 trained in Cyprus.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: For acclimatisation.

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: At that stage it wasn't
11 acclimatisation. In Iraq, in March, temperatures are
12 not dissimilar to Europe. We had some pretty bad
13 weather with rain and everything else. When I had been
14 there in 1991, we had been breaking the ice on the
15 puddles in February. So, you know, it is only in the
16 summer it really gets warm, and what we did to overcome
17 that, during the following summer in 2003, was we found
18 that Cyprus, in the summer, and the Basra region
19 were only 2 degrees Centigrade different in average
20 temperature, and so we had worked up a system whereby
21 one of the regular infantry battalions that was based in
22 Cyprus became the over the horizon reserve to go into
23 Iraq and would be backfilled by a battalion from the UK
24 into Cyprus, where their duties were more sedentary
25 rather than having to do anything active as they might

1 have to do in Iraq.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So in that sense you felt that the
3 troops would be in a reasonably good position. What
4 about if Iraq had actually used chemical and biological
5 weapons?

6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We did have the NBC suits and we did
7 rehearse. We had some problems with some of the
8 detection kit, it came quite late, and we went through
9 a calibration programme and so forth, but we did manage
10 to achieve it in the time necessary.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about equipment shortages?

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: There wasn't a shortage of equipment in
13 the end. What there was, was an inability to track it.
14 We knew it was in theatre, but some of it we couldn't
15 find. We had also had the situation where some of it
16 had been issued beforehand to be given to individuals to
17 take with them when we deployed, and some well meaning
18 quartermasters had decided to ship the individual items
19 and then couldn't find them when they got there.

20 So we had a scrabble at the end to find certain
21 items, particularly the ceramic plates for the flak
22 jackets, and some natures of ammunition.

23 What I said -- and I was quite clear about -- was
24 they would not deploy unless their commanders were
25 satisfied that force protection was not an issue for

1 them, and I got that assurance.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about communications equipment?

3 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Communications;we didn't have a problem
4 with at all.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. What about -- we have
6 discussed this, I think, with General Fry -- there has
7 been a sense that we were taking risks, but the risks
8 were acceptable because we were fighting the Iraqis in
9 the state that they were in in 2003?

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: There was a degree of that. In 1991,
11 we did some operational analysis, when we went into the
12 combat phase, because we had a division with only two
13 brigades. We had done an analysis of what was the
14 optimum force ratio that we needed for minimum
15 casualties, and where, for the attack against defence,
16 there has always been a ratio of 3 to 1, we had all been
17 taught in our Sandhurst and staff colleges.

18 We actually found that the ratio to minimise
19 casualties was 7.8:1, and that's of course what the
20 Russians have been using, an 8:1 ratio, which is what we
21 employed in 1991; but we had done some parallel OA on
22 the, shall we say, the -- which nations might be better
23 than others at fighting, and the conclusion which came
24 after we had actually gone through the combat phase in
25 1991, was that we could work on a ratio of 8:1 with the

1 Iraqis, and I think that was a factor in our thinking;
2 that they were less capable than us on that sort of
3 ratio.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So --

5 THE CHAIRMAN: With very different degrees of quality at
6 different layers of the Iraqi army?

7 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Correct, but the high quality ones were
8 actually quite small. You had, obviously, the Special
9 Republican Guard, which was a very small element, not
10 much more than brigade size and then you had the
11 Republican Guard, which had about four divisions and
12 then the rest were pretty standard divisions.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Conscripts?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: With that sort of 8:1 ratio.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was this also a function of where we
16 were operating, that some of the more capable divisions
17 were closer to Baghdad?

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: The more capable divisions were closer
19 to Baghdad.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When the campaign started, there
21 were concerns that -- the famous quote was, "This is not
22 the enemy we have war-gamed against", that there were
23 more irregulars, more -- different sorts of attacks on
24 forces, even if they didn't add up to a big
25 inconvenience at the time, they possibly could have

1 turned into some quite awkward?

2 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: About two weeks before we went into the
3 conflict phase, the intelligence lost sight of the
4 Special Republican Guard, and it transpired that they
5 had been broken down into small elements and placed
6 within the various brigades and that's where we got the
7 sort of more non-conventional approaches from.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So what was your reaction when this
9 started to appear as a factor in the fighting?

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Well, it wasn't really a factor, other
11 than one or two incidents, particularly for
12 3 Commando Brigade, where they hit a couple of small
13 pockets of resistance which were Special
14 Republican Guard.

15 By and large, the -- we were dealing with those
16 conventional divisions, who -- many of them just broke
17 up and disappeared.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just a final question before passing
19 over to Sir Roderic. There were serious risks, as there
20 are in any military operation. After the meeting in the
21 middle of January, in what ways were the various risks
22 highlighted to Ministers? Was this part of your
23 responsibility?

24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We produced various papers, looking at
25 each aspect in terms of risk, and fed them in. We

1 actually did our projection of casualties from OA in the
2 worst case, which, thankfully, we had nowhere near the
3 numbers in reality, and we had looked at all the
4 aspects, including, of course, a chemical attack against
5 us and so forth.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What sorts of levels of casualties
7 were you concerned about, if the worst came?

8 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We were looking between 300 and 500,
9 and, as you know, it was significantly less than that.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you had the systems in place in
11 terms of medical evacuation --

12 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, we had --

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- to cover that sort of number?

14 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We had a very comprehensive medical
15 package.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks very much.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Roderic?

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm conscious of time so I'll try to
19 focus on two or three questions. We ended up with, in
20 crude terms, about a quarter of the operational
21 involvement in the campaign. Would that be fair?
22 20/25 per cent?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We had 46,000, I think the Americans
24 had -- yes, it would be, the Americans had about 160.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: All along, it had been argued that we

1 needed to make a significant contribution in order to be
2 able to exercise influence with the Americans. How much
3 influence did that actually give us over the way the
4 campaign was handled?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I'm not sure that the numbers gave the
6 influence. I think that a lot of our discrete
7 capabilities gave us influence, and I -- I think that
8 the respect they had for our staffing and capability
9 gave us influence, because they certainly wanted more
10 and more of our staff to assist them.

11 So -- and because we teach our staff to give a very
12 balanced view, and they will give a commander, you know,
13 warts and all, whereas in the American system they tend
14 to gloss over the warts to please the commander, and
15 their commanders were feeling the benefit of having our
16 people.

17 So I think that in terms of influence it was the
18 niche capabilities and that credence that we brought to
19 the planning that gave us influence rather than,
20 necessarily, numbers.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You have already mentioned that our views
22 on shock and awe -- your views on shock and awe seemed
23 to have been taken into account in what they actually
24 did. Can you point to other ways in which you could
25 actually see the results of our influence on this?

1 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I think where we did influence was
2 later, particularly with -- after the conflict, when we
3 got the beginnings of the insurgency, where I discussed
4 with them that they needed to change their profile and
5 they needed to change the way they did their business,
6 and I came back and discussed it in London and we
7 offered training teams for all the US divisions
8 deployed on the ground. We put those forward and we
9 actually trained the junior officers and the NCOs in
10 counter-insurgency operations, which helped change the
11 profile and actually, shall we say, get the interface
12 between the American forces and the population slightly
13 better, because, you know, they were going around
14 driving in vehicles looking very aggressive and that's
15 not how you manage a counter-insurgency campaign.

16 I mean, we, the UK, changed our profile almost
17 immediately, when we went into Az Zubayr. We had
18 elements fighting on the far side of Az Zubayr, having
19 gone through the city, and, on the back end, we already
20 had people who'd gone down to berets and were delivering
21 food and water to the people.

22 So we had a very different approach to the Americans
23 but we did influence them in the change.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Had our plan ever envisaged that we would
25 find ourselves in the role that we then found ourselves,

1 as occupying power directly responsible for a box of the
2 south-east of Iraq with co-responsibility with the
3 United States for being the occupying power for the
4 whole of Iraq.

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: We certainly saw that, if we went in
6 without a UN Security Council Resolution
7 giving a specific mandate for that operation, that there
8 would be a period when we would de facto be the
9 occupying power. But the hope was the UN would come in
10 very quickly and that would absolve us of that
11 responsibility.

12 So we did some conceptual planning for Phase 4 of
13 having that responsibility, but what we were looking at
14 was very quickly developing the joint commission system,
15 where we would then involve, obviously, local governance
16 and so forth, and we, although we would be the
17 "occupying power", nonetheless we would be working
18 through them to the people and letting them have
19 influence in their own business.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you were not in advance being asked to
21 plan for sustaining combat forces for a long-term after
22 the campaign in Iraq; rather, the reverse?

23 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: No, I mean our intent was very clear,
24 to, you know, draw ourselves down to a sensible level to
25 maintain security as quickly as possible, and I mean,

1 I withdrew 16 Brigade and 3 Commander Brigade during May
2 and June, and I changed over 19 Brigade for 7 Brigade in
3 early July, which meant that none of the combat forces
4 were left in Iraq by, you know, early July, which was
5 a good thing, because, of course, people, when they have
6 been in combat, tend to be hyped up a bit, and it is not
7 easy to relax and have different a profile and
8 a different approach to the population, and so we had
9 them out and, you know, put in fresh troops who came in
10 on a security basis rather than a combat basis.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, you were CJO for about a year after
12 the end of the military campaign, and in that year
13 clearly things began to go quite badly wrong inside Iraq.

14 As you say, insurgency, it didn't happen immediately
15 but it began to come up, and you have mentioned some of
16 the ways at a tactical level in which you felt that the
17 American approach was not ideal for this.

18 What else might have been done better in that
19 period? I'm thinking, in particular, of the way that
20 the lack of aftermath planning became apparent through
21 ORHA or the CPA, and the decisions that were taken that
22 people really hadn't thought through in advance. What
23 was your view? This is at a more strategic level, if
24 you like.

25 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I was going into Iraq every month and

1 every month I was going up to Baghdad and I -- I used to
2 see Bremer each time I went up, for instance, and
3 Jeremy Greenstock and I discussed this at one stage as
4 well. I think there were some unwise decisions made.
5 I wasn't part of the decision-making process but
6 disbandment of the army as a whole, was, I think, an
7 error and the sort of --

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Even though the army had largely
9 dissolved?

10 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: But there was still some structure
11 there we could have built on, whereas, as it was, we
12 really had to start from scratch.

13 We could, by a process of vetting, have removed any
14 extreme Ba'athists and gone through a process of
15 building, and actually probably could have got a lot of
16 the people to come back to their old units, but, anyway,
17 that's an aside.

18 One of the key things that I said to Bremer was,
19 "You need to go through a peace and reconciliation
20 process", you know, it is similar to what had happened
21 in South Africa, for instance, and we, the UK had been
22 involved in, "and, you know, try and bring the
23 communities back together again. Don't discount every
24 Ba'athist", because anybody, to be any official at all,
25 whether it was a teacher, a dentist, whatever, had to be

1 a member of the Ba'ath Party, and they weren't rabid
2 Ba'athists. So we needed to go through a process and
3 integrate the community.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How did he react to that suggestion?

5 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: I don't think he listened,
6 unfortunately, and I know that Jeremy had tried as well,
7 but I don't know, you know, where he was getting his
8 direction from or whether it was from out of his own
9 head, but I was very disappointed in that particular
10 area. If I come more to the specifics for us, of
11 course, for the military, it is easy for us, we have
12 standing military capabilities, we have a standing
13 command and control structure and everything else. So,
14 when we go somewhere, we are up and running.

15 On the civil side, of course, we have nothing
16 similar. Certainly nothing then that was similar, no
17 command and control structure and no standing
18 capabilities.

19 So it took some time to build up -- and we lost
20 a window of opportunity, I think. I mean, in the early
21 stages I was able to walk through Basra, eat in
22 a restaurant, walk through the soukh, no problem at all
23 during my visits, and yet, you know, as time went on, it
24 became more and more difficult, and it was because there
25 was an expectation, I think, from the population, which

1 we didn't deliver, and I think, you know, one of the
2 valuable lessons we get from this and Afghanistan as
3 well, because we haven't really sorted Afghanistan
4 either, is we have got to come up with a system,
5 a better system, in terms of the civilian capabilities
6 required for all the other aspects of these operations.
7 The military can do the military piece very effectively
8 and we had a very successful Phase 3.

9 The military can provide security
10 thereafter and they can provide training for armed
11 forces and security forces, but, really, that's about
12 it, other than, you know, using our engineers, because
13 they have artisan skills as well as combat engineering
14 skills, to do quick impact projects and so forth in the
15 early stages, but when it starts getting into
16 reconstruction and development, we, the military, it is
17 out of our depth.

18 In those early stages, what I did, was I did a trawl
19 through all of our reservists to find out what various
20 skills they carried from their civilian employment and
21 we helped the consulate and the team in Basra by getting
22 some of those individuals who volunteered to actually
23 work in civilian clothes with them on this whole
24 development piece.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just two quick questions. First,

1 when we talked to General Fry, he indicated almost
2 a sense of disillusion when they started to look for WMD
3 and didn't find anything. This, after all, was what it
4 had all been about. Did you have a similar sense of --
5 a quizzical sense as to why all this effort had gone
6 into searching for something that didn't turn out to be
7 there?

8 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Again, I used to visit the
9 Iraq Survey Group. We had the deputy there. There is
10 no doubt in my mind that people genuinely believed there
11 were weapons of mass destruction, and, you know, we
12 started looking at the sensitive sites, and then, when
13 they weren't found there, then, you know, where else
14 might they be? Of course, he'd buried aircraft out in
15 the desert in the sands, so he could have buried
16 anything out in the desert in the sands. Were we ever
17 going to find it? And in the end they gave up.

18 They found that he had had active chemical, nuclear
19 and biological programmes right up until the UN
20 inspectorate came in and so certainly an intent -- and
21 I can only work anecdotally here, but there was a theory
22 on the intelligence that we knew that he needed to pass
23 a message to the rest of the Arab world that he had the
24 capability and that his scientists were not going to
25 tell him they didn't have the capability because had he

1 told them to get it, and, therefore, the circle around
2 him from which we might have been gaining intelligence
3 were probably saying, "We have got the capability".
4 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we will stop now. Any last final
5 comment? We have got a great deal already, but ...
6 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: May I just quickly look and see if
7 I have missed something important?
8 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.
9 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Yes, if I might just mention two
10 things. One is media. We embedded media with us, as we
11 had done during 1991, and the difficulty was we had less
12 time. In 1991, I had actually trained the media to
13 understand the military. I had actually given them
14 a series of seminars -- I'm coming to the point, sorry.
15 We didn't have that time. So the embeds actually were
16 reporting very minor things as very major things, during
17 the combat phase, which led to me having to go to the
18 Prime Minister to brief him over why we weren't in Basra
19 already, because, you know, he thought at one stage we
20 might be failing, but my more important point on the
21 media was that, to my mind, they had made their minds up
22 before we went in.
23 THE CHAIRMAN: We have got the point, I think.
24 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Okay, it was very demoralising for the
25 troops when we were actually doing really good things

1 and our media was reporting so negatively.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: It is helpful to hear that. Did you have
3 a different point?

4 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: On lessons, all I would say is the key
5 one -- or key 2, were asset tracking. We have to get it
6 right and we shouldn't have such reliance on UORs.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Got it. Thank you very much. We are going
8 to need time to reflect on the evidence from today's
9 session. There was a lot in it. We may need to take
10 this further at a later date, it is hard to say, later
11 in the year. But I think with that, we will conclude the
12 session.

13 For the record, the next session in front of the
14 Inquiry will be at 2.00 pm on Monday afternoon, when we
15 shall take evidence from Jonathan Powell, the
16 Prime Minister's Chief of Defence Staff.

17 Thank you General Reith.

18 GEN SIR JOHN REITH: Thank you.

19 (1.22 pm)

20 (The Inquiry adjourned until Monday 18 January 2010 at
21 2.00 pm)

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