

1 Wednesday, 3 February 2010

2 (9.00 am)

3 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Good morning.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning and welcome. We are hearing
7 from a number of witnesses in the course of today and in
8 this first session we are hearing from
9 Sir Kevin TEBBIT, who was Permanent Secretary at the
10 Ministry of Defence from July 1998 to November 2005,
11 a long stint indeed.

12 Sir Kevin has already appeared before the Inquiry
13 alongside Lord Boyce, when we heard evidence from them
14 about the planning for the invasion of Iraq, but today
15 we shall be mainly focusing on issues following the
16 invasion and how the MoD was able to respond to them.

17 One issue we do not plan to focus on in detail today
18 is equipment provision, both before the invasion and
19 afterwards, but we plan to come back to that later in
20 the Inquiry.

21 Two things I say on each occasion: we recognise that
22 witnesses are giving evidence in part based on their
23 recollection of events, and we, of course, cross-check
24 what we hear against the papers.

25 I remind every witness that they will later be asked

1 to sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that
2 the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

3 With those preliminaries, I will ask
4 Sir Lawrence Freedman to open the questions.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you came before, we spoke about
6 the defence budget and you said that urgent operational
7 requirements for Iraq were met without any problem, but
8 the basic problem was the defence budget, and, since
9 then, we have had a number of conversations, including
10 the other day with Lord Walker, but also with the
11 Treasury.

12 I just want you to take us through exactly what
13 happened with the defence budget, starting really with
14 the funding of the strategic defence review through to,
15 say, 2004/2005. Let's start with the funding of the
16 strategic defence review.

17 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Okay, I ought to preface my remarks
18 by saying that I don't think any defence ministry has
19 ever said that it has got enough. It is in the nature
20 of defence that you can always absorb any amount of
21 resource given the vast variety of activities and force
22 structures one is trying to develop.

23 Having said that, when I came to the department in
24 1998, it was just after the completion of the defence
25 review. I had been involved at the beginning in the

1 Foreign Office where I was partly responsible for
2 drafting the foreign policy framework, but I had not
3 been involved in the detail or what that meant in terms
4 of force structures.

5 When I came back to the department, I went through
6 the SDR and my own calculations were that we were about
7 half a billion short. That was based on a very
8 demanding efficiency challenge that was built into the
9 settlement, but also because most of the costings were
10 fairly broad-brush and, one could say, on the optimistic
11 side.
12

13 Now, the department didn't accept that. My
14 colleagues, when I returned, said, "It is not as much as
15 that", but actually, I think it probably was, and the
16 game was to recover the position in the
17 2000 spending review. We did not manage to do that in
18 the 2000 spending review. So the problem remained. We
19 were always under stress. When we move on to 2002,
20 and the run-up, as it were, to the Iraq operation,

21 I was
22 satisfied that our resource position was still
23 sufficient to mount a large-scale operation, should it
24 be required, and certainly the Treasury, as I said
25 before, were forthcoming, according to the proper

1 processes, with these extra resources to sustain the
2 operation, to conduct it, and for the urgent operational
3 requirements.

4 I think that continued to be the case.

5 The most serious problem that the defence budget hit
6 was after the 2002 settlement. That was, in principle,
7 as far as the Defence Ministry was concerned, a very
8 good settlement, because it was the first one -- and we
9 are going to get technical here, so I do apologise-- but
10 it was the first settlement and the first public
11 expenditure round throughout government which was done
12 on what is called an accruals basis, resource
13 accounting, rather than, as previously, cash accounting.

14 What that means, in short, is that, instead of
15 simply managing by virtual cash, salaries, fuels, stock,
16 consumption, travel, those sorts of issues, departments
17 moved to a resource budget, where the cost of
18 depreciation, of depreciation of their assets was
19 included, capital charges were introduced to encourage
20 departments to bear down on the asset base that they
21 had. I think it was 6 per cent in the initial
22 settlement, and also money for write-offs. So we moved
23 on to commercial accounts. There was a transitional
24 period over the previous two years, but it went live in the 2002
settlement.

1 The government had decided to manage departments by
2 resource, not cash. There was no cash control in our
3 settlement. The only reference you would find to cash
4 in that settlement came at annex E to the settlement
5 letter, where it was described as being there for
6 presentational and illustrative purposes, not as
7 a control mechanism.

8 The problem, however, for the Treasury was that,
9 whereas in most departments the transition from cash to
10 accruals didn't make very much difference, in the case
11 of defence it made a huge difference, because our asset
12 base was something between 70 and 90
13 billion pounds, a massive amount of money.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to stop you there for a second,
15 when the -- Mr Hoon wrote back and said, "This is an
16 excellent settlement --"

17 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was based on the assumption that we
18 were controlled now by a resource total, not by a cash
19 total, and that we had freedom -- this was written into
20 the settlement -- to manage our budget entirely on that
21 basis.

22 Now, the amount of, as it were, depreciation,
23 capital charging, write-off allowance that was in that
24 settlement, was a
25 a prudent figure, based on what we had

1 been doing for the previous two years.

2 But it did mean, as it transpired, that we had the headroom to
3 achieve what I felt we had always failed to achieve
4 before in my previous three years there, to actually
5 fund the defence programme properly, and we proceeded
6 on that understanding that we would be controlled by
7 resource, not by cash.

8 I should say that our understanding of this
9 settlement was validated subsequently, after we ran into
10 a disagreement with the Treasury on this by an
11 independent report by Capgemini, Ernst & Young, which
12 will be available to the Inquiry, should you want to get
13 into these sad, technical details. I don't recommend
14 it, but it is there.

15 The result was that we were using a lot of cash,
16 reporting this properly to the Treasury, but by the
17 summer of 2003, after, as it were, the Iraq
18 operations -- this is why it is not directly relevant.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, it is relevant in terms of
20 what happened afterwards.

21 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: The Treasury felt that we were using far
22 too much cash, and in September 2003, the Chancellor of
23 the day instituted a complete guillotine on our
24 settlement, and we were then, from then onwards,
25 controlled by cash, not by resource.

1 This was, in fact, reopening our settlement against
2 the terms of the original letter, and it meant that we
3 had to go in for a very major savings exercise in order
4 to cope with what was effectively a billion pounds reduction in our
finances. So we

6 conducted a major exercise, finishing in around
7 March 2004.

8 The whole question of what our budget was then based on was left
9 open. We could not engage with the Treasury actively on
10 this until we got the 2004 settlement, when it was all
11 wrapped up in a further public expenditure
12 round and we got a new budget from 2004 onwards, which
13 gave us some relief, I have to say, so we managed to
14 regain some of the losses that we
15 had incurred, but not all, and that major savings exercise
16 had to be carried forward. So that, in short, is the,
17 crisis period.

18 I should point out that I know another witness has
19 said that the Ministry of Defence was increasing its
20 cash allowance by around 9 per cent, and that could not
21 be allowed. I would only point out that in the 2002
22 settlement the Department of Transport in one year had
23 an uplift of 12 per cent and DFID had an uplift of
24 8 per cent. So it was not, as it were, completely
25 unreasonable for the Ministry of Defence to be behaving

1 in the way it did.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's extremely helpful. Now, this
3 presumably is the context for the discussion that we had
4 with Lord Walker about the view of the Chiefs about what
5 they were being expected to cut or not cut at this time.

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Not quite, if I may say so, because that
7 was about the actual nature of the 2004 settlement,
8 where, I say, we managed to regain some of the lost
9 ground. I think we secured nearly 4 billion of extra
10 cash in that overall settlement. It was 1.4 per cent,
11 I think -- I may be wrong -- real terms increase, not
12 massive, but we also gained some flexibility to move
13 from the non-cash element of our budget, if I can put it
14 like that, into cash. Not as much as we had enjoyed
15 under the 2002 settlement, but about 350 million a year.
16 That did help avoid the worst kinds of cuts.

17 So, Lord Walker and his colleagues were
18 reassured, although it was still very, very tight, by
19 that settlement in 2004, which I might say was concluded
20 about 10 o'clock at night with the Chancellor and the
21 Defence Secretary and myself, about six hours before the
22 final settlement for the whole public expenditure round
23 was printed. So it was pretty hard going.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That sort of argument was that
25 presumably the Chancellor did not want you to have as

1 much as you eventually got?

2 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That is correct. I think it is fair to
3 say that the Treasury, as a whole, didn't want us to
4 have as much as we got under the flexibilities in the 2002
settlement. I think it is fair to say that

5 most people were surprised at the extent to which the
6 MoD was moving from the depreciation capital charging
7 write-off area of the budget into the cash area.

8 Frankly, I had hoped that we would have had
9 a negotiation on that and it would have come out
10 somewhere in the middle, but the Treasury position and
11 the Chancellor's position was tougher than that.

12 I'm unrepentant, because my task was to provide the
13 resources necessary for the MoD to carry out its
14 functions and I believe that's exactly what we needed.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So basically you are saying that
16 there had not been a proper negotiation on this. All of
17 a sudden you pushed it very hard at the very last minute
18 in order to extract extra resource from the Treasury?

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, let me be clear, the final settlement
20 in 2004 was a normal, hard negotiation and that was
21 concluded amicably. The guillotine that came down
22 in September 2003 was an arbitrary issue.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This matters to the extent that it
24 affects the future defence programme. I think the
25 Prime Minister, talking about this yesterday, said it is

1 basically up to the Ministry of Defence how it handles
2 these sorts of pressures on its budget.

3 What were the consequences for the defence programme
4 of the way that this guillotine came down?

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I think, again, the way we ran the
6 budget was that, clearly, one prioritised according to
7 the most important activities and functions. So the way
8 in which we went through this exercise was to preserve
9 resources for Iraq, for the operational scenarios that we
10 were currently engaged in, and to make the cuts and the
11 savings in the areas which were least likely to be
12 called upon, and so the savings were in ships,
13 destroyers and frigates, in Nimrod patrol aircraft, in
14 submarines, in mine countermeasure vessels, mine
15 sweepers, patrol vessels, some helicopters but
16 helicopters not relevant to Iraq, more the result of the
17 withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

18 We were able to run down more quickly some of those
19 resources that were no longer needed for the
20 Northern Ireland situation, which by that stage, of
21 course, had eased. We took out some heavy armour -
22 Challenger tank squadrons, AS90 guns. There was quite
23 a large list of things.

24 We drew down and retired early our Jaguar aircraft.
25 We took manpower to some extent out of the three

1 services from, the Navy, from the air force, not by huge
2 amounts, I would have said by about 5 per cent --

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the basic picture --

4 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: -- but across the board we had to make
5 savings, and we took 10,000 civil servants,
6 a progressive reduction, and reduced headquarters size
7 and numbers of buildings.

8 So it was a general, across-the-board, major savings
9 exercise.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The way you approached it was to try
11 to protect --

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Naturally.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What about long-term impact on our
14 ability to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think it is very difficult to say that
16 it did have a long-term impact. For example, we had to
17 reduce the allocation in our forward programme for
18 helicopters. But these were not specific programmes

19 As you probably have seen in the Green Paper
20 published yesterday by the Ministry of Defence, they now
21 intend to give ten-year forward perspectives of
22 allocations for broad areas of capability. We had never
23 published those before, and still don't at the moment,
24 but, were we to do so, we would have seen that the
25

1 helicopter provision for the future was reduced.

2 Now, that would not have made an effect on Iraq or

3 Afghanistan, in my view, because the programmes would probably only
now just be coming

5 on-stream. So this was a longer term resetting of the

6 defence programme rather than an immediate or early

7 effect on helicopter availability, for example.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that's basically where

9 I wanted to get.

10 Just one final question: in terms of training, the
11 longer-term preparation of troops, were you able to
12 sustain this at a satisfactory level, while still having
13 to find resource to keep people in the actual
14 operations?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think -- it is never possible to say
16 this definitively. I think some training, obviously,
17 was reduced, but not the operational training, but these
18 things have a long-term, corrosive effect on a force
19 structure. It is not the short-term effect that would
20 have been noticeable in terms of Iraq, or, I think,
21 initially anyway, in Afghanistan.

22 Defence is a long-term business and the effects of
23 these sorts of reductions usually only come through in
24 the long-term, basically because, I have to say -- and
25 it is not me, I have to say my colleagues in the MoD are

1 very good at planning and prioritising, but throughout
2 my period as PUS, I was running essentially a crisis
3 budget rather than one with sufficient resource to be
4 able to plan as coherently and well for the long-term as
5 we would have liked, which is part of the reason we had
6 such difficulty with some of our major programmes. We
7 were always having to cut or defer or reduce the amounts
8 of off-take, which obviously added to the overall cost
9 of the programmes.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Given what you have just told
13 Sir Lawrence Freedman, essentially, about the long-term
14 rather than the short-term impact of the 2004
15 settlement --

16 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, no, it was the 2004 cuts necessary
17 as a result of the Chancellor withdrawing the
18 flexibility within the budget to move from non-cash to
19 cash. The 2004 settlement gave us some relief and we
20 were able to add certain things back. There was, of
21 course, then another settlement in 2007. The government
22 decided not to have a settlement in 2006 -- after my
23 time, I have to say, but when I looked at it from the
24 outside, I felt that that was a particularly bad
25 settlement for the MoD.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of 2004, you were describing
2 essentially that this had no immediate effect on the
3 problems which might be created by our going into
4 Afghanistan. I was just wondering what advice you were
5 able to give the Secretary of State for Defence with
6 regard to what our undertaking the Afghan commitment
7 would mean in terms of our resources, our ability to
8 fund the two operations.

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Obviously there were two aspects to
10 Afghanistan. One was the deployment of the headquarters
11 formation, which happened to be provided by the UK but
12 was a NATO formation, and the other was the actual
13 provision of a force, about 3,000 or so, which went into
14 Helmand province afterwards. The commitment coming
15 later than the original commitment to send in the
16 headquarters.

17 I was concerned about this. My view, as
18 Permanent Secretary, while we were still heavily engaged
19 in Iraq and we were still in the process of
20 recuperation, recuperating, as it were, the force
21 structure from a large-scale engagement, according to
22 our plans, was that I was very concerned about a new commitment
23 in Afghanistan.

24 I think we had a difficulty, which was that, at that
25 stage, the UK was seeking particularly to integrate, to

1 co-ordinate better the US operation and the NATO
2 operation and the deployment of the headquarters
3 was one of the means to seek to achieve this, and it was
4 quite clear that only the UK really could do that, could
5 try to bring the rest of NATO and the United States
6 together, a rather familiar theme.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just interrupt, Sir Kevin? Was that
8 a relationships thing rather than a capability --

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: It was both, it was both. These things
10 are intertwined. As far as the deployment of the
11 headquarters was concerned, I think that decision was
12 taken more or less in 2004 through the NATO process.

13 I think the deployment of our forces to Helmand from
14 the north was a different matter. I was apprehensive
15 and felt that this could be a mission too far and I made
16 my concerns known to my planning staff and to the Chiefs
17 of Staff. I think their view was that they could do it
18 and it was manageable. I think they were making some
19 very fine judgments about capability. It is what one
20 admires about them, and I think they were satisfied that
21 they could manage that deployment within the resource.

23 We
24 had a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff. I was
25 concerned. The weight of views of the Chiefs of Staff

1 themselves was in favour, and since it was they who
2 would actually have to ensure they could do this, I did
3 not press my objections fully.

4 One of the things that weighed with me in not
5 pressing those concerns was that if the UK
6 didn't come forward, nobody else was going to. If the

7 UK came forward, we hoped to create a snowball effect, to get other
countries to come with us. This was the

9 planning assumption. We would have other countries to
10 provide support forces, helicopters, the things that we
11 were relatively lacking in.

12 If we didn't kick it off, nobody else was going to
13 and nobody could predict at that time -- we are now in
14 mid-2005, I would guess -- what would actually happen
15 and whether we would indeed get those commitments. It
16 was certainly clear that, unless we took the first step,
17 nobody else was going to make a move, and that was the
18 grounds on which I didn't force my concerns, as it were,
19 to a formal recommendation.

20 I think when the Secretary of State, John Reid,
21 actually took a formal view, he was reassured by the
22 Chiefs of Staff that it was do-able.

23 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the objections that you
24 didn't feel you could press fully?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think they were very general ones.

1 They weren't to do with the specific elements
2 of the force package. It was because I felt that we had
3 not fully recuperated from the major operation and at
4 that stage we could only be contemplating a small scale
5 deployment. Afghanistan at 3,000/3,500 in Helmand, in
6 pretty uncertain circumstances, seemed to me to be right on the
7 margins of that.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: With a concern about mission creep, having
9 committed that --

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was the real concern, Chairman. It
11 wasn't that it wasn't do-able, as it were, in immediate
12 terms. It was about the risk that was being
13 introduced, as it were into our capabilities.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Fingers into the mangle, in fact.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: These points you didn't press?

16 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't press as a formal objection, and
17 it was just one
18 person's view. As I say, the Chiefs of Staff were
19 satisfied they could do it and I think John Reid --
20 I mean, I did have discussions with him and he did press
21 very clearly the department on these points about the effect on
22 capability, on whether it was do-able, in various ways. So I think
23 that process was gone through properly.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I'll turn to Baroness Prashar.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. I would just like to

1 move on on the arrangements within government to enable
2 us for proper co-ordination and planning.

3 What was your view of the effectiveness of
4 collective planning within government during 2002 and
5 the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003? I'm talking
6 about pre-invasion.

7 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think, as I said in my first
8 appearance, the Ministry of Defence, I think
9 did it very well, within the constraints that there
10 were. The constraints, obviously, being that, as we
11 were trying to synchronise military preparations, as
12 a contingent measure, with a diplomatic effort, which was
13 the main effort, there were difficulties in being able
14 to do as much as early as one would have wished to have
15 done, and that was quite clear.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: There was a constraint because you
17 were not -- asked not to make these arrangements --

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct, and I mean, it wasn't
19 a question, as it were, of resenting being held back.

20
21 It was more a question of
22 the proper integration and
23 management of those two tracks. We were able,
24 I think, to begin planning for urgent operational
25 requirements in September.

1 The first batch was approved by Geoff Hoon but he
2 had to hold back, I think, 4 out of 16, as I recall, at
3 the time, and we were continuing to
4 do just enough, but not as much as we would have
5 desired, as we went through the autumn. But in terms of
6 the actual machine -the Chiefs of Staff meetings,
7 briefings of the Secretary of State, involving as many
8 outsiders as we possibly could - it was, I think, well
9 done. When I say "as we possibly could" --

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Outsiders? Who were the outsiders?

11 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: There were operational security issues.
12 Not just our own, but also American ones. When you are
13 doing this military planning, and you are actually
14 beginning to put people's lives at risk, you are very
15 careful about how wide you make the community which is
16 engaged in the planning.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about co-ordination planning
18 across government departments? Because you are talking
19 about your own department, but it was working with DFID,
20 FCO, the Cabinet Office?

21 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, the Foreign Office set up
22 their Iraq Planning Unit during the autumn, I think, and
23 there was quite a lot of cross-discussions between us.
24 The Chiefs of Staff involved other departments, the
25 Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office, at a very early

1 stage. But I think that this general problem we had --
2 and I have this throughout -- I will be very frank --
3 the Ministry of Defence moved on to very much a crisis
4 operational footing. I didn't sense that that was true
5 throughout Whitehall. In a way, why should it have been
6 in 2002? The main effort was working on the diplomatic
7 track and the Foreign Office was flat out in that
8 direction at the time.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And DFID?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: My remarks earlier -- a rather
11 flippant remark - about poverty relief and that Iraq
12 didn't qualify, that referred very much to sort of early
13 discussions with DFID in 2002, not what actually
14 happened in 2003. DFID were not engaged in the process
15 until quite late on.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you wrote to Andrew Turnbull on
17 5 March and you dealt, among other things, with the
18 importance of ensuring the right structures --

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: 5 March --

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: 2003.

21 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Oh, yes. That was much later.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because I was asking before then.

23 What were your concerns at that stage, that you chose to
24 actually write to the Cabinet Secretary?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was more a formal thing.

1 My view, at that stage, was that a decision to
2 commit our forces in those circumstances was obviously
3 a matter for the Attorney General, but it was also
4 a matter for the Cabinet and it was a decision to be
5 taken by government at the highest level
6 with the integration of the --

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But in that letter, I understand you
8 also wrote about the importance of ensuring the right
9 structure in place to enable effective planning and
10 co-ordination. So what were your concerns about
11 planning and co-ordination?

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Can I go back to September 2002, when
13 I think I was talking to a number of people in Whitehall
14 about co-ordination and planning?

15 Structures were set up, both in the Cabinet Office
16 committee structure, at a slightly lower level, and at
17 a higher level chaired by David Manning. My feeling was
18 that he did heroically and he kept everybody very, very
19 well informed in the inner circle, as it were, of
20 precisely his discussions with the United States.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you were saying --

22 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: But --

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- that it was a smaller inner
24 circle and at that stage DFID wasn't part of it?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: When I said that, I wasn't necessarily

1 referring to DFID. I meant that, when you are doing
2 that type of planning, you keep it quite small.

3 Let me be clear about this. I felt that we didn't
4 have strong enough co-ordination mechanisms in place.

5 I raised this issue with David Manning, I raised it with
6 Number 10. I raised it with --

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: IPU wasn't set up
8 until February 2003.

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct. I'm sorry, I said earlier.

10 Yes, okay. I did feel that we needed a rather better
11 mechanism to involve very senior civil servants, in
12 order to plan better for the sort of crisis that finally
13 arose. I asked, for example, to be more involved myself
14 in the discussions that were going on, and the decision
15 was that that was not the way things were going to be.

16 I think Number 10 felt that it was quite a crowded
17 place already and that to widen it would mean widening
18 it too far from their point of view at that stage. But
19 I think it was a weakness. As I say, David Manning did
20 extremely well in keeping everybody informed that needed
21 to know about his discussions with the United States,
22 about how planning was going, and we did set up
23 machinery and mechanisms. The one I should have
24 mentioned was the one chaired, I think, by
25 Desmond Bowen, not by the Foreign Office and the IPU,

1 but they were not really at a high enough level, I felt,
2 to engage the people who needed to be engaged in
3 departments in serious planning of an active nature.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: General Viggers was pretty frank in
5 what he said to us. He said:

6 "Lives are being lost as a result of amateurs being
7 put into key decision-making roles without a clear
8 understanding of the implications of their decisions".

9 Do you think that's a fair assessment?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, I think that's going far too far.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You do not agree?

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, I don't agree with that.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Why would he make that comment?

14 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I have no idea. I'm not even sure what
15 he is referring to. I'm sorry, I didn't read his
16 transcript.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. You started to talk earlier
18 about the aftermath planning and the position of
19 personnel before we got the Resolution 1483.

20 What were -- do you think we fully understood the
21 implications, when the MoD offered the largest package,
22 we would become a joint occupying power? Was that fully
23 understood by ministers, you know, by the
24 Prime Minister?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, we're dotting around a bit

1 and these are very complex issues. I think the scale of
2 deployment was consistent with our planning assumptions, with
3 what we had done in the Gulf ten years
4 earlier. It was the type of operation that we expected
5 from time to time to be able to mount. So in itself
6 a large-scale deployment was consistent with what we had
7 developed from the strategic defence review.

8 I think the shift from a plan which involved
9 us going into south-eastern Turkey and holding, as it
10 were, the line to prevent Saddam moving into the Kurdish
11 areas and disrupting that end of the country, I think
12 the move from that, which took place progressively in
13 planning from, I don't know, middle of December to
14 middle of January, I think that was a very significant
15 shift, to move us down into the south of Iraq.

16 It was at that time, I think, I felt that it was
17 important to reappraise, to pause, to take stock as to
18 what was going on.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was that done?

20 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I certainly wrote to the Secretary of
21 State about it. I think I wrote a personal note to him,
22 which I am afraid I can't find, in the Christmas of
23 2002, expressing my concerns that we were, as it were,
24 being led into a possible military action, where we
25 might not actually have secured our objectives; in other

1 words, we wouldn't have disarmed Saddam by
2 the diplomatic route. We might not get a second
3 resolution. We hadn't got post-conflict planning as
4 well pinned down with the United States as any of us
5 wanted at that stage.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you get any response to that?

7 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I discussed this with the Secretary
8 of State and I think we were very much of one mind that
9 this did need to be thought through very carefully.
10 There were, I think, ministerial discussions.

11 I think we put forward the plan finally to go into
12 the south on about 16 January. I think the Secretary of
13 State wrote that to the Prime Minister at that stage, or
14 his office did, and I think ministers did have
15 a discussion, I'm not sure about what detail.

16 I recall, after our discussion, mine with the
17 Secretary of State, as a result of what I gave him over
18 Christmas as my thoughts, he asked me to do one thing,
19 which was to provide him with a note on the
20 transatlantic relationship. One of the
21 issues at that stage was that we had gone so far,
22 by the end of December, with the United States in
23 planning - not just because we wanted to be with the
24 United States, but because I knew the government
25 believed in what it was doing - that to have gone back at

1 that point and decided not to proceed, in circumstances
2 where we hadn't disarmed Saddam Hussein --

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what you are saying --

4 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: -- would have been particularly difficult
5 for our relationship with the United States.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- is that a commitment had been
7 made at a certain stage. There was no going back at
8 that stage there was no room for reassessment?

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: There was never an unconditional
10 commitment at all. I think when one begins to engage in
11 military planning, one takes on a risk that, if one
12 doesn't see it through in a way that was designed to
13 achieve the effect of disarming Saddam Hussein
14 diplomatically, or the use of force if this didn't
15 occur, then if one backs down without any of those
16 conditions being met, then that carries with itself its
17 own damage. That was one of the factors which I set
18 out, I remember --

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The point I want to get to is
20 a commitment has been made, but it is the level of that
21 commitment. Because Lord Turnbull said to us that,
22 because we went for the largest package, we became
23 a joint occupying power. Had anybody thought through
24 the implications of that at this stage?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I think they had, I think they had.

1 Yes, certainly.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: By the way, if I could just interject, we
3 would like to come on to the US dimension in a few
4 minutes.

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Okay. Sorry. My point -- well, it's
6 certainly linked to it. My point was that I felt that
7 that was slightly more easily managed in northern Iraq
8 than from the south. That was my own personal view,
9 because we would have been coming down next to the
10 Kurdish autonomous zone which was a pretty stable
11 government area.

12 So that would have involved, I think, less
13 difficulty than taking the four southern provinces. So
14 that was a factor that needed to be considered. So
15 I think we did think about this.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think that this was being
17 made clear to the other government departments, to the
18 Prime Minister, because in a way the workings of the MoD
19 are quite complex in any way, if you do the military
20 operations, the civilian operations. Was that an
21 understanding of the MoD and its operational
22 complexities?

23 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I think so. I think the continuous
24 stream of advice coming from the Chiefs of Staff and
25 from the Ministry of Defence into Number 10 and key

1 ministers, I think that was very clear.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, you have been a Permanent
3 Undersecretary, you were for a pretty long time, and
4 during your tenure, it coincided with a number of
5 operations in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and so
6 on, and Iraq, of course, was one of the most enduring.

7 How did you ensure that MoD was able to deliver its
8 parts of the UK strategy in Iraq effectively? What
9 steps did you take?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, I'm not quite sure what you mean by
11 that question. I mean, as I say, we prioritised in
12 order to ensure that we could deliver the Iraq
13 operation. The initial force deployment was in line
14 with our overall planning assumptions. The timescale
15 was slightly compressed, more than we would have wished,
16 which we made very clear, so that we didn't have
17 everything that we would have wanted at the right
18 moment, but the shortfall was not operationally
19 significant and we would have planned to have been there
20 for a deployment at around medium scale for about six
21 months -- sorry, we would have held that deployment and
22 then began to reduce to medium scale after around six
23 months --

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The initial assumption was that this
25 would be not such a long, enduring process?

1 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, that, I think, is one of the lessons
2 that we learned --

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you able to adjust your
4 department? Did you put your department on a war
5 footing or was a business as usual?

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, it wasn't business as usual in the
7 Ministry of Defence. I think it still may have been
8 a bit business as usual in other departments. But for
9 us, no, it certainly wasn't business as usual.

10 I mean, various things. Firstly, one of the lessons
11 we have learned from Iraq is that the concept in the SDR
12 of first in, first out, is not sustainable. We had the
13 idea that we were very good at moving troops very
14 rapidly over long distance, able to engage in war
15 fighting and, indeed, transition very rapidly to
16 stabilisation and peacekeeping, but that we would be
17 able to leave, and others in the coalition, as it were,
18 would be able to take the strain afterwards.

19 That has proved obviously to be unrealistic, both in
20 Iraq and indeed in Afghanistan, and I think that is one
21 of the concepts from the strategic defence review, which
22 will need to be revised in the next defence
23 review or national security review that's coming
24 forward. We had learned that lesson by 2003, I have to
25 say.

1 In terms of sustaining our position in Iraq, we,
2 I think, were able to do so, but at medium scale. There
3 was not the prospect of a larger operation than that,
4 but I think that was very clear, and, indeed, we did get
5 allies around in the coalition to work with us in the
6 south.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay, thank you.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne in a moment,
9 but I think Sir Lawrence has got one question first.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One quick question. You described
11 David Manning's efforts as heroic in terms of keeping
12 other ministries involved, despite the fact that he was
13 also the Prime Minister's leading foreign policy adviser
14 at the time. The Cabinet Secretary has told us he did
15 very little on Iraq. He was obviously busy with other
16 things.

17 Do you think we got the balance wrong within the
18 Cabinet Office? Because in previous conflicts the
19 Cabinet Secretary would have taken a much more prominent
20 role.

21 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, if you want my personal
22 opinion, I think we probably did. I think, having
23 looked at my notes, I recall the note I wrote to
24 Geoff Hoon in September when I had had the discussion
25 with David Manning and I think in that I said

1 that, it was difficult for David to take on both roles
2 of being both the Prime Minister's personal
3 adviser, and at the same time chairing the co-ordination
4 group, a Cabinet Office-type structure - not because he
5 couldn't manage both roles in principle: I think, if anybody could,
6 David could, frankly. I had the highest admiration for
7 him in terms of his objectivity. But it was just a huge
8 amount of work to take on, and I do not think he could
9 take on, and didn't really take on, that second role of
10 personally co-ordinating all of the Whitehall machine that
there needed to be. That's back to my earlier point.

12 You know, I am, myself, an advocate of also
13 underpinning ministerial discussions with a group of
14 relevant Permanent Secretaries who can operate under
15 a Deputy Cabinet Secretary, or
16 a national security adviser, whether it be
17 David Manning - or David Omand, for example, who could
18 have moved into that role; but it does need that type of
19 group, I think, to really carry forward a major British
20 operational interest of the kind Iraq was, or, indeed,
21 of the kind Afghanistan is, because I think most of the
22 co-ordination mechanisms we had were mainly to do with
23 exchanging information about what was going on in
24 individual departments or areas. It wasn't really the
25 integrated co-ordination able to bear

1 progressively, positively on the problem.

2 Now, of course there were all sorts of other
3 difficulties for us in Iraq. I mean, we were the junior
4 member in a coalition, so the American actions were what
5 really called the shots at the end of the day, and their
6 resources were what called the shots at the end of the
7 day, and other governments' resources. We could not
8 possibly have carried it all ourselves.

9 Nevertheless, I think we could have done better if
10 we had had a more integrated planning and government
11 structure, which I would myself have put under a senior
12 Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office system --
13 I don't necessarily call him the Cabinet Secretary
14 because I know Andrew Turnbull had a different remit --
15 able to pull together at the top level of the machine
16 the activities of colleagues.

17 As I said, with the best will in the world, I didn't
18 feel that other government departments were on the war
19 footing that the Ministry of Defence was on and when we
20 moved through from the initial phase to 2003/2004/2005, and
21 that obviously was important.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think Andrew Turnbull could
23 have done more to push a system like this forward,
24 because he must have seen the pressures on
25 David Manning?

1 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think, you know -- I mean, it is very
2 difficult to do that, if one -- I mean, this is
3 a counsel of perfection and I don't think it was so
4 obvious that one needed to go to that stage and, as
5 I say, David Manning and his successors did extremely
6 well. I'm just saying how one might improve the system,
7 not that it was obviously broken, as it were, and as
8 I say, DFID came through very strongly later, in 2003,
9 and the Foreign Office were flat out throughout.

10 So I don't think you can say there was
11 a fault in the activities of the departments. But it is
12 the central co-ordinating mechanism that I think could be
13 strengthened.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we will move on to Sir Roderic --

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, if I may just add, remember, it
16 wasn't until the end of 2004 that we got the
17 reconstruction unit set up, the Post-Conflict
18 Reconstruction Unit, which did begin to integrate
19 planning and activity. But at the beginning it was a sort
20 of academic activity rather than an operational
21 organisation. So this is what I mean about the need to
22 have overseen improvements earlier, if we could have done.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to turn to some of the

1 broader strategic issues, including the sort of matters
2 that you raised in your personal note to the Secretary
3 of State you have just described.

4 Do you think that, in the end, the UK faced a binary
5 choice between going to war to topple Saddam Hussein on
6 the one hand, or a near certainty that Iraq, within
7 a few years, would acquire nuclear weapons and
8 capabilities to deliver other weapons of mass
9 destruction and in all probability would also be
10 a supporter of international terrorism?

11 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't see it quite in those terms.

12 I mean, if you are asking me to step back, at the
13 strategic level, I myself was satisfied with the policy
14 which I understood we were pursuing; that is to say,
15 that we did need to deal with Saddam Hussein as
16 a threat, as a result of his track record, his
17 possession, as we believed to be the case, of weapons of
18 mass destruction and his intentions to continue to
19 develop that capability and intention in defiance of the
20 international community and successive Security Council
21 Resolutions.

22 I myself was very concerned about our position with
23 the No Fly Zones, -- and the way in which
24 sanctions had been eroding to our disadvantage rather
25 than Saddam's and to the disadvantage of his people

1 rather than his regime.

2 So I mean I was not challenging our strategy and
3 I felt that the -- whether they are conditions,
4 criteria, deeply desired desiderata or whatever you like
5 to call them - the various elements of our position of
6 operating through the UN to secure disarmament
7 diplomatically, of building a broad coalition of
8 international partners rather than US
9 unilateralism, of using this in conjunction with efforts
10 for the Middle East peace process, of seeking --
11 although we got things wrong -- of seeking to manage the
12 post-conflict and prepare for managing the post-conflict
13 during the build-up period. I thought all those
14 elements of our strategy were good and right.

15 What concerned me in my note in December to the
16 Secretary of State was the risk, as one feels in one's
17 dark moments, that maybe we are not going to get any of these
18 criteria achieved. It wasn't looking as if Saddam was
19 going to back down and really comply. It wasn't looking
20 as if the Americans were not going to pursue the
21 military course if compliance failed. There was a clear
22 sense of impatience, I think, in Washington.

23 The planning for post-conflict didn't seem to me to
24 be very robust. As we could read it in the
25 United States, a lot had been done, but it didn't seem

1 to have bite and direction.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Do you think --

3 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: So those concerns were ones which led me
4 to say to the Secretary of State at the point when we
5 were also not going to get our northern option and were
6 moving to a southern one, which seemed to me to be very
7 significant, that this is the time to reappraise and to think
8 hard before going forward. It wasn't that I was against
9 going forward.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was it perhaps by then too late to
11 reappraise? Were we committed politically to support
12 the Americans, to go with them whatever, and militarily,
13 because by then our military preparations were going
14 into high gear?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I don't think it was too late.
16 I wouldn't go that far.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we were committed at that point?

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: People have testified to say if the House
19 of Commons vote had gone the other way, we wouldn't have
20 been able to proceed. If the Attorney had not given us
21 the advice that it was legal for us to proceed, we
22 wouldn't have proceeded.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Those are two situations in which perhaps
24 we couldn't have proceeded.

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think the point I was making and would

1 make again now is that, having got where we did by the
2 end of 2002, not to have proceeded then without, as it
3 were, very strong reasons, such as Saddam actually
4 opening up and meeting the conditions, would have given
5 us a real problem by that
6 stage.

7 In other words, having indicated an intention, with
8 conditions, to work with the United States on the
9 military track, to have gone back at that point would
10 have carried risks and doubts. That's all I'm saying.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. Before we reach that point, did
12 you see a point at which the government at the most
13 senior decision-making levels had fully reviewed and
14 thrashed out the whole range of its options?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I never saw that process taking place.
16 As I say, I wasn't party to those discussions in
17 Number 10.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you never saw that process taking
19 place?

20 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Not personally.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. Can I now turn directly to the
22 relationship with the United States which clearly is of
23 great strategic --

24 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, when I say I never saw it taking
25 place, it doesn't mean to say it didn't take place.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I know, but you, as Permanent Secretary
2 to the MoD, were not aware that such a strategic review
3 of options had taken place, and one might reasonably
4 assume that you would have been, if it had, that you
5 would have heard of it through your Secretary of State
6 surely, you were quite likely have been involved in it,
7 but these were only presumptions.

8 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: All I'm saying is that there were lots of
9 meetings that ministers had --

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We have been told that there were lots of
11 meetings --

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: -- but the details were recorded at the
13 time or not, yes.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There are rather few records of these
15 meetings. There are very few details of them. It is
16 not clear who was at them.

17 The question I was asking, you have answered very
18 clearly. Thank you.

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I should just say that my understanding
20 was that in the second half of January, after my
21 discussions with Geoff Hoon, not because of my
22 discussions with Geoff Hoon, but I sense that that was
23 a point when ministers were coming to a major decision
24 point and it was also the point where Geoff Hoon was
25 recommending the southern option to government. My

1 understanding was that there was a pretty full
2 discussion at that time but that's my understanding.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But, as you said earlier, by then we were
4 a very long way towards a commitment.

5 In terms of our relationship with the United States,
6 which is clearly of great importance, there has been
7 a suggestion from witnesses that we decided to deploy
8 the large-scale land force in order to maximise UK
9 influence with the United States.

10 Some witnesses have suggested that the smaller
11 package, too, essentially air and sea without the land
12 division, which was initially favoured by the
13 Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence,
14 would have been sufficient to secure the amount of
15 influence with the Americans we required.

16 What do you think about that?

17 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think the smaller option was probably
18 initially favoured when we thought the Americans were
19 going earlier, or might be going earlier, when we
20 wouldn't have had time anyway to have put together the
21 large-scale option. I think the large-scale option was
22 a natural consequence of what we would do or what we
23 would plan to do. As I say, it was built into our
24 general planning from the strategic defence review.
25 I think experience has shown us that putting

1 a large-scale force on the ground, as it were, gives one
2 more influence with the United States than if you are
3 not on the ground.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We would have got quite a lot of brownie
5 points with package 2?

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I don't think one did this just to get
7 brownie points, if I may say so.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we weren't needed.

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think that -- there was also a military
10 view about the sense of critical mass under national
11 command that works well, which would have been a feature
12 of the Chief of Staffs' considerations.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Chiefs of Staff made it clear they
14 wanted to be there.

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: One doesn't do these things just to
16 indulge Chiefs of Staff.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it was an element, wasn't it?

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't sense myself that, as it were,
19 the military machine was forcing the political hand, not
20 at all.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In terms of the influence we got, again
22 we have heard arguments now from quite a number of
23 witnesses, including the former Prime Minister, former
24 Foreign Secretary, former Defence Secretary, former
25 Ambassador to the United States, about the Government's

1 failure to achieve the objectives that it set out at the
2 beginning in its dealing with the Bush administration
3 authorisation by the United Nations, wide international
4 support, substantive progress on the Middle East peace
5 process, proper planning of, not only the operation, but
6 the aftermath.

7 Now, there had been different views on whether or
8 not we could have used our leverage more effectively.

9 What do you think about that?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Firstly, one doesn't do this just for
11 leverage. Secondly, it was a consideration. There is
12 no doubt about that. I think we did have some
13 considerable success in moving the United States into
14 the UN and down the multilateral route. I think that's
15 well recorded. As I said, I think before, in my earlier
16 hearing, I recall the United States making this very
17 clear to us, Condoleezza Rice making it very clear.

18 One never knew quite whether they were humouring us,
19 as it were, or whether it was objectively true. My own
20 views sort of changed from day-to-day on that, but I got
21 the sense that we had affected and changed the way in
22 which the United States went about the operation, in
23 seeking to put them in the multilateral context rather
24 than a unilateral one.

25 Having said that, I think we expected more than we

1 secured at the end of the day in terms of the benefits
2 to the UK in the relationship. We were involved
3 afterwards in seeking -- I mean, I think we finally got
4 -- on the political track - the road map
5 finally went into place, but one can't say that it was
6 as directly linked to the Iraq operation as one would
7 have wished.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it didn't create the environment we
9 had hoped for?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct. In terms of more practical,
11 basic things, I was certainly involved in seeking to
12 improve the intelligence relationship with the
13 United States. It was already uniquely good, but even
14 so, we felt that that could go further, particularly if
15 we are doing joint things together in the world, as we
16 were and still are. We also had a major effort to ease the
17 bilateral obstacles in the conventional military procurement field.
As you know,
18 the nuclear relationship is very close with the
19 United States. We were seeking to move the conventional
20 military relationship into the same position, by removing
21 obstacles to the trade between us in defence technology
22 and goods. That actually still remains to be achieved. It
23 has not been achieved yet. So that can't be counted
24 a great success so far.

25 I'm thinking, for example of access to the technical knowledge
on

1 on the joint strike fighter. I'm thinking of the defence trade
treaty what is still

2 to be ratified. So I am

3 afraid the results haven't been as good as some of us

4 had hoped, to be absolutely frank.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There are a number of other issues in
6 that context that I would have liked to have pursued
7 with you, but time is unfortunately running out. I'll
8 just ask you finally one very specific question, if
9 I may. We will have to leave the rest for another
10 occasion, though it is rather important.

11 It is simply this: you have just talked about the
12 intelligence relationship, and I know the Defence Select
13 Committee has covered in its reports, the fact that we
14 weren't able to secure access to US Eyes only military
15 intelligence networks, despite repeated requests, so we
16 don't need to go into that today, but we have also heard
17 of instances --

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: By the way, I think we did in the end.

19 The problem there was a technical one to do with the
20 nature of their system, rather than goodwill, but --

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We know that. We have also heard of
22 instances, particularly with regard to Boards of Inquiry
23 and coroner's inquests in relation to so-called
24 friendly-fire instances, friendly-fire incidents, where
25 the United States has been reluctant to provide the UK

1 with material relevant to investigations in this
2 country, which to a lay person seems strange and a bit
3 concerning, given the support that we gave to the
4 United States. Could you comment on that?

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I must say I don't really feel qualified
6 to comment on that. I'm not sure how far one can link
7 these legal processes to that issue. I have to say
8 I hadn't myself been refreshing my memory about that.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is a concern that has been put to us
10 by some of the families and it is something where
11 I think one would have hoped that the leverage with the
12 United States might have secured more cooperation than
13 we have had, but it is not something that you can
14 comment on?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think it would be wrong for me to do
16 so. I must say I haven't refreshed my memory on those
17 particular issues.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. We will pursue that
19 separately.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I just want to raise a couple of
22 issues to do with access to the information at inquests
23 and investigations and some of the issues that have been
24 raised with us by families about the support for them
25 and injured personnel.

1 At the start of Operation Telic, how well placed was
2 the MoD to deal with the full range of personnel issues,
3 because these are quite important in terms of when you
4 send people out into the field, how they are looked
5 after. How well placed were you?

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: We believed we were as well placed as we
7 could be in terms of assessment of casualties and how we
8 looked after people subsequently. I mean, I know things
9 have moved on a great deal since then and there has been
10 a learning curve all the way through from 2002 until
11 today.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What improvements have you made over
13 that period? Because there were obviously gaps at the
14 outset, as we have heard from families, but also we have
15 heard that there have been improvements. What
16 improvements have been made? How have things changed?

17 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I don't think I could give you a detailed
18 explanation of those issues. I'm not sure how far they
19 were, as it were, part of my own experience. It is not
20 that I'm suggesting that they were not there, but
21 I mean, the defence medical services and the support
22 that has been given has been progressively improved
23 throughout the period.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, given some of the casualty
25 estimates that we have seen, if Saddam had used chemical

1 and biological weapons, what contingency plans were made
2 by the MoD?

3 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, we raised urgent operational
4 requirements as you know, to deal with that. I know you
5 weren't going into detail on equipment, but if you wish
6 me to do so, I mean, we did ensure that we had layered
7 protection, as it were, for chemical weapons and
8 biological weapons in terms of personal clothing, in
9 terms of other devices and systems which actually gave
10 warning of chemical or biological attack. There were
11 some shortcomings in the condition of some of the
12 equipment that was used, but that was rectified by the
13 time of the operation, and there were some shortcomings,
14 I think, in terms of these pens that people were
15 supposed to use if they were in difficulty, which,
16 again, were rectified by the time of the operation.

17 But it was an area of difficulty as we transited to
18 the operation, which was put right by the time of the
19 operation itself. That's my understanding.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you would say that over the
21 period of time there had been improvements, because
22 initially some mistakes were made?

23 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, I think -- I don't know about
24 mistakes as such, but certainly, as a result of the
25 experience of the operation, we took action, despite the

1 tight budget, which I have been talking about at the
2 beginning, to increase our holdings of desert clothing,
3 boots, these -- this type of equipment for future
4 contingencies, because -- just to go back, under our
5 planning assumptions we had stocks for medium scale
6 operations.

7 Under our plans, we would then take from industry,
8 the excess needed for a large-scale operation and that
9 process was expected to take about six months. It was
10 a planning guideline, it wasn't an absolutely strict
11 thing, but broadly speaking, that's what it was. We had
12 to compress some of that, so there were some areas where
13 we knew, the Chiefs of Staff knew -- I think they warned
14 in January, before the operation in the south, that some
15 of the urgent operational requirements wouldn't be fully
16 ready by, you know, a notional period.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's about equipment, but I think
18 what we have got --

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I'm sorry, I thought we were talking
20 about equipment related to --

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's one part of it, but I was
22 also talking about the treatment of the individuals in
23 the early stages and how the families were actually
24 supported and treated.

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I hope they were supported and treated

1 well, but I can't comment in detail on that.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay, thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: We have covered quite a lot of ground in
4 a very short time this morning and there is always more
5 to cover, some of it, of course, technically sensitive,
6 and we may want to pursue that in a private hearing.
7 That said, I wonder whether there are any final
8 reflections you would like to make in this open hearing
9 before we close?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think we have covered most of it,
11 Mr Chairman. I think many of the lessons learned that
12 I took from my experience through this period
13 have indeed been implemented or are now proposed in
14 various fora as we gear up to a general election.

15 I think it is very important to make the point that
16 we did apply a great number of lessons in terms of how
17 much we should expect to hold in stock and how we did
18 treat our people afterwards. I mean, I think there are
19 now something like three medics to each person deployed
20 in Afghanistan, which is very different to how it was in
21 Iraq. So I won't pretend that we didn't have a lot of
22 lessons to be learned both immediately after the
23 operation and subsequently, but I think some of the
24 machinery of government issues, which we have touched
25 on, are of interest and of continuing valid validity as

1 we go forward into a new period after a general
2 election.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As to that, there was, I think a
4 hanging point after Sir Lawrence's intervention, which
5 is whether there was a need not only for a stronger
6 co-ordinating centre at senior official level, but
7 whether the ministerial drive and direction was also
8 applied, but we will come to that with other witnesses,
9 I think.

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: All I would say about that is that, when
11 I saw and experienced the foot and mouth disaster
12 domestically, where we did use a ministerial drive to
13 actually co-ordinate and carry forward the operation,
14 I thought that was very valuable and I think there are
15 good lessons there for other ways of doing business.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Sir Kevin. I will close
17 the session now and we will resume in about ten minutes'
18 time with Dr Reid as our next witness. Thank you.

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Thank you.

20 (10.07 am)

21 (Short break)

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FINAL