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Wednesday, 28th July 2010

(10.00 am)

GENERAL SIR RICHARD DANNATT GCB CBE MC DL

SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Good morning and welcome. A general welcome both to those in the room and to our first witness of the day. General Sir Richard Dannatt was Head of the British Army between 2006 and 2009, preceded by your appointment as CINC Land between 2005/6 and much back history as well.

We shall hear this afternoon from General Sir Mike Jackson, who was your predecessor as CGS. That's simply the way the availability pans out.

Now I recognise that witnesses give evidence based on their recollection of events and we of course check what we hear against the papers to which we have access and which we are still receiving, and I remind each witness on each occasion he will later be asked to sign a transcript of evidence to the effect that the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

With those preliminaries done I will ask Rod Lyne to start the questions. Sir Roderic?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Richard, you were Assistant Chief of the General Staff up until September, I think, 2002. Can you just explain to us briefly what the Assistant Chief does, what the role is?

1 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The Assistant Chief is
2 effectively the Chief Executive to the Army Board. If
3 you take the Chief of the General Staff as being the
4 Chairman, the other board members have functional
5 responsibilities, the Adjutant General for personnel,
6 for example, the Commander-in-Chief for delivery of
7 trained soldiers. The Assistant Chief, who is the
8 junior member of the board, effectively manages board
9 business and is really the Chief of the General Staff's
10 right-hand man and effectively his Chief of Staff and
11 keeps the show on the road, I think would be the right
12 way of explaining it.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In that period we were beginning to
14 develop contingency plans for possible military action
15 in Iraq. That had been going on effectively from the
16 spring of 2002.

17 Were you and was the Army Board, or to what extent
18 were you involved in this process and conscious of the
19 plans that were being developed?

20 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: You are right to say that from
21 about spring 2002 there was a growing informal
22 realisation that, if certain political decisions were
23 taken, we might find ourselves involved in an operation
24 led by the Americans in Iraq. It remained informal and
25 in some ways there was a kind of parallel world really.

1 There was what we were actually getting on with so far
2 as policy was concerned, continuing operations in
3 Kosovo, in Bosnia. Northern Ireland was still
4 continuing, albeit at a much lower tempo than
5 previously, whereas in the background there was
6 a growing development of thinking and planning as far as
7 Iraq was concerned.

8 As Assistant Chief I would attend the Chiefs of
9 Staff Committee on odd occasions deputising for, then,
10 General Sir Mike Walker who was the Chief of the General
11 Staff when he could not be there. This probably
12 occurred once a month that I would attend on his behalf.

13 Therefore I was keeping up with discussions that
14 were going on around the Chiefs of Staff table. Indeed
15 General Mike Walker as CGS would be briefed by me and
16 the Director of Military Operations and other senior
17 members of the general staff before each Chief of Staff
18 meeting, and he would debrief us.

19 The point I am really making is that I was aware of
20 what was going on at a chiefly level even though I was
21 only a periodic player as far as that was concerned.

22 I think the other thing which is worth just saying
23 is we had then, and still have, quite a network of
24 liaison officers and exchange officers in the United
25 States who were embedded throughout the United States

1 army in particular and they were very aware of what was
2 developing on that side of the Atlantic. Therefore as
3 Assistant Chief from time to time I would receive phone
4 calls from the most senior of our liaison officers
5 saying, "The Americans are thinking this. The Americans
6 are thinking that".

7 So we had a pretty good informal idea of what was
8 developing, but it was not endorsed in policy at that
9 stage, but, as always with the military, prudent
10 contingency work was going on.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did this include discussions in the
12 Executive Committee of the Army Board of the possible
13 role that might be played by UK ground forces?

14 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: From my recollection I don't
15 recall formal discussion between the minuted business of
16 the Army Board of what we might or might not do. We
17 individually had quite a lot of informal discussion.

18 The reason I think that I am pretty certain to
19 say -- I know you are talking to General Jackson this
20 afternoon and he may have a different recollection --
21 the reason why I don't think we did is that at our
22 Chiefs of Staff level -- I have just described how I had
23 some role within the Chiefs of Staff Committee, at the
24 time the thinking that was developing was, "Well, if we
25 are going to get involved and we probably will get

1 involved, as money is tight, let's keep our involvement
2 as small as we possibly can", which seemed to translate
3 to: an air package, some ships, a maritime package, some
4 Special Forces and, "Well, if we get the army involved,
5 it will be very expensive, so let's not get the army
6 involved."

7 That's really how it seemed to go, and indeed
8 I think history would relate that decisions to commit
9 significant parts of the army were not taken until quite
10 late in 2002 and then events moved from there in terms
11 of equipping or not the force that was deployed.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. I mean, by July of 2002 there were
13 emerging ideas about different sort of packages, as you
14 say, between small and large, large meaning a division
15 of ground forces being part of the operation.

16 What was the sentiment in the army about the idea of
17 keeping it small and not actually offering a substantial
18 contribution of ground forces? There would always,
19 under any of these scenarios, very likely be Special
20 Forces, but a large visible army contingent, would the
21 army have been happy at being left out while the air
22 force and the navy and the Special Forces took part in
23 a very major operation of this kind?

24 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I don't think, with respect,
25 happiness comes into it. I don't think we as

1 professionals rush to get into any significant operation
2 where the loss of life is almost an inevitable
3 consequence. I think that would be irresponsible.

4 I would also say that we would not have rushed to
5 volunteer a large force, because at the time the army
6 and Land Command was very heavily committed elsewhere.
7 We could have a discussion about what the army was
8 required to do as a result of the defence planning
9 assumptions that came out of the 1997/98 defence review
10 if you wish in a moment, but we were required to do
11 a certain amount of work.

12 That translated in 2002 to a brigade headquarters
13 and at least a couple of major units in Kosovo,
14 a significant contribution still in the force in Bosnia.
15 We had a commitment to Sierra Leone. We have had since
16 1964 and still have today a commitment of a major unit
17 in Cyprus, in the United Nations operation there, and,
18 as I have already suggested this morning,
19 Northern Ireland was still consuming us.

20 Putting all that together, the desire of the army to
21 field the division was not huge. I think what's getting
22 behind your question is: if we are going to do it and
23 the navy and air force are going to get involved, what
24 is the army's attitude? I do recall some discussion
25 around the Chiefs of Staff table that, well, it is

1 expensive, let's put the naval package on the table.
2 Let's put the special forces package on the table, let's
3 put the air package on the table, but if we have to get
4 involved in some kind of peacekeeping operation
5 afterwards, that's where the army might come in.

6 On the one hand, you could say that was a very
7 respectable attitude to take. On the other hand, from
8 a professional point of view, like the US Army, the
9 British Army is a war-fighting army as well as
10 a peacekeeping army, and there was a bit of a feeling
11 that if the US was going to go in and conduct
12 an operation and then hand over to other people to keep
13 the peace, that's an operation or a role that some
14 nations' armies might have been quite content to be
15 involved in, but we rather professionally prided
16 ourselves as being in the higher league with the
17 Americans.

18 So there may have been a little bit of
19 a professional feeling, "We should be doing this", but
20 there was no desire to do it. There was no, "We would
21 be happy to do it", and there was certainly a large
22 element of, "We are very busy anyway so this would be
23 difficult if we had to do it".

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it is a mixed picture. You are quite
25 stretched. I think we will come on to questions arising

1 from the Strategic Defence Review a little later on.

2 We have had different points of view reflected to us
3 in the course of evidence, including one from the
4 Secretary of State at the time, where he told us that
5 there was a sense, particularly amongst the army, that
6 they did not want to be left out and other witnesses,
7 and indeed some of the written evidence we have seen,
8 have also reflected that view, that if there is going to
9 be a major war-fighting operation going on and the army
10 prides itself on its professionalism and war fighting
11 capability and its ability to stand with our major ally,
12 that it would be appropriate and right for the army to
13 be there and if, as Geoff Hoon put it to us, the army
14 was left out, this might indeed have had some negative
15 consequences for army morale. That's essentially what
16 underlies my question to you.

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think that's a point of view.
18 It is not a point of view I share. I don't think the
19 army had any professional points to prove. Cast your
20 mind back to the first Gulf War. Army significantly
21 involved then. Bosnia followed pretty quickly, army
22 significantly involved then. Sierra Leone, East Timor,
23 same comment applies. Kosovo in 1999. Afghanistan in
24 2001/2000.

25 I don't think we had any points to prove at all, and

1 I think it is very dangerous. It may be an emotion that
2 those who have not been involved in conflict very much
3 might feel, but actually if you have had people killed
4 and blown up around you, I don't think you rush to
5 volunteer for another war.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So as the Professional Head of the Army
7 at the time, if this had gone ahead without a division
8 of ground forces, from a point of view of the army's
9 standing you would not have had the concerns -- sorry --
10 you were not professional head at the time, you became
11 that at a later stage, but had you been in that
12 position -- you were Assistant Chief of General Staff.

13 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think if we are dealing with
14 this on a purely theoretical base I think it would have
15 had negative consequences for our relationship with the
16 Americans. They undoubtedly would have asked to us
17 contribute. They are a large army, but they are not
18 that large and have been significantly trimmed down
19 since the Cold War and the numbers of combat troops you
20 can put on the ground, certainly those envisaged in the
21 early planning process of Iraq, not after Donald
22 Rumsfeld had taken a knife to the force size later on,
23 but certainly the numbers that were envisaged to start
24 with, if they had asked for a division of British
25 troops, as they had asked and been given in the Gulf war

1 of 1991, and we had said "no", I think they would have
2 been disappointed.

3 I think that would have had some bearing on our
4 relationship with the Americans. I offer that as a side
5 comment, but I stand by my earlier comments that I think
6 we were quite occupied enough. Our recent history
7 proved our professional competence sufficiently and
8 I think a desire based on, "We don't want to be left
9 out", I don't think that's very professional.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

11 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I will ask Sir Martin Gilbert to pick up
12 the questions. Martin?

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn, if I may, to your
14 time as CINC Land. I wonder if you could explain this
15 role. Were you playing an active role in shaping the
16 strategy in Iraq or was your focus generating the units
17 needed by PJHQ to prosecute the campaign?

18 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: More of the latter than the
19 former, Sir Martin. Inevitably the Commander-in-Chief
20 as a member -- the second senior member of the army has
21 an important role to play on the Army Board. When
22 things are working properly the Commander-in-Chief and
23 the Chief of the General Staff will have a good working
24 relationship one to the other and talk either
25 face-to-face or on the telephone fairly frequently.

1 So to that extent the Commander-in-Chief does have
2 a role in influencing to an extent, but his primary role
3 is to do with that with which he is charged, which is to
4 ensure that whatever troops are required as a result of
5 decisions taken by the Government of the day, and
6 whoever going to be employed by the Permanent Joint
7 Headquarters, that they are made available, that the
8 units are properly trained, manned and equipped to the
9 greatest degree possible, and that's his primary
10 responsibility, as well as effectively having full
11 command over the complete field army, which is
12 75 per cent of the army and also the Territorial Army
13 and, to an extent, our regular reserve.

14 So it's a fairly wide-ranging set of
15 responsibilities that the Commander-in-Chief has, but
16 critically it is to ensure that the troops required for
17 operations are manned -- the units required for
18 operations are manned, trained and equipped sufficiently
19 to carry out the task.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What did you understand in 2005 to be
21 the nature of the Iraq campaign by then, particularly
22 the situation of the threat in MND South East?

23 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: If I could, without appearing to
24 go down a rabbit hole, just cast back to 2004,
25 a significant event occurred in 2004 -- well, I suppose

1 two significant events. One was a consequence I think
2 of the other.

3 The first event was, to my understanding, in about
4 March/April 2004 when the situation was beginning to
5 deteriorate in Baghdad and the north and the west of
6 Iraq, that the Americans asked us, the British, whether
7 we would be prepared to take responsibility for the
8 whole Shia south and the nine Shia provinces. I was
9 rung up. I was at that stage Commander of the Allied
10 Rapid Reaction Corp, our three-star deployable
11 headquarters based in Germany, under a sort of NATO
12 flag. I was rung up by the then Assistant Chief of the
13 General Staff, General David Richards, to warn me that
14 the Chiefs of Staff that morning had discussed six
15 options for the development of the campaign in Iraq,
16 three of which had included the deployment of the ARRC,
17 my headquarters, in the context of possibly agreeing to
18 the Americans' request for us, the British, to take
19 command of all coalition forces in the nine Shia
20 provinces. An interesting proposition, which, not
21 surprisingly, once the thought had been voiced to me,
22 the proper military process of contingency planning
23 begins and my headquarters cranked itself into operation
24 even more so than they normally do, but on this
25 particular question.

1 There was then a sort of hiatus for a while, while
2 events like the G8 Sea Island Summit took place, the
3 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings took place and
4 the Whitsun holiday. To my observation, sitting in
5 Rheindahlen, there was a sort of three or four-week
6 period of non-government. The Government then came back
7 from where it had been and again, as I understand it,
8 got round the table under the then Prime Minister
9 Mr Blair and asked themselves the question, "What are we
10 going do about this request from the Americans to take
11 over the Shia south in Iraq? Who is putting us under
12 pressure to do this?"

13 My understanding up to that point had been the
14 Americans had asked very nicely but said they would not
15 put us under pressure. My understanding again is
16 Mr Blair went round his Cabinet colleagues in
17 a subcommittee and asked who was being put under
18 pressure and they all said they were not being put under
19 pressure, which is what the Americans indicated they
20 would not do. So the decision was taken we would not do
21 this. Fine. I was told this would not happen.

22 Very quickly at the NATO summit in June, very
23 quickly after that, an announcement was made which I was
24 totally unaware of, that in the middle of 2006 or
25 thereabouts the UK would take a major lead in

1 an enhanced NATO operation in Afghanistan and that we,
2 the UK, would be a significant player in that and that
3 Headquarters ARRC would lead that. "Wow, where did that
4 come from?", I think was my feeling at the time.

5 So I kind of mention that as a sort of background,
6 that from the middle of 2004 onwards, as well as
7 whatever was happening in Iraq and however Iraq was
8 going to develop, there was going to be another
9 operation in Afghanistan in the middle of 2006, and
10 indeed, as Comm ARRC, and getting on with sensible
11 military contingency planning, I took myself to
12 Afghanistan at the end of 2004 to have a sniff of what
13 the situation there was, to see how we should be
14 thinking about shaping what became the operation that my
15 successor General Richards led in 2005/6.

16 I offer that and I apologise for being slightly
17 lengthy about that, but I think it is quite an important
18 background, because everything as far as I was concerned
19 to do with Iraq from the time I became
20 Commander-in-Chief in March 2005 was not just in the
21 context uniquely of Iraq, but in the wider context of,
22 "... and we are going to get involved in Afghanistan as
23 well".

24 Now there is a value judgment to be made here as to
25 the relative importance of Iraq and Afghanistan.

1 My own view, I was about to say I think it is fairly
2 widely shared now but perhaps I should not say that, is
3 that Afghanistan was certainly very important and
4 perhaps much more important to get right. I offer that
5 as a view. Therefore resourcing the operation in
6 Afghanistan was particularly important.

7 Going back to the defence planning assumptions
8 arising from the 1997/8 defence review and then tempered
9 by the new chapter post 9/11, which had effectively
10 reduced the capability of the army, the two operations
11 were always going to be a major challenge for us, and in
12 my judgment Afghanistan would always develop as being
13 the main effort and I think it has become so as far as
14 the UK is concerned.

15 I apologise again for a long preamble. When
16 I became Commander-in-Chief Land Command in March 2005,
17 the planning assumption to Headquarters Land given to us
18 in March 2005 for the autumn of 2006 was that we would
19 have one battle group and four sub-units deployed in
20 Iraq, about 1,000 troops. When it came to it in autumn
21 2006, we had 8,000 troops in Iraq, but were already by
22 that stage committed into Afghanistan in a commitment
23 that grew very quickly from 3,500 to 5,000 and has now
24 risen to 10,000.

25 Afghanistan and the pressure on the army coloured

1 all my thinking as far as Iraq was concerned as
2 Commander-in-Chief in 2005 and 2006, and certainly did
3 during my time as Chief of the General Staff from 2006
4 onwards.

5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of the situation in Iraq and
6 your understanding of it, how was that influenced or
7 confirmed by your own visits there?

8 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: In 2003, when we first went, and
9 this would have been reported to you widely by many, we
10 were effectively welcomed in the south. I think we went
11 through a process during 2003 and 2004 when that
12 welcome, which was very much based on consent to our
13 presence, turned to tolerance, turned increasingly to
14 intolerance, and turned to opposition.

15 So what had been a relatively benign set of
16 circumstances in 2003, which had enabled us quite
17 quickly to reduce from 46,000 troops to a much reduced
18 figure of single figures of thousands, began to become
19 more difficult through 2004, and I think became -- well,
20 I think -- I know it became very difficult from summer
21 2005, particularly most dramatically evidenced by the
22 appearance of the triple EFP, the explosively formed
23 projectiles, in threes, that were sufficiently effective
24 that even our most protected vehicles were at risk and,
25 indeed, counterintuitively to many of us, one soldier

1 lost a leg as the driver of a Challenger 2 tank. You
2 would not have expected that to have happened in
3 a benign peacekeeping operation.

4 So we were caught on what would I describe as the
5 horns of a dilemma, and we can go back to the military
6 policy or strategy underpinning it in a minute if you
7 like. The practical effect, as far as I was concerned,
8 as the Commander-in-Chief was on the one hand we were
9 reducing our troops in Iraq, because that was the
10 policy, whereas on the other hand, the situation was
11 deteriorating in the south in Iraq. If you had three
12 hands, on the third hand we knew that we had to build up
13 our forces for Afghanistan.

14 In Headquarters Land we had a briefing chart we use
15 for any visitors we can persuade to come down to
16 Wiltshire to see us, which showed projected fall in
17 force levels in Iraq with a projected rise in force
18 levels in Afghanistan. From the Ministry of Defence's
19 point of view we overlaid on that our best estimate of
20 how force levels would continue to stay high in Iraq and
21 possibly increase and for us that was the perfect storm.
22 We could see that perfect storm coming to fruition in
23 about the middle of 2006, late 2006, and I would contend
24 that it did.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were you being asked specifically

1 to produce in terms of force readiness for the growing
2 insurgency in MND South East?

3 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The critical deficiency was force
4 protection measures, vehicles in particular. It is very
5 easy, and I know you have taken evidence from a number
6 of people responsible for procuring equipment, to
7 criticise the equipment we had in the round, and I would
8 not wish to do so. I would certainly say that under the
9 Urgent Operational Requirement process considerable
10 amounts of money were spent and spent quickly and spent
11 well in some areas.

12 Indeed, if we were to put out in Parliament Square
13 a dismounted close combat unit today, a company of
14 soldiers taken out of Afghanistan, and compare them to
15 the same company that crossed the line of departure in
16 Iraq in 2003, in terms of the equipment it is
17 incomparable. It has been said that the only items that
18 they would probably have now that they had then are
19 a couple of felt tip pens to mark their maps.
20 Everything else from their clothing to their body
21 armour, substantially to their weaponry has changed, and
22 that is good. We have increased body armour and helmets
23 progressively.

24 I think the area -- two areas where we have fallen
25 short, although we have tried hard to improve, has been

1 protected vehicles. The Snatch Landrover, although it
2 has been enhanced, we all know its origins as
3 a Northern Ireland patrol vehicle was significantly
4 exposed from 2005 onwards in Iraq, if it hadn't been
5 exposed before that.

6 I think it is worth reflecting, although we have
7 brought in a number of other vehicles which you are well
8 aware of, the light protected patrol vehicle, which is
9 effectively what you would describe Snatch as, has still
10 not significantly been replaced and my understanding,
11 but I have been retired for a year, is that only now is
12 there a competition between two possible contenders to
13 provide what I would call an effective Snatch
14 replacement as a light protected patrol vehicle. That's
15 it. We did significantly increase the availability of
16 better protective vehicles in southern Iraq at the time.

17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That's something we are going to be
18 coming on to in some detail later.

19 Could I ask you on a more general point General Fry
20 told us in his evidence speaking about this period,
21 2005:

22 "We were exceeding all the assumptions we made on
23 capacity and therefore I think that the victims of this,
24 eventually the British Army, would find themselves being
25 deployed on a much more regular basis with far shorter

1 tour intervals than any of our assumptions previously
2 would have tolerated."

3 In view of what you said also about the Iraq/Afghan,
4 would you like to comment on that?

5 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I would think Sir Rob Fry's
6 comments are substantially correct. I would also add,
7 and I don't want to get too lengthy about this, it is
8 actually not for the army to complain about the amount
9 of work it is given to do. We can do a lot of work
10 provided that our needs are met.

11 The military covenant is something we have talked
12 about a lot. When the military covenant is in balance,
13 then the engine can do a lot of work. When the covenant
14 is out of balance, we have problems. I think we
15 progressively got out of balance as the amount of work
16 we were being asked to do increased through 2005 and
17 2006.

18 I say this not in any shape or form as a criticism
19 of any of my predecessors, but merely as a reflection of
20 the additional work that we were being asked to do as
21 a consequence of decisions taken to stay in Iraq until
22 we had successfully completed our operations there, but
23 also take on Afghanistan as well.

24 The way to bring the covenant back into balance was
25 to make sure we were expending sufficient resources on

1 looking after the legitimate needs of individuals,
2 soldiers and their families in terms of their pay
3 allowances, accommodation, and the equipment with which
4 as proud professionals you would want to give these
5 people.

6 That's where I think we were deficient. That's
7 where we had to work quite hard to get it back in
8 balance. I know I said in 2006 the army was running
9 hot. That is correct. You can run hot when you are in
10 balance and there is enough oil sloshing around the
11 engine to keep it going. When the oil is thin or not in
12 sufficient quantity, the engine runs the risk of seizing
13 up. I think we were getting quite close to a seizing-up
14 moment in 2006.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of army morale in that period,
16 how would you assess that?

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think army morale on the front
18 line was good and always has been good. I have related
19 two or three times the fact that soldiers are
20 professionals and that, when they know they have a job
21 to do, understand why it is important and are well led,
22 they will get on with it. I think they need two other
23 things. They need to be properly equipped and need to
24 know they have the support of the population behind them
25 and are doing something that's thought to be in the

1 national interests and not just something they are doing
2 because they are doing.

3 I think more widely there were concerns about morale
4 reflected particularly in our families' morale. You
5 alluded to General Rob Fry's comment about short tour
6 intervals and the frequency with which operations were
7 coming round.

8 Overlaying that, on a substantial part of the army
9 and the other services, but the army in particular,
10 living in less ideal accommodation, both single soldiers
11 in barracks and families in their married quarters,
12 doubt about whether at the time £1,150 take-home pay for
13 a month's fighting in Helmand or Basra was sufficient,
14 and I think there were questions over morale, and they
15 needed to be addressed.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

17 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I would like to turn to some training
18 aspects. Baroness Prashar?

19 BARONESS PRASHAR: Sir Richard, we have heard the core
20 budget was under stress. What impact was this having on
21 training of troops who were deployed to Iraq?

22 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The effects that the pressure on
23 the operating budget was concerned was that we had to
24 prioritise training, and increasingly over the last few
25 years any training that was not directly related to

1 presenting an operation -- to presenting a unit in Iraq
2 or Afghanistan in the best possible way took a lower
3 order and then eventually, when the pressure got really
4 tight, those exercises were cancelled.

5 This had quite an effect, for example, on the
6 Territorial Army and some of our training
7 establishments, and didn't have -- Sandhurst, for
8 example, training officer cadets, always used to go
9 overseas for a training exercise. There was felt not to
10 be sufficient money for that.

11 So the effect is prioritisation. To make sure at
12 the very least the units deploying on operations
13 received the training they needed.

14 BARONESS PRASHAR: So you were having to reduce the scale
15 and intensity of training. Is that right?

16 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Effectively that is right, but
17 what you are doing in that process, and it is not just
18 the effect of having to prioritise training, but when
19 you are finding troops for two operations of the
20 magnitude of Iraq and Afghanistan as they were and you
21 are only really set up for one, you are having to forego
22 much of your wider training, the contingency tasks. In
23 fact, for the last couple of years the army has been
24 exclusively focused on current operations with virtually
25 nothing in the contingent locker for something else that

1 might blow up. I don't think at the present moment we
2 probably have the supplies or anything else much to take
3 on a new task at the present moment, but that was
4 increasingly a trend that was developing through
5 2005/6/7.

6 BARONESS PRASHAR: Was this reduction and scale and
7 intensity having an impact on the operations itself?
8 I mean, was it having an impact on the effectiveness on
9 the ground?

10 SIR PETER SPENCER: I would like to think not, for the
11 reasons that I have given, that we- as fiercely as we
12 could- prioritised and made sure units that were
13 deploying deployed as well as they could.

14 Now, the other issue that constrained training and
15 therefore constrained the level of competence at which
16 units deployed was the availability of equipment. This
17 was a feature in Iraq to a certain degree and certainly
18 has been a feature as far as Afghanistan is concerned,
19 that as both of those theatres have remained dynamic and
20 the threat increased and changed and our responses to it
21 have had to change, so new bits of equipment were
22 required. Procured under the Urgent Operational
23 Requirements process, fine, but the net effect of that
24 was often soldiers only met these new bits of equipment
25 when they got into theatre or possibly on their

1 immediate pre-deployment training.

2 That's not ideal, verging on the not acceptable.

3 I sort of make a wider point, which I think is relevant,
4 if you take the point that I made a few minutes ago, the
5 almost exclusive preoccupation of the army in the last
6 two or three years has been on success in Afghanistan.
7 Everything we are doing as a field army in the two-year
8 cycle of training is geared towards that. Therefore the
9 equipment that you need in Afghanistan today is the
10 equipment that they need throughout that two-year cycle.
11 It is not acceptable in my view for people to be trained
12 to the top of their professional competence with the
13 best equipment available and then when they get off the
14 aeroplane back in this country after a six-month tour
15 have it taken off them. That is demoralising from
16 a soldier's point of view. It is a poor use of
17 a soldier's time. Frankly you can't uninvent things.
18 When soldiers know how new technology has enabled them
19 to do a job, you can't take away the new technology and
20 say, "Just do it the old-fashioned steam-driven way".
21 That's not on.

22 BARONESS PRASHAR: So it was the urgent operational
23 requirement and the time lag, and they have not prepared
24 for the training?

25 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: That gets you to a wider point.

1 What is urgent and what is routine? How long does
2 something have to go on being urgent before it becomes
3 routine?

4 Now the notion -- it has always been the agreement
5 between the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury that
6 the additional cost of operations are funded from the
7 Treasury from the contingency reserve equipment through
8 the Urgent Operational Requirement process, but when the
9 emergency, the "urgent" has gone on for several years,
10 is there not a moment in time when you actually say,
11 "This is not emergency anymore. This is not urgent
12 anymore. It is actually routine. This is core
13 business."

14 Now if that point had been accepted or was accepted,
15 or might be accepted in the future in the Ministry of
16 Defence, then that says that some of our core equipment
17 programmes should have changed towards making sure that
18 more of the equipments needed for the current operations
19 were routinely available particularly to cover training
20 throughout that two-year cycle that I alluded to just
21 now. I don't think that has happened.

22 BARONESS PRASHAR: Can I just go back to Iraq itself,
23 because the situation was evolving very rapidly. There
24 was insurgency. Was the training and the equipment
25 cycle keeping up with the situation?

1 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I would say in the context of
2 Iraq it substantially was. 2007, of course, was
3 a particularly difficult period. It was the culmination
4 of our presence in what was called the downtown sites in
5 Basra, which eventually just came down to our holding
6 Basra Palace. This of course, is quite complicated,
7 because, of course, while we were progressively removing
8 our footprint from Basra, progressively handing over the
9 four provinces we were responsible for in Iraq to the
10 Iraqis themselves, the Americans were going through the
11 process of the surge and increasing their troop numbers.
12 They were increasing it following an operational
13 concept, which I fully recognise, of their soldiers in
14 small bases being right out there amongst the people,
15 having good situational awareness, therefore, and the
16 consequence of that was they were significantly and
17 increasingly effective through 2007 and 2008 in Baghdad
18 and elsewhere.

19 We were doing the opposite. We were doing the
20 opposite by design. We were following the previous
21 policy, which was to progressively hand over to Iraqi
22 control. That was the policy articulated by General
23 Casey, General Petraeus' predecessor, and because in the
24 south through 2003/4 and to an extent in 2005 it had
25 gone fairly well in the south, there was an element of

1 thinking, "Well, the British are in the lead here and
2 maybe there are lessons to be learned from the way the
3 British hand over to the Iraqis that the Americans maybe
4 when things quieten down in Mosul or Anbar can take
5 lessons from us". It didn't, of course, happen that
6 way.

7 So we had this rather lumpy dynamic of us reducing
8 as a matter of policy and the Americans increasing as
9 a matter of policy. Perhaps the overall coalition
10 command perhaps have called us to stop and check, but
11 I go back to putting this in context in Afghanistan. By
12 2007 we had a significant force in Afghanistan fighting
13 as fiercely in Afghanistan as 2 and 4 Rifles were
14 fighting around Basra Palace.

15 I think also it is tight to play in the Iranian
16 influence in Iraq at the time. It was very much the
17 Iranian backing of the Shia militias in Basra and
18 southern Iraq that wanted to portray the British being
19 kicked out of southern Iraq and Basra in particular. We
20 were very aware of that and were conscious of that. The
21 irony of course was that it was our policy to withdraw
22 and hand over to the Iraqis. They wanted to make it
23 look as uncomfortable and difficult for us as possible
24 so they could claim we had been kicked out, which was
25 not the case.

1 BARONESS PRASHAR: I understand that, but from your point of
2 view did you feel that our army were trained and
3 equipped to deal with these lumps and changes and
4 responses to insurgency?

5 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think in general terms we were.
6 I think that the Operational Training and Advisory
7 Group, the OPTAG process we put our people through, went
8 to great lengths to keep current with what was going on
9 in Iraq and make sure that every sequential six-month
10 package of troops were trained in the most up-to-date
11 skills.

12 That said -- and I visited 2 Rifles and 4 Rifles
13 when they were in Basra Palace in 2007 -- pretty hard to
14 replicate the circumstances they found themselves in
15 training. We always say that we train for the worst
16 case and then the actual operation is a little easier.
17 I think although we trained pretty hard, the worst case
18 was a lot more difficult than perhaps we had imagined.

19 BARONESS PRASHAR: Thank you.

20 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: We would like to turn to doctrine
21 I think. I will ask Martin to pick it up.

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could go back to the period when
23 you arrived in Land Command and looked at the question
24 of counterinsurgency both from a doctrinal and a
25 practical point of view.

1 When you arrived the coalition strategy in Iraq was
2 very much focused on the transition to Iraqisation, and
3 a significant part of this was developing the Iraqi
4 security services to the point where they were ready to
5 take control of security. By this stage the MoD had the
6 lead in the security sector reform and the military were
7 delivering a very large portion of that reform.

8 Did the army see this as a core task?

9 SIR PETER SPENCER: The army always saw that the solution to
10 us as an army not being present in Iraq was that the
11 Iraqi security forces has to be sufficiently numerous
12 and capable that they could take responsibility for
13 security for themselves.

14 Whether it was given sufficient priority I think is
15 an interesting question. I am not sure that I feel
16 competent to give you an opinion on that. We always
17 knew it was an important task. I think one factor that
18 is relevant was the decision that was taken very early
19 on in the Iraq campaign, and I am not quite sure when,
20 but back in the 2003/2004 period, that our approach to
21 training the Iraqi army in particular was that we would
22 train them in barracks. We would not embed training
23 teams within Iraqi units.

24 This of course, continued all the way through until
25 Operation Charge of the Knights in March/April and

1 beyond in 2008, when we changed our policy overnight.
2 It is counterintuitive, this, because in Afghanistan
3 right from the start of the operation in 2006 we had
4 chosen to embed our troops with the Iraqis in terms of
5 our training teams being embedded.

6 I think the explanation for it was we felt that in
7 the predominantly urban closed environment of Basra and
8 Iraq we felt we could not sufficiently protect our own
9 people. In the rather more rural setting of Afghanistan
10 we felt we could. But it is interesting that from 2008
11 onwards in Charge of the Knights we changed that policy,
12 as I said, pretty much overnight. If we missed
13 anything, and I have said this while I was still Chief
14 of the General Staff, I think all of us in the chain of
15 command from the very top in London through to the
16 ground didn't see that to more effectively train and
17 mentor the Iraqis that we knew were the exit strategy,
18 that we hadn't embedded our training teams with them
19 until force majeure we did in March/April 2008 and maybe
20 that was a mistake.

21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were there other skills the army needed
22 or skills you yourself were seeking to develop in order
23 to make this an effective involvement?

24 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Training the army for an army is
25 the relatively more simple end of the task, but, of

1 course, policing and the police force is probably more
2 important, because after all we are talking about
3 a civilian population in Basra in particular, and the
4 normal way of ensuring a civilian population behaves
5 according to the laws of the land at any one place at
6 any one time is to ensure that the police look after
7 them and not the army.

8 So it was the more difficult task as far as the army
9 was concerned to train up the police.

10 You said that we had the lead in Security Sector
11 Reform and that is right. Whether enough specifically
12 policing resources were made available I am not sure and
13 I don't think that they were. Again those police
14 mentors that were deployed were constrained by the same
15 general policy that soldiers were constrained; that's
16 only doing training in barracks and police stations and
17 not being out and about, and I think that constrained
18 our effectiveness.

19 I think -- maybe I straying in my answer beyond your
20 question, in which case please stop me -- the Security
21 Sector Reform aspect of it is very important as far as
22 the army and policing concerned, but I think the wider
23 aspects of what we now accept to be the comprehensive
24 approach of helping Basra and Iraqi society develop so
25 that the people lived a better life and therefore were

1 more went to be compliant to the Government of the day
2 and to live in peace effectively, I don't think we
3 resourced that properly either.

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of the actual
5 counterinsurgency doctrine, the United States were very
6 much looking at revising their doctrine. Was this some
7 process that was also going on in the army?

8 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It is an interesting question,
9 and in some ways it's a vexing question. Where US
10 doctrine has got to now in Afghanistan and got to
11 substantially in Iraq has taken us to classic
12 counterinsurgency. Rupert Smith talked about war
13 amongst the people. It is certainly war amongst the
14 people. It is about the people. It is about winning
15 their hearts and minds, and I actually think it is for
16 the people, to give them a better life. As far as
17 Afghanistan is concerned it is for the people there,
18 I think it is also for the people in this country as
19 well to ensure our own security.

20 The three classic ingredients of counterinsurgency
21 are muscle, money and message. I think they are
22 well-worn themes.

23 So where we are now I think is where our study in
24 history of counter-insurgency would always have taken
25 us. The Americans were not there in 2003/2004. It is

1 not a criticism, I think it is a fact. I think they
2 would recognise that. Very much war ethos to their
3 army. I don't offer this as a criticism, it is just
4 a comment.

5 In their parlance, "We do war-fighting. We don't do
6 nation-building. We do war-fighting. We don't do this
7 peacekeeping stuff. Other people can do that". I think
8 we have always endeavoured as the British Army to do
9 both.

10 Some people in the British Army in 2003/4 were
11 perhaps a little bit too quick to point to our historic
12 and received, and in our view, apparent expertise in
13 this area, perhaps making parallels with, "We did this
14 in Northern Ireland. We did that in Northern Ireland",
15 which themselves were techniques based on what we might
16 have done going back as far as Malaya, if you like,
17 where I think classic counterinsurgency has its roots
18 and going back before that as well.

19 So the Americans responded to a new situation very
20 rapidly and General Petraeus takes a lot of credit for
21 that. I think the American military takes a lot of
22 credit for having the inspiration to see the right
23 person in him after two terms in Iraq to send him to
24 Fort Leavenworth to head up the staff college, to get
25 a new doctrine developed, and to bring it back, and, in

1 a wonderfully American way, rigorously enforce its
2 application. When the Americans decide to do something,
3 they do it very well, as we know.

4 I digress, but the armies fighting in the blockage
5 in 1944, which army adapted most quickly? I think the
6 Americans did. They have always seen a problem, cracked
7 it, and thrown resources at it.

8 So against that description of them adapting quickly
9 in Iraq we may have looked a bit flat-footed, but
10 I would maintain the circumstances were rather
11 different. They were reinforcing their campaign. They
12 were surging their troop numbers. They were spreading
13 themselves in small bases throughout the population,
14 getting among the people, whereas we were doing
15 absolutely the opposite.

16 I would also point to the side issue, and that is
17 that in the British military the army, having built up
18 a very good doctrine development capability really from
19 the time of Field Marshal Sir Nigel Bagnall in the
20 1980s, we produced the British military doctrine. We
21 updated it in the light of the end of the Cold War.
22 Indeed, it was my hapless task to have to do that
23 updating in 1991/2/3, that sort of period.

24 We had a good doctrine organisation headed by
25 a Major General and some of our brightest colonels were

1 in our doctrine development organisation, but the
2 centralising effect and desires within the Ministry of
3 Defence had been that we needed to have had a central
4 concepts and doctrine capability and indeed that's what
5 we produced. During 2005/6/7 the army's doctrine and
6 development capability was disbanded and merged into
7 an overall defence capability, and I believe as an army
8 that left us less well-placed to develop new doctrines
9 or adapt existing doctrines as required. I think that
10 was a factor in perhaps us not being as agile and fleet
11 of foot at the tactical and operational levels as we
12 would have been had we had a Major General and a bunch
13 of bright colonels who were focusing on that as a their
14 day job. That's a straight criticism actually.

15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to look at one specific
16 threat in Iraq we have heard a lot of evidence about,
17 which is the IED threat.

18 Speaking specifically of this and the
19 Northern Ireland experience, General Riley told us, "We
20 have forgotten institutionally how to deal with this".
21 Would you like to comment on that?

22 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think what General Riley was
23 getting at was that over the many years of the
24 Northern Ireland campaign when, like any insurgency, it
25 is dynamic and the threat changed, from a bit of

1 a flat-footed start I think in the early 1970s we became
2 quite sophisticated at, in the context of IEDs,
3 analysing the material of what had been an IED, or
4 dismantling IEDs we had prevented from going off, very
5 rapidly assessing what the technology was that the enemy
6 was using, devising counters to that, bringing in new
7 bits of equipment, changing our training procedures,
8 changing our operational techniques, and responding to
9 that changed threat. We had a pretty sophisticated
10 mechanism for that.

11 But by the time we went into Iraq in 2003 frankly
12 the situation -- and it is a good thing -- in
13 Northern Ireland had significantly quietened down. Much
14 of our capability to do that had either slowed down,
15 because it didn't need it so much, or indeed as the
16 peace process took hold in Northern Ireland, we
17 dismantled quite a lot of that capability.

18 Now we said at the time some of the
19 Northern Ireland-specific techniques we needed to make
20 sure that we did retain, and this was one of them.
21 Human intelligence and how we handled human
22 intelligence, that was another.

23 The extent to which we did that and how well we did
24 that, as opposed to how much we said we must do it,
25 I think remains a moot point.

1 So I think what General Riley was probably getting
2 at was that we had had a process that was pretty
3 responsive and pretty good. I think we didn't have that
4 process to the same degree when he was commanding MND
5 South East in 2004/5. I can't remember exactly when he
6 was there without looking at his notes. Probably he
7 felt the same responsiveness that he had known as the
8 other officer that was no longer there. I think to some
9 extent he is right. I think we are better now again
10 because the situation as changed dramatically as far as
11 Afghanistan is concerned and Iraq from 2005.

12 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I think, Baroness Prashar, your turn.

13 BARONESS PRASHAR: Can I just come back to another issue to
14 do with the six-month tour rotations, because today we
15 have published a declassified part of your visit report
16 of October 2006, in which you raised the issue of
17 continuity and you said the subject is worthy of further
18 debate. Was this debated? What did you do about it?

19 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It certainly has been debated and
20 we have changed our policy in some key regards. There
21 is a separation to be drawn here between commanders and
22 senior people who need to interact with the indigenous
23 population, whether it is Iraqi or Afghan, and the
24 troops that do the fighting. I am implacable in my
25 view, which I feel justified in through the intensity

1 of, for example, what happened in Basra Palace in 2007
2 and what has been happening in Afghanistan really from
3 the middle of 2006 until this very day, that six months
4 in the front line is as much as you can reasonably ask
5 a soldier to do, particularly as it will probably come
6 round again within two years. I know the Americans do
7 12-month tours. I know they did 15-month tours for
8 a while. That was their decision. I have seen some
9 very tired American soldiers. I think their mindset and
10 their attitude was different. They were a nation at
11 war. I don't think that has been an attitude that has
12 coloured us.

13 So I am in no doubt at all that six months at the
14 intensity of operations that our people have been going
15 through in the last few years is the maximum we can
16 reasonably ask people to do, and even digging back into
17 history, one thinks of the First World War. Well, there
18 was the front line and there was the support trenches
19 and there were the communication trenches and the rest
20 areas and battalions cycled through. Actually
21 the company of infantry men that went to Basra Palace
22 April 2007 was there for six months, and it may well
23 fight an engagement every day for six months. That's
24 tough pounding. So I think I am pretty convinced there
25 was a strong case for saying no more than six months for

1 our combat troops.

2 I think it is a different set of circumstances for
3 some senior commanders and some senior staff officers,
4 and those who are engaging with local leaders and those
5 who are engaged in the training operation with
6 indigenous forces, and we have significantly changed the
7 number of posts that go for nine months, 12 months and
8 some even longer.

9 That wasn't done without difficulty. I can recall
10 torturous discussions in the Chiefs of Staff Committee
11 about the terms and conditions of service for people we
12 were going to send for 12 months, who would get paid
13 what and all the rest of it, and some opposition to
14 that.

15 So where we are now certainly in Afghanistan and we
16 are moving towards that in Iraq in the latter days, was
17 that there was a certain category of individuals for
18 whom continuity was at a premium, as opposed to the
19 fighting troops for whom -- others had a different view,
20 but my view, as I said, was absolutely crystal clear:
21 six months maximum.

22 BARONESS PRASHAR: So you made a distinction between the
23 commanders and key staff as compared to those --

24 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes. There is one tension here.

25 That is we -- it is the right thing to do -- train our

1 blocks of troops in brigade packages. They go through
2 the training process together as a brigade. They fight
3 for their six months together as a brigade. They come
4 back as a brigade.

5 I said some key commanders we want to keep there for
6 longer. It is therefore counterintuitive from what I
7 just said that you keep the Brigade Commander there for
8 six months. We have found other ways of doing that with
9 deputy commanders or in the higher headquarters, for
10 example, the divisional headquarters currently in
11 Kandahar and latterly in Basra. Those senior people
12 stayed longer. So at the higher tactical level or the
13 operational level people were doing longer. At the
14 actual tactical level where they were fighting battles
15 then the Brigade Commander and his troops did six
16 months.

17 It is not ideal, but in my view the good was better
18 than the perfect solution which had other negatives.

19 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Could I just turn that coin around the
20 other way? Would it have been an iron rule not to allow
21 a Brigade Commander to move in mid tour when his brigade
22 was actually in operations?

23 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It is not ideal. It happened.
24 It is not ideal for it to happen. I think this is
25 an interesting thing to analyse really. It says

1 something on our mindset. Is the individual career
2 development to someone more important than the actual
3 development of a mission? That says: are we an army at
4 war, a nation at war, or an army that is getting on with
5 normal business, some of which is conducting difficult
6 operations?

7 Now that could be translated into a criticism of
8 those who took decisions to move a particular Brigade
9 Commander. I think you would have to look at each one
10 of those circumstances in its own right, but in general
11 terms it is not ideal to do that.

12 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you.

13 BARONESS PRASHAR: Can I just go back? You said this was
14 not without difficulty. What were the constraints and
15 why did it take so long to kind of come to that
16 accommodation of doing longer periods for key commanders
17 and keeping the troops for six months?

18 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It took as long as it did because
19 there are a variety of points of view. I have tried to
20 explain fairly clearly what my points of view were.
21 There were others that took a point of view that troops
22 could do longer than six months. Most people seem to
23 accept that certain commanders should take longer. Of
24 the certain senior staff officers the categories I have
25 talked about should do longer. I have also made

1 reference to the fairly torturous discussions of agreeing
2 the terms and conditions of service. Almost silly
3 things really, like: could the family of an officer who
4 was staying for 12 months stay in the house they were
5 in? You might think that grown up people could decide
6 this just like that. Sometimes they found it difficult
7 to do that. So things you might think are
8 straightforward become more complicated.

9 Probably getting to where we are now took rather
10 longer than it should do. That said, did it matter?
11 A bit. Did it matter much? Probably not that much.

12 BARONESS PRASHAR: Thank you.

13 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Turning to equipment,
14 Sir Lawrence Freedman.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I just want to deal very briefly
16 with the UOR question, because we have taken a lot of
17 evidence on that, just to put one proposition to you.
18 Sir Peter Spencer told us:

19 "I used to call regularly on the three Chiefs of the
20 General Staff, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the
21 three Commanders in Chief. If there had been concerns
22 about UORs, they would have been raised."

23 Were you in general satisfied that the army had the
24 equipment they needed to fight in Iraq coming through
25 the UOR process?

1 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: And your question is specifically
2 to do with the UOR business?

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. There are other equipment
4 questions on which I expect you are not satisfied, but
5 this is just the UOR process itself.

6 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: In general terms the answer is
7 yes. There was a problem, though, which was -- and
8 I felt this as Commander-in-Chief and I don't think
9 I was alone in this either before or after, that the
10 process whereby the troops deployed on the front
11 line saw a requirement and reported it back to Permanent
12 Joint Headquarters, the action in the PJHQ and the staff
13 there, which were relatively small in number, were able
14 to turn the opinion and the requirement of soldiers on
15 the ground into a rapidly staffed requirement for new
16 and changed equipment that could then be fired at the
17 Defence Procurement Agency or whatever it was at the
18 time.

19 I felt that there was a greater role that the front
20 line command here in this country, in our case Land
21 Command, could have played to help out at least the
22 horse power of those on the equipment staff of PJHQ, and
23 also play our wider understanding of army requirements
24 from our frequent involvements informally with the
25 troops on the front line. I thought we could actually

1 get a greater understanding, get it more quickly.
2 I made several offers, and they were taken up
3 eventually, to have my own equipment staff help the PJHQ
4 equipment staff to try to convert the needs of the front
5 line into identified requirements that the procurement
6 system could then get on and act upon.

7 Once there was a properly put together case, I think
8 it is fair to say that the UOR process and the funding
9 of it always went pretty well. I think it is fair to
10 say that a properly argued business case was never
11 actually turned down by the Treasury. I think that is
12 right and proper.

13 I was never convinced, and I so often used to say
14 this to my people, "Are we actually doing all we could
15 be doing to make sure we have the right equipment in the
16 right quantity in our hands, front line hands, as
17 quickly as possible? Is the problem money? Is it
18 industry capacity? Is it leadership? Is it energy?"

19 If it had been just money, then I would have known
20 exactly where to target the problem. If it was
21 industry, one could quite happily have gone to companies
22 that had been supplying us and say, "Come on. Start
23 working 24/7 and get these things going". I think there
24 was a bit of deficiency in leadership and energy at
25 times.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you give me some examples of
2 what you mean?

3 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I don't think I can give you
4 a specific example. It is a general feeling. I think
5 it is evidenced by a wider issue that we have touched on
6 when I talked a little earlier about when is something
7 an Urgent Operational Requirement, that, or when does it
8 become core business? Once it becomes core business,
9 then the funding of it has to come from somewhere in the
10 main defence equipment programme so something else has
11 to be given up. Identifying what has to be given up is
12 painful. I think others did not want to see things
13 being given up.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We are going to come on to a very
15 specific example of that potentially.

16 Just pushing you a little bit more on this, does
17 that create a temptation in the UORs to bring in stuff
18 that you might well have expected to come in the normal
19 course of event through this core business?

20 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I don't think it's a cheap
21 comment to make, but I am sort of minded to make it, and
22 having spent three years as the Director of the Defence
23 Programme Staff, overseeing the military side of the
24 annual budgeting exercise, many of the things that were
25 added back in as Urgent Operational Requirements at the

1 start of Iraq were things that had been taken out of the
2 equipment programme, the savings in earlier years. So.
3 In some ways we were putting things back in that we had
4 taken out.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Again I am tempted to ask you for
6 particular examples there.

7 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The Apache helicopter, for
8 example. In its original specification it had a radio
9 that the pilot could talk to ground troops. Actually
10 given the Apache attack helicopter is all about
11 supporting ground troops it is surprising that radio was
12 taken out as a saving. It is therefore very
13 unsurprising it has been added back as an Urgent
14 Operational Requirement.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the things perhaps you could
16 have advised on -- maybe you did -- would be the
17 relationship of the UOR to the training requirement,
18 which is something you have already mentioned as being
19 a problem with UORs. Were you able to add in something
20 about the extent to which extra equipment would be
21 needed for training?

22 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Well, I think -- indeed. I think
23 this gets back to an earlier answer which is to do with
24 quantity of equipment. I said it before, and I think we
25 are all in agreement, that it is not satisfactory just

1 to have a piece of urgently procured equipment in the
2 operational theatre. It needs to be there in the
3 pre-deployment training. I have made the wider case
4 that it should be present now in the full two-year
5 training cycle. Too often it was the case that soldiers
6 were being introduced to new equipments having arrived
7 in Iraq. The grenade rocket launcher was one equipment,
8 for example, which people didn't see initially until
9 they got into theatre. There were several examples of
10 that.

11 Now I don't offer it as across the board criticism,
12 because everything has to start somewhere. When you
13 know you have a need for something, is it acceptable to
14 hold it back from the operational theatre until everyone
15 is properly trained on it and then deploy it and trained
16 people? Or is there the temptation to rush into
17 theatre? Generally there is probably the latter. It is
18 the temptation you fall for.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Presumably there could be cases
20 where it would be actually dangerous to have something
21 being used in theatre upon which proper training had not
22 taken place.

23 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think there is a danger of
24 that. I think we fail in our wider duty of care if we
25 had not ensured that new and complicated equipments are

1 not fully understood by the people operating them.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we should talk about Snatch
3 Landrovers, which you have already mentioned. We have
4 had a lot of discussion about this, which no doubt you
5 have seen.

6 There seems to have been a discussion going on
7 almost from the time that Snatch or indeed before Snatch
8 was introduced in the autumn of 2003 about whether it
9 was necessary to do things to improve it, part of
10 a wider package of dealing with IEDs, or replace it.
11 I just wonder from your perspective, the various jobs
12 you had, how you viewed this issue and why do you think
13 it took as long as it did before a replacement was
14 decided upon?

15 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: There are two or three strands to
16 an answer as far as that is concerned. I will try to be
17 brief.

18 All commanders have accepted there is the need to
19 have a light patrol vehicle. Narrow streets, small
20 roadways and so on, that you have got a vehicle that can
21 get down these places.

22 That has been used as a justification to keep the
23 existing Snatch in small numbers still in theatre for
24 the present moment.

25 Another line is, and I shared this view and I was

1 strongly of this view, let's get all the Snatch out as
2 quickly as we can, but if you accept there is a need for
3 a light patrol vehicle, it was said by all those
4 involved with industry and the procurement process that
5 there was nothing available on the market to replace the
6 sort of Snatch-type dimension very quickly.

7 I think we have already this morning mentioned the
8 fact that even now the Ministry of Defence I understand
9 is deliberating between two contenders for effectively
10 a Snatch replacement. This is 2010. That was 2003/4.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then there was Mastiff.

12 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: We will come back to that. We
13 are talking about a 20 tonne as opposed to 4 tonnes.
14 There are a whole range of other vehicles all of which
15 are really important, and they are plus points.

16 To deal with the light patrol vehicle, which Snatch
17 was, it was said by the people whose advice one had to
18 take, "There is nothing else out there". I am not
19 a scientist myself. If that's what they say, one had to
20 accept that.

21 Therefore the next strand of argument was to really
22 go for the work-arounds as to how do we protect our
23 people with other vehicles? That's when we get into the
24 Mastiffs, the Bulldogs, every other dog's name you could
25 think of being tagged to a vehicle. Many of these have

1 been very successful. Mastiff, very successful.
2 Ridgeback, smaller version, very successful. In the
3 context of Iraq something that I found counterintuitive
4 and had to agree to while I was Commander-in-Chief was
5 the Bulldog. The old 430 lightly armoured personnel
6 carrier that I grew up as a platoon commander in the
7 early 1970s and I thought had had its day in the
8 battlefield. When I said, "We must have a better
9 vehicle", eventually they came to me in middle 2005 and
10 said, "Commander-in-Chief, the best option that we can
11 get into the field quickly with good protection is to
12 slap modern armour around a rear-engined 430 series
13 vehicle. That's the best we can do".

14 I took a very deep breath and said, "If that's the
15 best we can do, then that's what we are going to do".
16 For Iraq I think it played a significant role. It has
17 no application in Afghanistan and I think it was a bit
18 of a one-off. That's when we quickly as far as
19 Afghanistan and latterly for Iraq fell into the Mastiffs
20 and the Ridgebacks and the other range of vehicles that
21 we now have in Afghanistan.

22 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Could I just interject with a side point?
23 All the dog-named vehicles are much heavier than 4 tonne
24 light personnel protected vehicles. What were the
25 Americans using in the light protective role? Humvees?

1 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes.

2 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: They were not looked at as a possible
3 answer for us?

4 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The Americans realised that
5 Humvee was not the answer. I mean, some horrific things
6 happened to American soldiers in Humvees in Baghdad.
7 You know, we might all for a little while have thought,
8 "Let's get Humvees. The Americans have them. If they
9 are good enough for the Americans, they are good enough
10 for us", but I think quite rightly before we were
11 seduced down that track we began to realise that
12 a Humvee was in many ways -- I will use unemotional
13 language -- as equally unsatisfactory as a light patrol
14 vehicle as Snatch was.

15 The other thing which we decided in 2005, and it was
16 in the context of Afghanistan, but is not irrelevant as
17 far as Iraq is concerned, was that we decided to go down
18 the track of what's called Vector, which was effectively
19 a somewhat up-armoured Pinzgauer. It was for
20 Afghanistan, on the basis that -- but I think it is
21 relevant so I will try and be brief. 16th Air Assault
22 Brigade that went first to Afghanistan had the vehicles
23 it had, 3 Commando Brigade had armoured Viking vehicles,
24 the sort of tracks over snow vehicles, but then 12
25 Mechanised Brigade, which was the third brigade going

1 into Afghanistan, had no vehicles at all. So we knew
2 that by spring 2007 we had to have something for them.

3 We went down -- in something of a hurry, decided
4 just before Christmas 2005 to go down the Vector
5 programme. Vector was over-matched by the changed
6 threat in Afghanistan, to the extent that it deployed
7 into Iraq almost as soon as it was fielded. So it was
8 not a solution to Snatch either.

9 It had slightly better cross country performance
10 which was relevant as far as Afghanistan was concerned
11 but in the end it was not the answer.

12 It remains unsatisfactory that it is only now we are
13 closer to the issue of a light protective patrol vehicle
14 to finally replace Snatch. We worked around the
15 problem, we did not actually confront the problem.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Why didn't we confront the problem?
17 What was holding us back on that?

18 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The technical answer was that
19 there is nothing available that will provide sufficient
20 protection of the small size that can do the job that
21 the Snatch does, which is why we therefore kept
22 a residual small number of Snatch for those places it
23 had to go.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Even with Mastiff it seems to have
25 taken quite a bit of effort to get this deployed into

1 Iraq. We have had evidence on Lord Drayson's push for
2 this in 2006. We have seen papers on it. Des Browne
3 announced a review into the PPVs in 2006. It is still
4 curious as to why action had not been taken beforehand.
5 It seems it be a political rather than a military
6 initiative at that time.

7 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Well, you asked me earlier and
8 when I opined it wasn't money and was not industry
9 capacity, was it leadership and energy, I think it was
10 a deficiency in leadership and energy in solving this
11 problem. It would be trite if I said I had a full head
12 of hair in 2005, but really frustrating not to be able
13 to get on with this, and the fact we have still not
14 closed with the issue in 2010.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Are you looking into your own
16 service in this? Are you looking at the procurement
17 people? Where is the lack of leadership and energy?

18 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think it goes back to the
19 answer I gave before, that if you were going to identify
20 a requirement that needed resources thrown at it, which
21 couldn't be funded immediately from the UOR process, it
22 has to come from somewhere else in the core MoD
23 equipment programme. That meant something else had to
24 go and other people perhaps did not want to see other
25 things they thought were very important going.

1 It would be wrong to say this was kicked into the
2 long grass, but other solutions, work-arounds were
3 preferred than tackling this one head-on. As I said
4 before, I am not a technical person, I am not
5 a scientist, I don't know whether there would have been
6 a technical solution -- alternative solution sooner than
7 2010 to Snatch. To me it seems incredible that we
8 couldn't produce a 3 or 4 tonne sufficiently armoured
9 light patrol vehicle rather sooner than we have but one
10 had to go with the advice we have been given that there
11 was nothing out there or that could be developed
12 quickly.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we want to break quite soon
14 but can I just push a little more on this? What you are
15 saying is very helpful. It fits in somewhat with what
16 Sir Peter Spencer told us. He said:

17 "I think the difficulty became in the amounts of
18 money which were available and if you were going to use
19 money from the Capital Equipment Programme to deal with
20 the short term as opposed to UOR action ...",

21 which of course is how Mastiff came in in the end,
22 that would have what he said was a "fratricidal effect".
23 He specifically related that to FRES.

24 General Fulton yesterday did not say it was
25 particularly related to FRES. I would just be

1 interested in your view as to the relationship between
2 the two.

3 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: There is a very strong
4 relationship to FRES and I would like to go into that in
5 some detail. Do you want me to embark on that or wait
6 until we have a break?

7 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I suggest we have a break now for
8 ten minutes and come back to it and then we want to get
9 on to ISTAR.

10 (11.20 am)

11 (A short break)

12 (11.30 am)

13 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: We were about to address FRES. Right.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, you were about to address
15 FRES. Perhaps you could do so.

16 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Thank you. Terrible name, FRES.
17 I think we all know it stands for Future Rapid Effect
18 System. It remains a terrible name.

19 Its origins are important going back to 2001/2002,
20 when the realisation in the army was that whereas we had
21 come out of the Cold War with the good generation of
22 heavy equipments, Challenger 2, Warrior, AS90 and Apache
23 Attack helicopter on its way, eventually came in. On
24 the heavy side, we had good equipment. On the light
25 side, 16 Air Assault Brigade had some perfectly

1 reasonable forms of mobility, but mobility for them
2 mostly came from their feet supported by some small
3 vehicles. But the army had a clear requirement, as we
4 were moving towards an expeditionary era, of having
5 vehicles that were small and light enough to go into
6 aircraft to be flown to trouble spots, but heavy and
7 capable enough to be useful and usable when they got
8 there, and that was the basis of the future rapid effect
9 system and the nomenclature, lumpy in name that it is,
10 that came about.

11 In 2002 the Army Board agreed this programme. It
12 was endorsed by the Secretary of State, Geoff Hoon, and
13 it was to be a rapid programme, filling -- I use the
14 word "urgent", but a short to medium term requirement
15 that needed to be filled quite quickly. As far as we
16 were concerned 85 per cent of the solution delivered
17 quickly would have been the right answer, and the
18 procurement route that us as users and future users
19 seemed to make most sense was to go to the market and
20 see what was out there and procure it.

21 FRES in some people's minds became synonymous with
22 the American army's future combat system. It was not
23 a future combat system as all. It was much more akin to
24 their Striker programme, which they procured very
25 rapidly from existing vehicles and deployed six brigades

1 of Striker during the decade which we are just getting
2 to the end of.

3 I would contend -- it was also going to be
4 expensive. We had identified two programmes that were
5 clearly Cold War legacy programmes. One was MRV,
6 a very large troop-carrying vehicle which had a Cold War
7 origin, and the other was Tracer, which was a high-tech
8 reconnaissance vehicle, again which had Cold War
9 applications. We cancelled both of those programmes to
10 put the money to one side to pay for the FRES programme
11 on the modest basis on which it was set out to be.

12 The production run money of Tracer and MRV was in
13 the years 2007-2009 and our aspiration in 2002 was that
14 FRES, the utility vehicle, would come into service from
15 as early from 2007 and better if we could do it, and the
16 money was there because we had made the money available.

17 I would contend that had that programme gone ahead
18 in the way that it was envisaged, we would have had
19 capable vehicles which we would have used to benefit in
20 Iraq and Afghanistan and we didn't. The Americans did.
21 I went on patrol in west Baghdad with an American
22 Striker battalion in the middle of 2007, in exactly the
23 vehicles that I believed we could have procured and
24 should have procured and they were significantly
25 successful in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we didn't go

1 down that track.

2 For reasons that remain still fairly unclear in my
3 mind, but I think come down to affordability and the
4 desirability in some other people's minds of using the
5 money thrown up by Tracer and MRAV for other programmes,
6 delay was built into the -- delay came into the FRES
7 programme, and sophistication was added into the FRES
8 programme, which made it a much more complicated and
9 expensive programme than the army had ever envisaged,
10 much more akin to the future combat system which the
11 Americans at that stage were going ahead with and had
12 moved away from in some people's minds.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just stop you there a second?
14 I think it is puzzling for somebody who is not within
15 MoD or within the system. You described something that
16 you as a pretty senior officer in the army would like to
17 see and then somehow things happen.

18 Where do these things that happen come from? Who is
19 it? Who is deciding that it should be more
20 sophisticated than the users actually say they need?

21 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I would love to know the answer
22 to that particular question. The reason why I am
23 a little opaque on this was that having got this
24 requirement locked in as Assistant Chief of the General
25 Staff in 2002, I then disappeared off to Germany for

1 2003 and 2004 to command the ARRC, and was outwith the
2 process that was going on in the Ministry of Defence.

3 When I re-emerged in the mainstream of army business
4 as Commander-in-Chief in 2005, I was horrified to find
5 effectively what had happened to FRES, that it had
6 become a much more complicated requirement with very top
7 end Command and Control specification written in,
8 a communication specification written in. It had
9 attracted a 14 billion price tag well above that which
10 we could have afforded from the MRAV and Tracer
11 programmes.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When we talked to people on the
13 procurement processes, the specifications are said to
14 come from the users. So is this somewhere else within
15 the army while you are off doing the ARRC, that is
16 fiddling with an original specification?

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: No. I mean I have to be blunt
18 here now.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Please do.

20 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The defence programme:
21 unaffordable. This was spare cash swilling around in
22 some people's mind, the MRAV and the Tracer money, and
23 that by moving the Tracer requirement to the right
24 beyond 2007/8/9, that money could be put into other
25 programmes, and it was.

1 By 2005 I was horrified to find that the in-service
2 date of FRES had become no sooner than 2012, and it was
3 being postulated by the procurement team that it might
4 be 2015, 2018.

5 As far as playing into Iraq and Afghanistan was
6 concerned, completely meaningless. On the money,
7 a considerable number of billion pounds that the army
8 had put on the table from the Tracer and MRAV-saved
9 programmes had gone elsewhere. That suited other
10 people.

11 It was also said, and I have seen some other
12 people's evidence, that the army really didn't know what
13 it wanted. It could never make up its mind on the
14 requirement. I am afraid the facts don't stack up with
15 that. The Army Board in 2002 took a paper, it took what
16 the key user requirements were for FRES and that's what
17 we wanted to procure.

18 So what I am getting at is that there were internal
19 machinations within the Ministry of Defence to use the
20 money the army had voluntarily given up from MRAV and
21 Tracer on other programmes. It was convenient to say
22 the army didn't know what it wanted. It was convenient
23 to say it had become a rather more high-tech programme
24 than it should have been and therefore it moved to the
25 right. It has now moved so far to the right that

1 effectively it is a dead programme. I had to
2 reluctantly accept in my last year as Chief of the
3 General Staff we were not going to see the utility
4 vehicle at all. What money that there was went into
5 other programmes. The question I would have to ask is
6 where is the analysis of what our defence really, really
7 needs as opposed to what resources need to go into some
8 cherished schemes other people have their eye on? This
9 is quite a difficult issue and coming to today, it is
10 an issue that the defence review currently underway must
11 grapple with. We must look at the nature and character
12 of future conflict, look at the threats to our future
13 security, and put our resources to our highest priority
14 and not to what we would like in a world of plenty.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All of this revolves around
16 prioritisation within a restrained core defence
17 equipment programme. Now we started off this
18 conversation talking about Snatch. The issue -- one
19 question that might be raised by what you have said is
20 if this money had been made available and it seemed too
21 much to go the FRES route, maybe at least for a slightly
22 different requirement it could have gone the Snatch
23 route. Do you have any sense of why that didn't happen?

24 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: To an extent it has happened,
25 because there were some people that said "Mastiff is

1 FRES". Mastiff is not FRES. Mastiff is a very useful
2 heavy protected patrol vehicle of use in Iraq and
3 Afghanistan, and if we should ever find ourselves on
4 another kind of battlefield where we needed to manoeuvre
5 in the way that we manoeuvred in 2003 from Kuwait into
6 southern Iraq, or in 1990/1991, Mastiffs, Ridgebacks
7 have no place on a future battle -- had we had the
8 utility vehicle FRES, had we had the scout FRES, they
9 would have had utility in the kind of operations we were
10 involved in in Iraq and Afghanistan and will have or
11 would have had, I think, except I don't see it
12 happening, in other campaigns elsewhere in the future.
13 It was a very effective solution to a wide-ranging
14 series of equipment problems.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, Mastiff came in eventually
16 as a UOR --

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- because again, from what we have
19 seen, the ministers were getting anxious that this issue
20 had been postponed for so long.

21 Now you have described to us a period when you were
22 somewhere else in Germany doing ARRC, but when you came
23 back, C-in-C Land, presumably now you are more in the
24 centre of things again.

25 Could you give us some flavour about how the army is

1 actually discussing these various requirements, deciding
2 what its priorities are? How it can make a push back on
3 some of these questions and perhaps even the role you
4 were able to play in all of that.

5 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I certainly will. The senior
6 decision-making body of the army is the Executive
7 Committee of the Army Board, which meets formally in
8 minuted session and makes board level decisions. As
9 I have already said, it had made a decision in 2003 or
10 in 2002 as to what the key requirements for FRES were.

11 In 2005, and you can put the same question to
12 General Jackson this afternoon, as the then Chief of the
13 General Staff, he chaired a meeting of ECAM at which
14 a progress report on FRES was formally tabled to the
15 board. When the integrated project team leader briefed
16 the board that the likely in-service date of FRES
17 utility vehicle now was in the bracket 2015-2018 as
18 a board we were shocked.

19 Clearly unacceptable and clearly at huge variance to
20 where we had been three years before in 2002, and we
21 decided to do something about it. What we decided to do
22 was to persuade Lord Drayson, then the Defence
23 Procurement Minister, that we had a major problem, and
24 it was decided to lay on equipment demonstration on
25 Salisbury Plain and get him to come and see it on the

1 basis seeing is believing, and then come to Headquarters
2 Land and discuss the issues. As Commander-in-Chief
3 I was given the task to put that together.

4 Ironically it was Colonel Patrick Sanders' battalion
5 of the Rifles, the last one in Basra Palace 2007, that
6 was given the task to lay on an equipment demonstration
7 at Copehill Down, our fighting village in the middle of
8 Salisbury Plain.

9 We took one of everything that we had and Lord
10 Drayson saw what we had and saw what we didn't have and
11 quite clearly what we didn't have was anything in that
12 medium bracket. We had something called Saxon, a sort
13 of lightly armoured lorry that might have some utility
14 on the north west German plain, but we had taken that
15 out of service, because it had no place on a modern
16 battlefield or in a counterinsurgency situation. So on
17 the one hand we had these good heavy equipments, on the
18 other hand some good light equipments. In the middle we
19 had nothing.

20 In the car on the way back from Salisbury Plain to
21 Headquarters Land he said to me, "I didn't know the army
22 had a problem. Since I have become Minister of Defence
23 Procurement I have been focusing on jets and on aircraft
24 carriers. I didn't realise the army had a problem". To
25 his great credit he then realised we had a problem and

1 began to put some leadership and energy into it.

2 He accepted the notion we needed these vehicles as
3 quickly as possible, accepted the notion they had
4 an important part to play in Afghanistan, because by
5 that stage Iraq we could not do much about, and we
6 should bring forward the in-service date to 2012. To
7 his great credit he energised the system to go out to
8 industry for a competition of what industry had
9 available with a view to bringing these vehicles into
10 service in 2012.

11 There were three contenders that were going
12 through -- put through a trial of truth process and I
13 will say it was in 2007 and I believe that's right. The
14 intention was that we came to a decision on those three,
15 which would lead to a production contract by the end of
16 November 2007. I have huge confidence that had we done
17 that we would in mid-2010 be very close to fielding the
18 first of those FRES utility vehicles now or certainly
19 next year for a full capability by 2012.

20 Unfortunately what happened, for reasons entirely
21 personal to Lord Drayson, he chose to leave the
22 Government on 1 November and the programme stopped
23 absolutely dead.

24 A year's delay was built in until the middle of
25 2008, when we were not substantially further down the

1 track. There are other high profile and pressing
2 defence procurement projects that needed to be funded.
3 Your question to me could quite properly be, "What were
4 they?" In which case the answer is: it was the aircraft
5 carrier programme. The money that might have gone into
6 the FRES programme substantially went into the carrier
7 programme. Others will dispute that, but sitting around
8 the Defence Management Board table, it was quite clear
9 to me that's what was happening. So for the second time
10 the money went.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We need to move on to other issues,
12 Can I just ask you once again about Snatch? You
13 described vividly how the FRES programme was helped
14 along by Lord Drayson. He also seems to have done the
15 same thing with Snatch.

16 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Mastiff.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Snatch to Mastiff, if you like, in
18 the summer of 2006.

19 Why does it take a minister to do that rather than
20 the Defence Board itself coming up with the answers to
21 what by then was recognised every day in Iraq to be
22 a serious problem.

23 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Well, you have taken evidence
24 already from the Chairman of the Defence Board. You
25 have taken evidence from the Chief of Defence Staff.

1 I was purely a member of the Defence Board, and there
2 were many people around the table and many conflicting
3 point of view. You can articulate your point of view as
4 clearly as you can. Others might be persuaded by your
5 argument or choose not to be persuaded by your argument.
6 In many cases they chose not to be persuaded by my
7 argument. So one had to accept the decisions that were
8 taken, albeit with a degree of frustration.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we probably, because there
10 are other questions to get through, need to move on. We
11 will have a chance obviously to talk to General Jackson
12 about this this afternoon.

13 We have a declassified extract which has now been
14 put on the web from one of your visit reports from
15 October 2006 when you highlighted a need for greater --
16 greatly improved ISTAR capability. Yet General Shirreff
17 told us by 2007 you still lacked UAVs. Sir Peter
18 Spencer told us that he found it easy to get people in
19 the Ministry of Defence to sign up to the importance of
20 ISTAR until they were invited to cancel a major platform
21 project to pay for it. This to some extent follows on
22 from our previous conversation.

23 Would you like to comment? Was that the problem
24 with ISTAR as well, that the bigger high profile
25 platform projects crowded out some of these sorts of

1 capabilities?

2 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I mean, the short answer is yes.

3 I don't want to appear too partisan as far as this is
4 concerned, but self-evidently if you are moving
5 increasingly, as we were in Iraq in 2006/7, to come away
6 from the downtown sites, which gave a situational
7 awareness, to one of overwatch, if you are going to
8 overwatch, you need something to do the watching with.
9 So it was pretty obvious we needed more ISTAR
10 capability. That can be provided by a number of means,
11 whether it is by high altitude aircraft that can do
12 magic things from the sky, whether it is from UAVs,
13 whether it is from manned airborne surveillance from
14 helicopters. There were quite a lot of things we could
15 do.

16 It gets back to something we were talking about
17 before, a very good programme called Watchkeeper, a UAV,
18 which had been in the programme for quite a long time,
19 but had experienced savings to it over the years, which
20 resulted in delays to its in-service. Once a real
21 operational requirement for UAVs was derived for Iraq
22 and Afghanistan, surprise, surprise, energy was then put
23 back into the Watchkeeper programme. Money was added
24 back into the Watchkeeper programme. Hermes 450,
25 another programme, was brought forward.

1 While these things were theoretically important, as
2 they were pre-Iraq, "Yes, we will get on and do as we
3 can but there are other things that are taking the money
4 so we can delay Watchkeeper a bit". That's what
5 happened.

6 So things that were taken out of the programme as
7 savings had to then be added back as UORs or emergency
8 programmes because there were competing pressures of
9 other things.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to conclude this section, do
11 you think there was, therefore, a temptation amongst
12 those clearly having to manage a very complicated and
13 challenging equipment programme with many people acting
14 as advocates for their particular interests, to push out
15 of the core programme things that they thought they
16 might get in as UORs?

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I don't think you can play around
18 with a UOR process. I mean, it is done quickly but,
19 there is scrutiny. I am just about to disagree with
20 myself before I give you an answer.

21 In general terms I think you will only get things
22 through the UOR process that are absolutely required by
23 an operation. If you have sought agreement to field
24 a particular kind of equipment, let's say it is
25 an aircraft type, and the policy decision has been made

1 to field that aircraft type, but, oh, it has not got all
2 that it needs to be operationally capable, then that
3 will actually attract UOR money being spent on it. Now
4 whether that's defensive aid suites for some aircraft or
5 whatever it is -- I mean, I don't want to go too far
6 down that track, I suspect in your question you kind of
7 know the answer I am trying not to be too specific on.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

9 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We are left with a general sense
11 about a problem of prioritisation in defence equipment,
12 and whether the mechanisms we have within the Ministry
13 of Defence are adequate for the sort of choices that
14 need to be made.

15 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Well, I would say quite simply
16 decision-making is relatively simple if you apply
17 priorities in a rigorous fashion. If you have not
18 established your priorities you are all over the place.
19 A question that might be worth pondering is: why did it
20 take an away day of the Defence Board until October 2006
21 to come up with a pretty obvious statement that the
22 principal effort of the department should be the
23 achievement of strategic success in Iraq and Afghanistan
24 in the context of countering global terrorism? Why did
25 it take until October 2006 when we had been in Iraq

1 three and a half years and southern Afghanistan six
2 months to come up with that statement of prioritisation?
3 Even when that statement was made, was it rigorously
4 followed through?

5 Now I know there is a debate to be had about the
6 short term and the long-term and making sure that the
7 unpredictability of the future can be attended to by
8 a balanced programme and a balanced inventory of
9 capability for the future, but when the present is
10 staring you very bloodily in the face, it is very
11 difficult not to fully resource that. I think your
12 colleague Professor Sir Michael Howard famously said
13 guessing the future is very difficult to do. The trick
14 is not to be so wrong that you can't adjust when the
15 future reveals itself. That's what I think we should be
16 working towards at the present moment. Absolutely
17 funding properly what is staring us in the face, which
18 today is Afghanistan and previously was Afghanistan and
19 Iraq. I don't think we did that.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

21 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Right. Iraq. Sir Roderic?

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to look in a minute at this 2006
23 question, including the definition of what at that point
24 constituted success, but before I do that, taking
25 advantage of your very long perspective, indeed more or

1 less throughout the period of our terms of reference, on
2 Iraq, I would like to pick up one or two of the points
3 you made earlier, where you talked about the way in
4 which the British Army endeavoured to do both the
5 war-fighting and the peace-building. That we saw as
6 being two skill sets. The way the comprehensive
7 approach and things like the Security Sector Reform had
8 been under-resourced in your view, the way in which the
9 Iranian involvement appeared and became a major
10 complicating factor, and a number of other issues, all
11 of which takes us back to the question of the degree to
12 which we could have and should have, we, the coalition,
13 anticipated the post-conflict situation. The phase 4,
14 the aftermath, whatever one wishes to call it.

15 One gets a sense that the coalition was making it
16 up, from May 2003, as it went along. If you like,
17 picking up your remark about Michael Howard, as the
18 future began to reveal itself.

19 To what extent could this have been mitigated by
20 more thorough planning within the coalition, and I say
21 coalition deliberately, for the post-conflict phase of
22 the campaign? What we thought was going to happen, what
23 we thought the situation was going to be, what we needed
24 to do the job, what indeed the job was and how long it
25 was going to go on for, because I don't suppose we

1 expected then that we would have combat troops in Iraq
2 up to the year 2009.

3 Now stripping out the wisdom of hindsight, how
4 defective, how absent perhaps, was the aftermath
5 planning in your view?

6 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It was a major factor. I will
7 take it head on.

8 You refer to the wisdom of hindsight. Actually
9 I think history can be quite instructive here. You said
10 perhaps we would not have envisaged keeping troops into
11 Iraq until 2009.

12 Well, I think history shows that actually these
13 things do take longer than you expect. We were 38 years
14 conducting Operation Banner in Northern Ireland. We
15 were 14, 15 years with troops in Bosnia. We were ten
16 years with troops in Kosovo. Why did we think that Iraq
17 was going to be -- after all regime change and putting
18 a new regime in place was quite a tall order, why did we
19 actually think we could do this very quickly? I think
20 history would have indicated to the contrary, given the
21 operations that I have just mentioned.

22 I think also history is quite instructive. I mean,
23 look at the planning for what happened in Germany from
24 1945 onwards. That building on the experiences of
25 military government in Italy, the military government

1 was put together and the reconstruction of civil
2 government in Germany from 1945 had been planned for a
3 long time prior to that. Why? Was it just to keep
4 people occupied in 1945 and 44? No, it wasn't. It was
5 because it was going to be a difficult job and needed to
6 be thought through properly.

7 Why was Iraq going to be so different? Two things.
8 Planning was conducted for proper Phase IV. It was led
9 by the Principal of the Foreign Office in this country
10 working with the State Department in the United States
11 and I think quite a lot of meaningful and useful
12 planning did go on, but what happened shortly before the
13 operation was launched, I think we all know, the
14 Pentagon took control of Phase IV and the assumption, as
15 I understand it, from Don Rumsfeld and his supporters
16 was that a lightning attack into Iraq would be
17 successful, as it was. There was no great surprise
18 there.

19 We had significantly written down and destroyed the
20 Iraqi capability in the first Gulf War so rolling it
21 over a second time was probably not going to be that
22 difficult. Difficult, yes, but not that difficult, and
23 his hope was that by having moved in quickly, the
24 leaders of government would be in place, and that
25 others, their hands could be put on leaders of

1 government and that Iraq could change direction
2 relatively simply and all would be well. There was no
3 plan B.

4 The plan B might have been the original planning
5 being done between to an extent the Ministry defence and
6 the Foreign Office and the State department, but all
7 that was put to one side by the takeover bid, the
8 hostile takeover bid, if you like, that Don Rumsfeld
9 mounted on Colin Powell just before the operation, and
10 that when that aspiration collapsed in the outbreak of
11 lawlessness, which we saw in Baghdad and elsewhere, the
12 very thin but well-meaning organisation under General
13 Jay Garner, supported by our own Major General Tim
14 Cross, both excellent people in their own right, their
15 team was so thin they had no chance of being able to
16 resurrect the situation.

17 There was no plan B at that stage. If there is no
18 plan, there is a vacuum and into a vacuum malign forces
19 will come, and that's exactly what happened.

20 Fast forward a little bit to Bremer and his interim
21 Provisional Authority and the decisions to disband the
22 Baath party and the Iraqi military structure, and then
23 the two things that could otherwise have held the
24 country together fell part. So I think we made
25 a difficult situation worse.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We then got in the situation in which
2 Bremer favoured a longer period of coalition control and
3 there was a debate over the speed of transition to Iraqi
4 control which then came out a different way. So the
5 strategy kept changing.

6 If I can take it forward now to 2006, the period of
7 the away day you just spoke about, you gave an interview
8 to the Daily Mail in which you referred back to:

9 "The original intention that we put in place
10 a liberal democracy that was an exemplar for the region,
11 was pro-west and might have had a beneficial effect on
12 the balance within the Middle East."

13 That was the hope in 2003.

14 "Whether that was a sensible or naive hope history
15 will judge."

16 You then said:

17 "I don't think we are going to do that, I think we
18 should aim for a lower ambition".

19 What at that point would you have defined as being
20 the reasonable ambition for us to have? What in 2006,
21 October, to you constituted success?

22 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think the aim had reduced to
23 Iraq remaining as a unitary state. I don't think it was
24 in any one's interests to see it fragmenting into Shia,
25 Sunni and Kurd elements. Had that happened, I think it

1 would have put Iran in a very strong position as far as
2 the region was concerned. I think one objective was to
3 keep Iraq as a unitary state, and as quickly as possible
4 under its own government. We had already begun
5 a democratic process. So it was going to be an elected
6 government put in place, which was sufficiently stable
7 with its own security forces to look after itself.

8 The extent to which it needed economic help, bearing
9 in mind it sits above the second or third largest
10 remaining supply of oil in the world I think is moot.
11 I think if it had been sufficiently stable from
12 a security point of view, its economy could have got
13 going.

14 Of course, you know, fast forward to where we are
15 now. I think Basra has a tremendous amount of
16 potential. 100 kilometres away, 100 miles away, Kuwait,
17 one of the most successful places in the Gulf. Basra
18 not very far away. The principal port for Iraq, very
19 close to its major oil fields, has every prospect of
20 being as successful as Kuwait.

21 So in 2006 I think we quite rightly came to the
22 conclusion, or were coming to the conclusion, whatever
23 the original intention of 2003 had been was unachievable
24 and a much more minimal objective of a unitary state,
25 sufficiently self governing, sufficiently stable to then

1 pick itself up off its own feet economically was the
2 reasonable thing to do.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What at a strategic level in 2006 was the
4 United Kingdom able to do or seeking to do in Iraq?

5 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think that's, if I might say,
6 a very good question. I don't think nationally we had
7 sorted out what our future long-term intentions were
8 with regard to Iraq, what relationship we wanted to have
9 as far as Iraq was concerned.

10 I might be wrong there, but that was just the
11 impression that I got, and certainly talking to our
12 consul in Basra as late as 2007/8 it was very much
13 an impression I got, that our own Government had not
14 decided what its future relationship with Iraq might be.

15 Putting that to one side, I think we have to
16 remember that in both Iraq and Afghanistan we are the
17 junior partner in what was then a coalition in Iraq and
18 an alliance in Afghanistan, so in a sense our national
19 ambition is not strictly relevant.

20 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Could you just slow the pace a little bit
21 please?

22 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I am sorry.

23 What our national ambition was I don't think is
24 strictly relevant as far as Iraq overall is concerned.
25 I think there was this unsettled question as to what our

1 future relationship would be particularly with the south
2 of Iraq.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You at this point had fairly recently
4 become the CGS. Your predecessor General Jackson on his
5 final visit report from Iraq had observed -- the
6 possibility of strategic failure had been mentioned to
7 him in earnest on this visit more than any before.

8 Did you feel that we were facing a serious risk of
9 strategic failure in the period you took over? Who was
10 deciding our strategy? Who was deciding within it what
11 the size and shape of our military commitment at that
12 stage should be and how it should be effected?

13 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think two dimensions to
14 an answer on that.

15 One, as the junior partner, we did not own the
16 coalition strategy. The Americans owned the coalition
17 strategy. In that 2006, going into 2007 period, they
18 were on the cusp of changing their strategy from one of
19 rapid transfer to the Iraqis to cracking the problem
20 militarily in order to secure the country in order to be
21 able to move it forward.

22 I think it is very telling in one of the books that
23 I am sure we have all read, "The Gamble", General Jack
24 Keane, who previously had been the Vice Chief of the
25 United States Army, having retired, was worrying at home

1 about the prospect of the army that he loved being
2 defeated and realised that the only way that they could
3 avoid that was going through and increasing forces, the
4 surge, as we have come to know it, and the changed
5 strategy as implemented by General Petraeus.

6 They were taking those decisions. He lobbied on the
7 hill. He got that policy endorsed and put that strategy
8 in place.

9 We were on the coat tails of that and actually we
10 were on the coat tails of it going in the other
11 direction, because we were following the previous policy
12 of progressively handing over to the Iraqis province by
13 province and indeed going through the issue of
14 withdrawing from the downtown sites in Basra.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did it make sense for us in our area of
16 operation in the four south-eastern provinces to be
17 follow a different policy, not, for example, to apply --
18 bring in and apply extra muscle to try to re-establish
19 security in Basra, to create different conditions for
20 a handover?

21 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: If Iraq had been the only show in
22 town and the Americans had decided to increase, we could
23 probably have increased. After all, we had deployed
24 46,000 in 2003. We could have deployed another 5000 for
25 a short period of time in 2006/7, but, of course, we

1 couldn't, because we had already decided to reinforce in
2 Afghanistan. In 2006 we had committed a small force to
3 southern Afghanistan, which by early 2007 had already
4 become over 5,000 and has quite quickly ramped up to
5 10,000.

6 So the context of what we could nationally do and
7 not do in Iraq was inevitably set by what we were doing
8 in Afghanistan, but I would also say that one has to
9 regard the whole of Iraq and Afghanistan as being, if
10 you like -- the language might give away the meaning
11 here -- two fronts or theatres of operation within the
12 same overall campaign. They were not just Iraq and
13 Afghanistan. They had a very close relationship, and
14 the reason -- it goes right back to what we were talking
15 about two hours ago -- why it was perhaps surprising
16 that at the NATO summit in June 2004 Prime Minister
17 Blair announced that we, the British, would be doing
18 more in Afghanistan from the middle of 2006, was because
19 we had said no, we would not do more in Iraq in 2004.

20 It was a perfectly reasonable strategic gesture, if
21 you like, for the junior partner to make to the senior
22 partner, which was saying something like, "Our bit of
23 Iraq is going quite well. Your bit of Iraq is becoming
24 very difficult. We will take more of the burden in
25 Afghanistan so you can take more of the burden in Iraq".

1 That was a reasonable strategic decision to take, and
2 I think that's what he was getting at.

3 Once we had made that decision and he had announced
4 that decision, then unless we revisited that decision,
5 which we never did during 2005 and 2006, what we could
6 and could not do in Iraq in 2005 and 2006 was
7 constrained by what we were doing or were going to do in
8 Afghanistan from 2006.

9 If you put those two things together, you come to
10 the pressure on our land forces in particular, which was
11 one of my major concerns while I was Chief of the
12 General Staff.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: At the time the Prime Minister and the
14 Defence Secretary took the decision to make a major
15 deployment into Afghanistan did they realise that in
16 left us with no alternative to an exit strategy in
17 southern Iraq, what General Shirreff described to us as
18 an exit strategy at this time rather than a winning
19 strategy in the period he was there.

20 Were they really conscious of the way in which, in
21 terms of the SDR, with two enduring medium level
22 commitments of a pretty arduous kind, that they had put
23 the army in the situation that you graphically
24 described, as running on hot, and really left you and
25 the other commanders without any alternative options?

1 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: A bit of me wants to duck that
2 question and I am not in the habit of ducking questions,
3 but you are referring to decisions -- discussions and
4 decisions taken into 2004 in the main when I was not
5 either Commander-in-Chief or Chief of the General Staff.
6 Indeed, I was in Germany on the sidelines, as it were.
7 I think you will get a much better answer from General
8 Jackson this afternoon, because, as Commander-in-Chief
9 and Chief of the General Staff at the time, he was sat
10 around the table discussing those things.

11 Now that sounds like I am sloping shoulders. My
12 secondhand perceived view of what was discussed in 2004
13 was that at the time in 2004 things in southern Iraq
14 were still relatively quiet, relatively successful and
15 therefore moving towards a policy of handing over to
16 Iraqis was a reasonable thing to be doing. I have
17 already said that that set of circumstances had begun to
18 change during the early part of 2005 and by the summer
19 of 2005 had graphically changed. This was the arrival
20 of the triple EFPs.

21 So I think the decision was reasonable in 2004 to do
22 more in Afghanistan based on the circumstances that we
23 saw and were experiencing in southern Iraq in 2004, but
24 by 2005 the situation was changing. Maybe by 2006 they
25 had changed even further.

1 I ask a hypothetical question: should we have
2 revisited that decision, the one taken in 2004, to do
3 more in Afghanistan in 2006, revisited it perhaps during
4 the latter part of 2005/early 2006? Perhaps we should
5 have done. I could have played a part in saying I think
6 we should revisit it. I didn't say we should revisit
7 it. One accepted it as a policy decision and we got on
8 with it. Maybe that was an error.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You having inherited these decisions, but
10 being part of the chain of implementation in 2006/7, did
11 you regret at that point that you simply didn't have the
12 ability to reinforce in the south-east of Iraq and to
13 handle the situation there in a different way?

14 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: You mentioned General Shirreff
15 earlier. He put together an operation called Operation
16 Sinbad, which was designed to go through Basra district
17 by district to make Basra better before we handed over,
18 and he requested certain reinforcements from PJHQ and
19 from the forces in order to better deliver Sinbad.

20 Apart from a small proportion of what he asked for
21 he didn't get, because the focus was shifting
22 progressively towards Afghanistan. I don't know whether
23 he has given evidence to you, but he would say that was
24 a frustration of his. The fact of the matter is he got
25 on and carried out Operation Sinbad as well as he could,

1 visiting on the ground and seeing good work being done
2 by soldiers. He believes he have could have done it
3 more thoroughly and better had he had the uplift that he
4 had asked for, but didn't get, because we were already
5 going down the track of better supplying Afghanistan.

6 So I am afraid it comes back to what I have been
7 saying all along, that Afghanistan provided the context
8 of the constraint of what we might otherwise have done
9 in Iraq and could not do from 2004/5 onwards.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Given that we had to make a decision
11 between these two priorities, would I be right in
12 inferring -- I think we will come on in more detail to
13 Afghanistan in a minute -- your own view was that we got
14 it right at this point to be putting the main effort in
15 Afghanistan rather than in Iraq?

16 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I am not going to opine. I think
17 history and your inquiry can decide the relative
18 importance of Iraq.

19 As far as Afghanistan is concerned, I think that
20 always was a hugely important operation. I think the
21 west's track record in Afghanistan over the last
22 30 years has been somewhere between patchy and poor.
23 I don't want to go into a history lesson, but my take on
24 it in headline terms, that the west through the CIA in
25 particular was quite content to arm Mujahidin between

1 1979 and 1989. Once the Soviets had left Afghanistan
2 there was an opportunity to stabilise Afghanistan, but
3 the west moved away. That led to the first civil war in
4 Afghanistan, which allowed large areas of Afghanistan to
5 become ungoverned space and the country effectively
6 moving towards becoming a failed state into which Al
7 Qaeda were able to move, from which they were able to
8 mount their operations, most spectacularly in 9/11,
9 which concentrated the West's mind again on Afghanistan.

10 There was a second opportunity to stabilise
11 Afghanistan. I don't believe we took it then. I think
12 we did minimal in 2001/2. The Americans conducted
13 a counter-terrorism campaign in the east, Bin
14 Laden-hunting. We did a useful job within the Kabul
15 area in establishing the original ISAF, but not much
16 more. It was only when we began to resource under NATO
17 leadership the enlarged operation from about 2006 did
18 the west begin to engage significantly in Afghanistan.
19 Then the subsequent realisation that the Afghanistan and
20 Pakistan issues and in the tribal areas in between were
21 all one and the same, and were themselves -- I will use
22 a value judgment if I say more important. I would say
23 they are very important that we get right.

24 So we were constrained between Afghanistan,
25 misunderstood, but in my view extremely important, and

1 Iraq, something that we were doing because it was
2 decided that was the right thing to do.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

4 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: I think still on Afghanistan, Lawrence?

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. Following on a bit from this
6 discussion, first on the decision-making on Afghanistan,
7 you have described this decision-making process starting
8 in 2004. There were two parts of this. There is one
9 which you mentioned because of your own role at the
10 time, which was the ARRC, and then there was another one
11 about troops going into Helmand.

12 That started off again with, as you have already
13 mentioned, about 1,000 troops and then progressively
14 moved up: 3,000 troops, 5,000 troops and so on. By
15 which time you were presumably more in the relevant
16 loop.

17 As these incremental increases in troop numbers came
18 into being, were there opportunities then -- were they
19 taken -- to discuss the balance between Afghanistan and
20 Iraq?

21 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes, they were. The formal
22 process, the weekly Chiefs of Staff meeting on Wednesday
23 mornings, the agenda always had two principal points:
24 Iraq and Afghanistan. That provided a forum not only to
25 review what was going on individually within Iraq and

1 Afghanistan, but to put the two together.

2 Whether that was done sufficiently I think is a moot
3 point, but in a sense the policy had already been
4 established that we were handing over to the Iraqis in
5 Iraq and downscaling and handing over to them and
6 getting out as quickly as we could, because Afghanistan
7 was deemed to be more important.

8 Indeed, Sir Roderic referred to an article which
9 I -- an interview in the Daily Mail in October 2006 when
10 I talked about getting out of Iraq sometime soon. That
11 was purely in the context that Afghanistan was the major
12 operation we were getting into and we did not have the
13 capacity to resource both to the extent that we needed
14 to, and if Afghanistan was the operation we critically
15 had to get right, therefore we needed to achieve our
16 reduced objectives in Iraq as quickly as possible and in
17 that context get out of Iraq sometime soon.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Listening to what you are saying,
19 one conclusion might be that in the summer of 2004 the
20 British Government almost inadvertently took a decision
21 which was going to shape their future freedom of
22 manoeuvre in Iraq, and that's something that we can ask
23 more questions about.

24 If we then move on to 2006, essentially now what we
25 are saying is because these decisions have now reached

1 the point of troops going into Afghanistan, our freedom
2 of manoeuvre in Iraq is now for all practical purposes
3 severely constrained.

4 How is this handled at the political/military level?
5 If ministers perhaps were not fully aware of what they
6 were agreeing to -- things had obviously changed and you
7 have indicated how between 2004 and 2006, by the time
8 you get to 2006 they find themselves sort of stranded in
9 a way in Iraq and with this new commitment in
10 Afghanistan. Essentially what you are saying is that
11 Afghanistan had now become the priority.

12 Was that a deliberate decision taken at the highest
13 levels of Government or was that just a consequence of
14 a decision taken inadvertently a couple of years before?

15 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It was certainly the latter. It
16 was certainly a consequence of the decision taken in
17 2004 and it begged the hypothetical question which
18 I debated a moment or two ago as to whether in the light
19 of the way circumstances in Iraq were deteriorating
20 whether we should have revisited that decision. Without
21 getting into military doctrine, we have something we
22 call "question 4". When you are analysing a mission,
23 the fourth question you ask yourself is, "Has the
24 situation changed since my superior gave me my orders?"
25 If the answer is "yes", then you revisit the whole

1 decision-making process. Maybe we failed to do that,
2 but I have already debated that.

3 So undoubtedly the decision in 2004 constrained, as
4 I have said many times, what we could do in Iraq from
5 2006 onwards. The extent to which that was understood
6 at the highest levels of Government or the extent to
7 which that was a conscious policy decision, I think it
8 is fair to say I don't know. You have taken evidence
9 from Sir Jock Stirrup as the Chief of Defence Staff who
10 would have given the closest advice to the Secretary of
11 State for Defence and indeed to the Prime Minister.

12 In my three years as Chief of the General Staff and
13 therefore the head of the service which was doing the
14 heavy lifting, I never attended a Cabinet or a Cabinet
15 Subcommittee. So my views on the pressure that the army
16 was under and the competing needs of Iraq and
17 Afghanistan I wasn't able to voice. Indeed, I only had
18 a one-to-one discussion with Prime Minister Blair in his
19 last month as Prime Minister.

20 However, I did at the start of my time as Chief of
21 the General Staff write a lengthy letter to Des Browne,
22 who was then the Secretary of State for Defence.
23 I signed it in my first week as a precursor to my
24 introductory interview with him which lasted for some
25 hour and a quarter when I set out my concerns, which we

1 have broadly been rehearsing today, that the competing
2 demands of Iraq and Afghanistan put huge pressure on our
3 land forces and the army in particular, and this was
4 something that had to be attended to.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You indicated, apparently with some
6 regret, that you only had one conversation with Prime
7 Minister Blair.

8 Did you press for other opportunities to talk to the
9 Prime Minister? Were you surprised that you weren't
10 invited to Cabinet committees or subcommittees?

11 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The received wisdom is that --
12 not received wisdom -- the constitutional right of the
13 head of one of the single services is he has the right
14 of access to the Prime Minister if he requires it.
15 Usually that right is reserved for very dire
16 circumstances.

17 I felt that I was making my point sufficiently clear
18 in my dialogue with Des Browne, the Secretary of State
19 for Defence, on the basis of the lengthy letter I had
20 written to him, the hour and the quarter of discussion
21 I had with him and periodic other discussions I had
22 subsequently with him.

23 I assumed that the Chief of Defence Staff was having
24 similar conversations in parallel with the Prime
25 Minister. It is not -- again General Jackson's view

1 will be interesting on this. I think I know it, but you
2 will probably want to ask him whether he had frequent
3 one-to-one discussions with Prime Minister Blair.

4 I certainly didn't. He didn't invite me to talk to him
5 and the only interview I had at his invitation was in
6 his last month, which is probably not going to move
7 things along very far.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I am just interested in the sense
9 that around this time -- it is not what I am asking
10 questions about at the moment, but there are lot of
11 issues around the military covenant and so on which the
12 Prime Minister seemed to be quite interested in, but he
13 didn't talk to you about those either?

14 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Prime Minister Blair didn't talk
15 to me about them, no.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have reasonable confidence
17 that the Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief of
18 Defence Staff were vigorously expounding the sorts of
19 concerns you had expressed at the highest levels?

20 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: They told me they were.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will read into that what we may.

22 Can I put to you a proposition that we have heard,
23 and putting it to you as a proposition I would just be
24 interested in your comment.

25 The proposition goes something like this.

1 The army had had a very frustrating time in Iraq.
2 It was getting even more frustrating in the 2006 period.
3 It had started off well but now got rather difficult.
4 Afghanistan was a different sort of operation and
5 provided an opportunity for the army to recover some of
6 the ground that it had lost, revive its reputation, as
7 it were, and that there was therefore not only perhaps
8 a grand strategic need to move from Iraq to Afghanistan
9 as a priority but it actually suited the army extremely
10 well also.

11 I would be interested in your views on that
12 proposition.

13 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: It is an interesting proposition,
14 but I think I would refer back to some of my answers
15 some couple of hours ago, that I don't think we get
16 involved in operations and wars for the convenience of
17 the army. We do what the government of the day requires
18 us to do and we do it as well as we can within the
19 constraints of the resources and the manpower available.

20 That said, given that we were locked into, I have
21 described it as a lumpy set of circumstances in southern
22 Iraq, with the Americans increasing as we were
23 decreasing, there was an opportunity in southern
24 Afghanistan, and given there was a grand strategic
25 aspect to this as well to help out the Americans, there

1 was an opportunity for the British to get it right in
2 Afghanistan. If we were switching from Iraq to
3 Afghanistan because we wanted to help the Americans,
4 self-evidently we needed to do that as well as we could.

5 So I don't think it is anything to do with making
6 the army feel better. It was what we were required to
7 do and do it as well as we could.

8 We then get down to our understanding of what
9 southern Afghanistan was like, what it was going to be
10 like, what we would find there, what we hoped to do
11 there, how much we needed to take there, and I think
12 history again is recording that, having got there, we
13 found that it was more complicated and more difficult
14 than perhaps we had thought.

15 That's fairly unsurprising, but it meant that we had
16 to react to it, and go back to my earlier contention,
17 you could say Iraq was discretionary. I would say
18 Afghanistan was non-discretionary and we in the widest
19 sense, the West and the alliance, must get it right in
20 Afghanistan, not just for Afghanistan but for south Asia
21 and I think the implications are much wider than that,
22 even to the security of this country.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks very much. We do have to
24 move on, but I just want to ask you one question.
25 I referred to the sort of military covenant before and

1 you said earlier -- I am quoting what you said before:

2 "We needed to make sure we were expending sufficient
3 resources on looking after the legitimate needs of the
4 individual soldiers and their families in terms of their
5 pay, allowances, accommodation and equipment. We were
6 deficient" you said.

7 I just wondered if you could expand on how we were
8 deficient and what you felt able to do about it?

9 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I think we were deficient in
10 terms of private soldiers' pay. £1,150 take home way
11 a month for a month's fighting in Basra and Sangin
12 probably not enough. The Government reacted very
13 quickly to that with the operation allowance of a better
14 part of £2,500 coming in in about six weeks of it being
15 mooted as something we needed to do. The fact that the
16 accommodation our soldiers lived in, some of it very
17 good, some mediocre and some appalling. You can't turn
18 that around very quickly but you can put more money into
19 the accommodation programme, and we began to put more
20 money into the accommodation programme.

21 Our medical arrangements for the receipt of
22 casualties from Iraq and then Afghanistan.
23 Notwithstanding the tremendous efforts of a number of
24 individuals and particularly within the National Health
25 Service, we were significantly lacking in terms of

1 meeting the needs of the overall patient group, by which
2 I include the families of the wounded soldiers as well.
3 That has been turned around. So those are three
4 examples of things that we needed to do.

5 Almost more importantly -- and this gets back to --
6 Sir Rod was the first to mention the interview I gave to
7 the Daily Mail and the publicity that attracted, which
8 was a by-product, as it happened -- it was important for
9 our people, soldiers, and their families, and those who
10 care about the army, not just to understand that I was
11 fighting the corner within the corridors of Whitehall,
12 but that with the permission of the Secretary of State
13 for Defence, because Des Browne and I had discussed
14 these things, was talking publicly about it to reassure
15 our people that I knew what the problems were and that
16 we were all doing something about it, because I think
17 our morale in very general terms, not on the front line,
18 but our morale in general terms was fragile in 2006. My
19 biggest concern was that that fragility could have
20 turned into a sharp rise in the exits from our trained
21 manpower, akin, as I described it to Des Browne at the
22 time, to going over a cliff edge, and once your manning
23 has begun to plummet, we would have been in all kinds of
24 trouble trying to man two operations with units that
25 were not fully manned. That would have spiraled us down

1 into something of a nightmare.

2 So we had to do something, a number of things, quite
3 quickly for our people to know we were on the case of
4 their individual needs to bring some balance back to
5 this Government.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think you could do that
7 because you were an incoming CGS or could the process is
8 have been started earlier?

9 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: How I answer that question could
10 be taken as implied criticism of my predecessor which
11 emphatically it is not. It is often easier to start
12 something at the start of an appointment when you have
13 had the chance to survey the landscape, if you like,
14 think about it, and coming from the position of
15 Commander-in-Chief, which I held for just under
16 18 months, one going round the army, with time to go
17 round the army, could sense both at home and abroad the
18 pressures building on soldiers and their families and
19 deciding something had to be done. Something had to be
20 done in two or three different ways, one of which was to
21 bring some balance back into the military covenant, and
22 the other was to try to energise this debate about how
23 we spent our resources between the equipment programme
24 and the operational -- the operating costs programme,
25 and also within the programme in the balance between the

1 air, land and maritime areas. These were all areas that
2 I felt very strongly about when I moved from being
3 Commander-in-Chief to Chief of the General Staff, and
4 they are all contained within the letter that I sent to
5 Des Browne, which having talked about, Chairman, I am
6 very happy to give you a copy of. I have one which has
7 a coffee stain on I'm afraid. I will find a new one.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: A number of our documents have the
9 same problem. Thank you.

10 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: We have a few more questions to ask and
11 enough time I think to gather them while leaving you
12 enough time at the end for any final reflections you
13 want to offer us. Now over to Martin Gilbert.

14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn from the question
15 of casualties to that of fatalities, inquiries and
16 inquests. It is inevitable in a conflict situation
17 there will be fatalities and we have spoken to many
18 bereaved families about the awfulness of the moment when
19 a knock comes at the door and particularly the
20 difficulties which then follow. Many of the initial
21 difficulties that they mention to us, for example, in
22 relation to timely notification and also delays with
23 inquiries and inquests were in the process of being
24 resolved by the time you took up office as CGS, but it
25 remains a significant issue for the army and for our

1 Inquiry.

2 A particular issue raised with us is the attitude of
3 the MoD and the armed forces, and in the view of many of
4 the families of service personnel killed in Iraq, they
5 felt the military attitude was dismissive and overly
6 defensive. Indeed, Bob Ainsworth told us in his
7 evidence that in respect of bereaved his families his
8 words were, "We just weren't getting it right?"

9 Would you comment on that?

10 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: If that's how some families felt,
11 that's an absolute disaster and tragedy, and it cuts to
12 the quick as far as I am concerned. Pretty much
13 everything I have tried to do in the last three or four
14 years has been to improve the situation particularly for
15 our wounded and where possible for our bereaved. You
16 mentioned inquests. It was clear to me while I was
17 Commander-in-Chief that we had this extraordinary
18 backlog of inquests building up.

19 Eventually it was addressed, but it took a lot of
20 eventually about addressing it before the south
21 Oxfordshire coroner and the Wiltshire coroner were
22 reinforced with others so that the increasing number of
23 fatalities could have their inquests heard. It took too
24 long for those coroners to be reinforced in my view.

25 I can't gainsay the evidence that you have heard

1 from families. I have obviously talked to a tremendous
2 number of families myself. The visiting officer formula
3 that we have, with the exception of one or two
4 spectacular cases where visiting officers have let their
5 families down, the vast majority of comment I have had
6 has been that the visiting officer who then remains in
7 a relationship with the family has been extremely
8 helpful and that has been a plus. If that's not the
9 case and is widespread not the case, then I have lived
10 in cloud cuckoo land for the last three or four years,
11 because I believe that aspect of it is right.

12 Where I think there has been greater contention is
13 the representation of families at inquests, when it has
14 been said many times or the question has been put and
15 I have put the question: why does the MoD not pay for
16 a lawyer to be present to represent the interests of the
17 family at an inquest? The answer has come back that
18 no-one is in the dock. No-one is to blame. This is the
19 coroner asking questions of witnesses to establish truth
20 and that there is no need for the expense of a lawyer to
21 represent the families.

22 That might be narrowly true. My own view is and was
23 and was expressed from time to time that if families
24 felt they wanted representation or they wanted
25 someone -- I am not belittling -- to hold their hand or

1 guide them through the process, that I think we should
2 have done.

3 Again going back to Northern Ireland, the court
4 witness section, which for years helped military
5 witnesses give evidence in courts up and down the
6 province, was really good at meeting, briefing on
7 procedure and being there to guide military witnesses,
8 not in what they said, but knowing how the process was
9 to be managed. I experienced that many times as
10 a witness myself. To me it was counterintuitive that we
11 could not do this.

12 I think we have moved towards a better process, but
13 in the early days of a large number of fatalities
14 I think we were deficient. I believe the situation is
15 somewhat better now, but this is 2010, and I think the
16 problem we have is back in 2004, particularly 5, 6 and
17 7.

18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Another concern which quite a number of
19 families have mentioned concern the internal
20 investigations being carried out by the military, that
21 they were not sufficiently independent or rigorous.
22 This particularly concerned questions of friendly fire
23 or blue on blue, and whether suggestion that the actions
24 or inactions from a member of the armed forces or an
25 organisation may have been a contributory factor in the

1 death.

2 Were you aware of these concerns and was this
3 something you were able to address?

4 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: Yes. One was aware of the
5 concerns. I am not sure whether I want to get into
6 specifics of cases and I am just trying to think of
7 specific cases in framing an answer. I think there are
8 a number of factors that have to be weighed up. One is
9 the perception of the family. Another is what actually
10 happened in the context of the events and the
11 uncertainty on the ground.

12 What I do know is unsatisfactory is if a family
13 feels at the end of the process it has not really got to
14 the truth and there are still questions unanswered.
15 That is unsatisfactory, and if we have not resolved
16 those questions in some family's mind, then the process
17 is not complete and we should go through that.

18 I joined Bob Ainsworth on certainly one occasion as
19 Chief of the General Staff in a meeting with a family
20 who felt there were unanswered questions and it was
21 terribly difficult for the family, and both Bob
22 Ainsworth and I, when he was Armed Forces Minister, you
23 know, felt the situation was not right. We ought to be
24 able to bring these things to closure to the sufficient
25 satisfaction of a family. It is bad enough to have lost

1 someone that is dear to you on operations. It is worse
2 if you think there is a lack of truth or transparency or
3 even worse still, that something is being covered up.
4 I don't believe that there is a policy to cover anything
5 up, but if something is not transparent and the family
6 has unanswered questions, I think that's a black mark.
7 I think that's a tragedy.

8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

9 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: We are coming close to the end. In
10 a moment I would like to invite your general
11 reflections, but just two or three specific points,
12 looking back at the whole Iraq experience.

13 I suppose one way to ask it is to ask for your
14 assessment of how both our friends and allies and our
15 potential enemies will have viewed the performance of
16 the British armed forces in Iraq over the whole period.

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The key answer or key question to
18 discuss is how the Americans view us. I think at the
19 senior level in the American military they understand
20 what we are doing, why we were doing it and gave us
21 consideration for that. I think at the middle level in
22 the US military not everyone did understand and couldn't
23 understand why we were not doing more in those critical
24 periods of 2005 and 2006 for all the reasons that we
25 discussed extensively with regard to Afghanistan over

1 the last two or three hours.

2 So I think there are a variety of views within the
3 US military. That said, the relationship in general
4 terms between the British Army and the United States
5 Army and United States Marine Corps is very good and
6 very close. We respect each other and I think that has
7 always been the case and I think will remain the case.
8 I have used the term "lumpy" a couple of times. I think
9 there were some lumpy moments as far as Iraq was
10 concerned.

11 As far as other European allies are concerned, well,
12 one could give a whole range of answers, which really
13 comes from their sort of domestic political
14 perspectives.

15 I am inclined to suggest that any of our European
16 partners, if they are willing to be bold enough to
17 criticise us, want to look very closely at themselves
18 and say, "What were you doing, old chap?" Some of our
19 European, particularly Eastern European partners, have
20 been very good and loyal allies. Some more traditional
21 European partners have perhaps been less forthcoming.
22 So, you know, deal with the mote in your own eye, mate,
23 before you start looking at ours. Sorry. That's a bit
24 colloquial.

25 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. We understand what you are

1 saying I think.

2 Then, again, taking the whole period, you were in on
3 the 2002 planning as a CGS and you saw and served pretty
4 much up to the 2009 exit. You said -- you were also CGS
5 in late October 2006:

6 "We will remain in southern Iraq until the job is
7 done."

8 Now the task that was set in 2002 in the initial
9 planning had changed. Circumstances changed. It was
10 much extended, but was the job done by July 2009?

11 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: The job the British were asked to
12 do in southern Iraq I believe was substantially done by
13 the time we left at the end of July in 2009. In
14 military terms, cut to the quick, our task was to guard
15 the southern flank of the coalition. I think we did
16 that. Basra today, as I said earlier, if we went there
17 today, I think we would find, in a situation which has
18 the prospect of development and hope in the future, free
19 from the kind of fear and disagreeable regime of Saddam
20 Hussein prior to 2003.

21 I have never opined in public and I won't about
22 whether we should or shouldn't have gone into Iraq. The
23 fact of the matter is that we did. We lost 179 British
24 lives there. I think their families should be proud of
25 what those 179 who lost their lives and all the

1 thousands of others achieved, because Basra has a chance
2 of a better future than it probably had under Saddam
3 Hussein. So I think that is a positive.

4 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you.

5 Last question from me and it really is only a way of
6 introducing an invitation for your reflections, but you
7 gave a great deal of personal energy and effort as CGS
8 to increasing popular awareness of the work of the armed
9 services and support for them.

10 You have done that in an age when the media context
11 has changed almost beyond recognition from 15 years
12 before, if not even ten.

13 Could you say something about the legacy for the
14 army from the Iraq experience both professionally but
15 also in popular understanding and acceptance and support
16 for it?

17 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: I remember my senior regimental
18 colleague, now Field Marshall The Lord Inge when he was
19 Chief of Defence Staff -- he may have been Chief of the
20 General Staff, visiting just prior to the onset of
21 hostilities in the first Gulf War. A group of soldiers
22 said to him, "Are the people with us, Sir?" It is
23 really important that soldiers who are risking their
24 lives in the national interest feel that the people are
25 behind them. I think the problem we got into running up

1 to about the middle of 2007 was that Iraq was a very
2 unpopular war. Afghanistan had become, and in many ways
3 still is and that is what we still have to work on,
4 a misunderstood war, tarred in some people's minds or
5 many people's minds with the same brush of unpopularity
6 as Iraq was. The armed forces were being lumped into
7 that whole bundle of unpopularity.

8 What happened in autumn 2007, and we saw a variety
9 of expressions of it, was the separation I think in the
10 general public's mind in the main between the issues of
11 Iraq and Afghanistan, one unpopular and one
12 misunderstood, from the people, the members of the armed
13 forces that were conducting the operation, and that
14 showed itself in a huge upsurge in support. Not
15 sympathy, but genuine support.

16 We saw it through advent of homecoming parades.
17 I know from talking to soldiers that when they march
18 through their own home town and there are thousands of
19 people on the street clapping and waving flags that
20 those soldiers march ten feet tall and they feel, "What
21 I am doing is appreciated by the people".

22 When the people of this country have given
23 60 million to a new charity, Help for Heroes, when the
24 British legion has had its three best Poppy Appeals in
25 the last three years, when SSAFA raised 5 million in

1 seven months to build two homes from home for the
2 families of those wounded, one at Selly Oak and one at
3 Hedley Court. That says to me the people have got
4 behind the armed forces.

5 Private view: I don't think the last Government knew
6 how lucky they were that actually the people's attitude
7 had changed. What is really important now, and I am
8 afraid I am digressing to Afghanistan, is that because
9 the mission in Afghanistan is so important we have to
10 get support for the mission and not just support for the
11 servicemen conducting the operation.

12 I think the attitude towards the armed forces has
13 changed hugely. It is a wave, and waves have crests and
14 waves subside. I don't see it continuing well on into
15 the future but I think there is a much healthier respect
16 for the armed forces, for the difficult work they are
17 doing, and that's important in its own right, but it is
18 really important as far as the morale and motivation of
19 the British soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who
20 are conducting operations in difficult places at the
21 moment and their families.

22 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: Thank you. We have had in the course of
23 this quite long morning reflections on a number of
24 significant, even vitally important issues. Is there
25 anything that we have missed or have not given you the

1 opportunity to reflect?

2 GEN. SIR RICHARD DANNATT: No. Sir John, I think we have
3 really covered most of the issues and I don't really
4 want to just reiterate things. We have talked about the
5 absence of proper campaign planning and the vacuum that
6 created in Iraq, which made a difficult situation worse.

7 We have talked about the slow way in which
8 priorities have been applied to the expenditure of
9 resources in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and the need to
10 prioritise rigorously between the problems that are
11 staring you in the face and the problems you might or
12 might not have to face in the future. I think that
13 balance has still got to be addressed. That's a major
14 task and a major challenge for the defence review that
15 is ongoing.

16 Perhaps famously we have not talked about the
17 helicopters in this discussion at all. I think that the
18 momentum on the battlefield, and I use the term broadly
19 to cover counterinsurgency, the increasing momentum that
20 can be achieved by the use of the air dimension is huge.
21 I think the decisions not to fund as well as we might
22 have done future helicopter programmes has been
23 a significant shortfall and one which I to my
24 frustration failed to make much progress on, and I think
25 that has been -- I will not say hamstringing --

1 a definite negative and to an extent we are paying the
2 price for that in Afghanistan, and you can't catch up
3 just like that.

4 I think otherwise, Sir John, thank you for your
5 questions. I think most of the things that I might have
6 wished to talk about have come out and I am grateful for
7 your indulgence.

8 SIR JOHN CHILCOT: In that case our very genuine thanks to
9 our witness for your evidence this morning. I will
10 close the session now and we will resume at 2 o'clock
11 this afternoon when our witness will be Sir Michael
12 Jackson, your predecessor.

13 (1.00 pm)

14 (The luncheon adjournment)

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