Thursday, 24 June 2010

SIR DAVID MANNING

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll open this session with a welcome to Sir David Manning. Thank you for coming. I know you have read our standard text on the terms on which this private session is being held. So without more ado, start with the questions by Baroness Prashar.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Morning, David.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Morning.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I want to look at the issues of containment, 9/11 and regime change, and get some understanding of the thinking that was around at the time, because I think you were in the States at the time of 9/11.

Before we go into that, when you took up the post, what was the thinking around containment, both here and in the States, and what was the intelligence telling you about containment?

SIR DAVID MANNING: The sense in London, when I took over the job, which is in August 2001, was that containment was probably eroding. It hadn't become, I think, a complete failure, but there was certainly a sense that something serious had to be done about it.

The feeling, I think, was that Saddam was getting bolder and shooting at the planes in the No Fly Zones, which certainly concerned the Prime Minister, who I think was worried about the possibility of a British pilot being shot down and dragged through the streets of Baghdad. But I think it was a bigger issue than that. The feeling was that some ten years after the First Gulf War, steam was running out of this; that it was no longer very effective; that the smuggling of materials into Iraq was probably at a worrying level; the Oil for Food programme was

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being used by the regime for its own purposes, rather than as a tool of the international community to put pressure on Saddam; and that a rethink was absolutely necessary about the whole question of the containment process.

I think there was also a feeling that some of the key players in the Security Council were losing their will for this, if you like. But I think there was a feeling that the consensus was breaking down at the top level, that probably the Iraqis had found increasing ways through, that we were at risk of finding ourselves absolutely, as it were, tied down in a No Fly Zone but at greater and greater risk, and that containment as a strategy ten years after the First Gulf War, if it hadn't run its course, it certainly needed some pretty radical rethinking.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was there similar thinking in the United States, in your understanding?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I have to be honest. I don't know at that stage. I suspect there was because my American colleague in posting much earlier, when I was in Israel, had talked to me about the options. I had seen him privately as a friend, and he had said that they had to decide whether to strengthen the cage, if you like, or to accept that the cage simply wasn't going to hold Saddam anymore.

So I think there must have been a debate going on, but to be honest with you, I don't really know because I came into this in the late summer. But it was perfectly clear there was a big debate going on in our system, and I would be very surprised if

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there hadn't been extensive discussions between our own people and the Americans about this.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: As I said, you were in the States when 9/11 happened, and you had been there for a briefing.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the American thinking just before 9/11 about Iraq? Was a regime change on the agenda, and what were the means they were thinking in terms of regime change and --

SIR DAVID MANNING: My visit there was the first time I had gone there in my new role, and it was really in order to try and establish a good and close working relationship with Dr Rice, which is what the Prime Minister wanted me to do.

I had been exposed for the first time to the Bush team, if you like, when he came to Chequers in July, I think, of 2001, but I had flown back from my job in Brussels just to be there for that period.

So I hadn't any great working knowledge of the Bush team at all, and if I was going to get alongside them, it was obviously important to go over there quickly. So what I did was I flew over as quickly as I could in September. There was indeed discussion, but it was at a fairly general level, and it was much more of a getting to know you session, as far as I was concerned, than a negotiation.

Having said that, Dr Rice certainly didn't spend a lot of time talking to me about Iraq, and I would not have come back thinking that Iraq was a preoccupation. ████████████████ ██████████████████████████████ The concern they had, if anything about Iraq, was we have got to think about containment and the Middle East peace process.

But this certainly wasn't a visit that was about Iraq, and

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I have no strong memory that we discussed it in any detail at all.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So at that stage you didn't think it was a significant part of the agenda; they were more concerned about [redacted] rather than Iraq per se?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I expect they were thinking about it, but I didn't have any sense when I was there in September that this was a top priority for them. If anything, my impression at that stage, I think, was that Bush was focused actually on the domestic agenda, and schools and "no child left behind"[1]. I don't think it's a coincidence that when 9/11 happened, he was in a school classroom in Sarasota.

So I'm sure people in the administration were concerned about foreign policy, but I don't think at that stage this was what motivated Bush. In a sense, he had brought in -- I think he had deliberately brought in some very senior figures to do foreign and defence policy for him. [redacted] and I think he probably at that stage thought he would be a domestic President. This is guesswork on my part. But he certainly hadn't shown, as far as I'm aware, any interest in it, and I think it's 9/11 that completely changes the focus of Bush's presidency and his preoccupations.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Obviously, you know, we hear things changed after 9/11 quite dramatically. What I really want to understand is: what were the discussions at Number 10 about the regime change after 9/11 and early 2002, and what was shaping our thinking? Was it being done independently? Was it being shaped by what we heard from the USA?

[1] Title of legislation

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SIR DAVID MANNING: The preoccupations immediately after 9/11 were Afghanistan, and the whole question of what were we going to do about the Taliban, and what were we going to do about Al Qaeda; how were we going to get into Afghanistan. It was one thing to say that we were going to issue an ultimatum. It's quite another thing to get the troops on the ground.

In the early days, the Prime Minister was concerned -- I think "restraint" is too strong a term, but he wanted to be sure that the Americans understood that they had their allies with them, but we should do nothing in a rush. We should take a considered view about what to do.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And that was his view at that stage?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. If I recall, there's a letter of about 14 December recording his conversation with Bush, and it's very clear on this. It may have been a letter he sent. I can't recall that, looking at the papers. It's very clear at this point that he is basically concerned to steady everybody and for there not to be some sort of lashing out. [redacted]

I think the sense that we had in London in the immediate aftermath of Afghanistan was that that was the focus. And the question was what we were going to do (a) about Afghanistan, but (b) the bigger issue of Al Qaeda, which becomes Bush's global war on terror. So this is the beginning of the whole sort of leitmotif, if you like, of the Bush presidency.

Now, there are voices in Washington, as I recall, not least, I think, a letter from several senators during this period, saying, "Hang on, we are sure Iraq is involved", and it's clear that there are pressures within the administration for focus on Iraq and those who want to believe Iraq is involved, [redacted]

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But there was no sense I had that Bush, in his conversations with the Prime Minister, was focused on this. Certainly in the early part of 2002, when I went across, again for some of these regular discussions, it was quite clear from what Dr Rice was saying that, yes, they were thinking about Iraq, but they had no plans, and that they certainly had no intention at that stage of doing anything about Iraq.

It's difficult to remember now how difficult Afghanistan was. Iraq sort of consumes our attention, but actually it certainly didn't consume anybody's attention at that stage.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When did the link between WMD and counter-terrorism merge in the thinking?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think the idea of terrorism and WMD does indeed come from the Iraq episode. I think there are different causes for this.

First of all, there is the physical evidence that is discovered of very crude attempts by the Al Qaeda terrorists to develop some kind of dirty bomb which, as I understand it -- and I'm not a scientist -- means wrapping radioactive material around explosives. So this is fairly crude, but it is discovered in the camps. There are also, I think, suggestions of some very primitive attempts to look at CW and BW.

This obviously triggers considerable concern in the intelligence and security community. It's not new. Terrorists have used sarin in Japan. But I think it suddenly refocuses everybody.

So I think that is one reason for it. But I think there's also the issue, this calculus of risk having changed, which is an argument that I think Cheney in particular used a great deal,

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which says, look, we have risked being asleep at the wheel on this. We thought it was okay to leave the Taliban to get on with this. It wasn't going to affect us. Actually look what happened. So if we don't sharpen up and accept that there's a risk in Iraq, where we know this is a leader who has had this stuff in the past, this could seep out into terrorist groups, we know he supports terrorism, ergo we had better do something about it.

I think that is also another, if you like, intellectual argument that Cheney puts forward.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When did the Prime Minister become concerned about it?

SIR DAVID MANNING: He was certainly very concerned about WMD, but it's not simply an Iraq point.

Again, it's easy just to focus the WMD argument on Iraq, but it was much wider than that, and this wasn't new. There were serious concerns about WMD programmes in other countries. Certainly the Prime Minister's view was you had to tackle WMD and proliferation on a global basis, [redacted]. There was pressure to deal with the Libyan programme. There was worry about the Iraqi programme. There was concern about Iran, not only during this period, but when I was in the United States, and also the whole question of AQ Khan [redacted].

So this is a very big issue. It's not simply an Iraq issue.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I think we need to move on.

THE CHAIRMAN: Iraq is very much at the centre of our sights. Rod?

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: I need your help here digging into the memory bank of nine years ago. You were in Washington at the time of 9/11. Then it isn't clear from the records we have been given so far when you were next in Washington, except that [redacted].[2]

Can you recall that meeting? Can you recall a sequence of visits to Washington in the autumn of September 2001?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Certainly there's a meeting well before that, because I remember I went with the Prime Minister when he went across for the memorial service, and he then was present for Bush's speech at Congress. So that's the end of September, I think.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's late September?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, and it's at that point that the argument is very focused on: we need to think about a proper ultimatum, we need to measure how we are going to do this, we need to build a Coalition.

Thereafter I can't remember exactly what the trigger was for the December visit, and I can't, without going back to the papers, I'm afraid, remember how often I go. I don't think I would have gone again between the end of September and December because I'm airborne with the Prime Minister who is flying like a bat out of hell around the world at this stage.

[2] Sir Roderic referred to evidence that suggested that the witness had been in the US after 9/11 but before the end of 2001; the Inquiry had, however, not - at the time of the hearing - seen any HMG records which could confirm this. HMG has since provided one.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I seem to remember you turning up in Moscow at some point.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, exactly, and the sub-continent and the Gulf and so on. So I can't remember exactly --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm sure we will get that detail, and it's not even clear that it's December. It might well have been late November.

So far as I can see, this was the first Washington visit that you made in tandem with Richard Dearlove as head of SIS, though there were several more that followed after that.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the first time I was in Washington with him was on the night after 9/11, because he came across, together with -- I think it was Eliza, and the team from GCHQ, and I drove down, courtesy of Jeremy Greenstock, from New York, where I was marooned, and there was a meeting through most of that night. [redacted] . That's the first time I went.

I did go, I think, on two subsequent occasions on my own with him, but I can't remember the dates exactly without going back to the papers, I'm afraid.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm interested in the pattern, because for you in your role and the head of SIS to go jointly to Washington -- the first ones you say you coincided there after 9/11, but thereafter you planned some of your visits jointly together -- was, I think, a departure from previous behaviour.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, and I think it probably reflected the new weight that the intelligence agencies had in the system. This is something that emerges after 9/11. It's in a sense inevitable because the Americans choose to play it this way.

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Tenet is absolutely a key figure, and is, I suppose, if you like, the central repository, insofar as there is one in the American system, for the intelligence. I think, and we have to find our counterparts.

But I suspect it's not just about American organisation. I think after 9/11 you see a completely new emphasis in Whitehall from ministers, and indeed in terms of budgetary provision, for the agencies. The fact that they had become the natural interlocutors of key players in the Bush administration, and at a time when they are being resourced -- given, anyway, much, much higher priority for resourcing, I think reflect a sort of shift in weight in the system.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And as a result of that, Richard Dearlove spends much more time with the Prime Minister and attends more Prime Ministerial meetings than his predecessors had been in the habit of doing?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I guess. You would be able to look back at your own experience. I only have the experience I had from 9/11 onwards. Richard was certainly part of the group the Prime Minister consulted regularly, and Richard had access to the Prime Minister, I guess, pretty much when he wanted it.

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: On 30 November -- I think you have had these records drawn to your attention -- you had a meeting with [SIS4][3]. You evidently asked him for advice on Iraq, and he then very quickly that evening -- I think you wanted it straight

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away -- sent you a paper on Iraq.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Do you recall what triggered that meeting?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I don't recall exactly what triggered it, but in the role I had, which you will recall, I think it is important if something catches your eye to go back to the system and say, "I need this to be considered and I need to alert the Prime Minister".

So the Iraq episode is one of a series. I remember asking for papers on Saudi Arabia, which worried me very much. I thought it was very fragile at the time. I remember asking for papers on what was going on in Nepal, which may seem slightly esoteric, but we were told that the Marxists were about to take over, and what was the effect going to be on India.

So I think it's part of a pattern, but it certainly reflects that Iraq is out there as an issue, what do we think about it, and [SIS4] provided a useful paper which I can't remember, but I'm sure I would have put up to the Prime Minister.

Then the sense maybe something is going to happen in Iraq, or indeed in Syria incidentally -- there were worries at this stage that the Americans might have Syria in their sights -- this sort of fades away a bit, but this was, I would imagine -- if I'm honest with you, I can't remember exactly -- that that's what prompted it.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And the paper that [SIS4] gives you, which actually then becomes three papers, is essentially about the pros and cons of regime change.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: It's predominantly about the wider politics,

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[3] This SIS officer is referred to as SIS4 throughout the Inquiry's documentation.

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but including obviously the WMD aspects and so on.

Why would you have gone to [SIS4] for this advice, rather than some other source or collective such as the Cabinet Office or the Foreign Office?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't remember what prompted it. My guess is it's something as simple as having bumped into him at a meeting, and said to him, knowing that he was one of our best Arabists, what do you think, and he said, I'll write you a paper. But I really can't remember what triggered it. But I think, looking around at this stage, the best advice probably, and a view from somebody who probably understood these people a great deal better than most of the rest of us. That's my guess, but I couldn't swear to that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: He is an outstanding expert on the area. Your going to him presumably reflects the fact that the people who should be the first line of this sort of advice in the Foreign Office or the Cabinet Office don't actually match that expertise. You need really good advice quickly.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I wouldn't go as far as that. I wouldn't say they are mutually exclusive, and it may even have been suggested to me. I may have bumped into Richard who said, I tell you what, why doesn't [SIS4] send you a paper? I simply can't remember in the maelstrom of events. But I did think it was useful to have, as it were, a sideways look from a real expert.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you remember the urgency? He met you, and then the same evening he sent you a paper.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know why. I can't remember whether this coincides with the letter from the senators in Washington, and Christopher's telegram saying Iraq has suddenly become

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an issue in the American debate. It may have been that I thought, blimey, you know, we had better see what people think about this. But it sort of faded away again by Christmas, and we were deep into Afghan problems.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The substance of his first paper on the Friday evening is all about how we head the Americans off doing regime change. Indeed, it says:

"If the US heads for direct action, have we ideas which could to divert them to an alternative course?"

Now, one might speculate, that's Friday evening, you quite likely put it in the Prime Minister's weekend box.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, probably did.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: On the Monday -- if 3 December is a Monday; perhaps it's Tuesday -- Richard Dearlove sends you that paper officially, as it were, from his office, but with two other papers, one of which is essentially a shorter version of that same paper, and the other of which points in exactly the opposite direction and begins:

"At our meeting on 30 November ..."

This is [SIS4] to you still:

"... we discussed how we could combine an objective of regime change in Baghdad with the need to protect important regional interests which would be at grave risk."

Then it sets out a route map for regime change very openly. He says the key idea is that it is possible to speak openly about support for regime change in Iraq.

So there's a shift between 30 November and 3 December. Can you enlighten us on why they would have produced or been asked to produce a second paper looking at the other side of the coin?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, maybe just because of that. You know, what are the options we have got, rather than having any

specific plan to do it. I can't remember exactly what would have triggered that, but regime change at this stage, of course, is not about invading Iraq.

I think it's important to remember, until the spring of 2002, when one talks about regime change, certainly the idea is how can you foment regime change within the country,

. So it wasn't a terribly promising line of approach. But I don't think there's anything particular about it, except to examine all the options that are available. Coming back to what Baroness Prashar was talking about, if you are concerned that containment is failing, what are your other options?

So I think it would be in that context.

[4] and I think -- I can't swear to you, but I think that would be the sort of context of that kind of discussion.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The key add on in these papers is the emphasis that it would have to be supplemented from outside by air support.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE:

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[4] The witness explained that, at that stage within the UK system, the concept of regime change was about how you could foment regime change within the country; nobody

SIR DAVID MANNING:

I don't think the Prime Minister ever made any secret of the fact he thought getting rid of Saddam would be a good thing to do. I think I mentioned in my open testimony, I think it's very striking, if you go back to the speech in Chicago in 1999, the two people he said the international community must deal with are Milosovic and Saddam.

So I don't think anybody is in any doubt that he would have felt that getting a new regime in Iraq was a good thing. But I think there's a big gap between that and

envisaged anything else."

SIR RODERIC LYNE:

Would that[5] be an accurate reconstruction?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it probably is. It's difficult to be categoric. I didn't see the whole process in Washington either.

My sense is that when I go -- I think it's at the end of

[5] In the preceding text, Sir Roderic had set out his understanding of the US position in early 2002, including the witness' conversations with Dr Rice.

January -- to see Condi, and I raise this because it's clearly something that's now being discussed, she's pretty clear that no decisions have been taken. I think it's at that point that I say, look, if you are starting to think about Iraq, you've got to think about the UN route. You've got to think about the implications of this. There are all sorts of big issues that you've got to take into account. She says yes, and I think I had much the same conversation, as I recall, about a month later.

It is clear, however, that other bits of the administration are certainly starting to think about this. Once Afghanistan is, as it were -- it's not resolved, but the immediate crisis is resolved, it is clear that this comes back to the top.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [6]

[6] In the exchange that follows, Sir Roderic had asked about the role of SIS in briefing the Prime Minister during this period. The witness described the type of briefing that would have been supplied.

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SIR DAVID MANNING:

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: A final question before we move on. The Foreign Office was informed of this. They received two of the three papers that Richard Dearlove sent to you, although, interestingly, not all three. They got a slightly expurgated version. And the Foreign Secretary sent a letter saying he thought these papers were very perceptive and he hoped the Prime Minister would read them, or his private secretary sent them.

So no reservations expressed at that stage by the Foreign Office, either in terms of SIS leading on a bit of action that was heavily political, going direct to Number 10 on it, rather than through the traditional orthodox route via the Foreign Secretary; nor reservations about regime change, when the Foreign Secretary's consistent public position, and indeed

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private position, in advice to the Prime Minister was that regime change could not be a legal or legitimate objective of British policy.

So what impression does that leave one of the Foreign Office at this stage?

SIR DAVID MANNING:

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So what he sent was a short letter, having seen the [SIS4] papers -- these were briefing papers -- saying these are good papers, perceptive, and he hopes the Prime Minister will read them. So no reservations expressed there. He has looked at them. He has sent an approving comment on them. But it's otherwise a rather curious vacuum. There is the Foreign Secretary who is arguing already, and continues to argue, for caution on this subject. We will come back to that later.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yet here are papers saying let's co-operate with the Americans on regime change, and he says these are good papers, the Prime Minister should read them. Otherwise you are not getting input from the Foreign Office on this subject. That's all you get, one sentence.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he's had pretty frequent discussions with the Prime Minister himself. I don't know if you count that as input, but there's no doubt that they see a lot of each other.

Again, I think you have to ask him,

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: The words "regime change" are all over these papers, and that normally triggers in him a red light, but it doesn't on this occasion.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I doubt -- and you would have to ask him -- whether that for him, at that stage, meant hitting the beaches. I think "regime change" for him at this stage is, is it possible for us to get -- rather as we talk now about Iran, can we get a more congenial government to deal with? But you would have to ask him that.

But I think it would be a mistake to assume, because of that paper going across, that he wasn't seeing a lot of the Prime Minister. They talked a lot.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The papers were also copied directly to the Middle Eastern Chief in the Foreign Office at the time, Alan Goulty, [SIS4]'s oppo. Was he making any input to this?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I'm not aware that he made any input. If he did, it would have been internally in the Foreign Office. He certainly didn't come, as far as I'm aware, to meetings. He may have been involved in meetings in the Cabinet Office. That's perfectly possible. But no, I don't think so.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence, over to you. We are into March, I think.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. I want to put two propositions to you, and then move on to the options paper.

The first one is that in your conversations with Condi Rice

you are pressing for time before any decision is taken in Washington until there has been a proper consideration in the UK, and that, I guess, leads on to the build-up to Crawford.

Secondly, that though you have stressed, correctly I think, that regime change up to this point tends to be something that's internally fomented, it's becoming clear on the American side that large-scale military action could well be the route to regime change. This is January and February.

Are both of those fair?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it's certainly true by March/April. I didn't come back -- I don't recall coming back from my trip in February thinking military action was sort of the new, if you like, orthodoxy. But I think by the time the Prime Minister goes to the ranch in April, it's clear that American minds are turning to that, and this is after the anyway immediate resolution of the Afghan issue, where apparently military force has worked, and I'm sure that this feeds into the argument in Washington, well, if we can do in Afghanistan, we need to think about doing it more widely, and people like Perle and, I suspect, Cheney would have made that argument. But I think February may be too soon.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. Let's concentrate on the set of papers that Tom McKane sent you on 6 March 2002[7] ████████████████ ████████████████████████████. Did you commission these papers? They were sent to you.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I probably did. I can't remember again what the immediate cause was. It may have been for the Prime Minister himself, or I may have known that he would in a few weeks be going to see Bush, and I wanted him to have the arguments set out. But I'm afraid I can't remember exactly what

the cause was.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In the covering note Tom McKane says:

"The papers commissioned by the Prime Minister which we are to discuss in your office tomorrow, 7 March."

Now, I'm not sure if there is any record of actually the conclusions these discussions came to, or indeed whether these papers were actually discussed with the Prime Minister or whether he just read them. Of all the papers we have seen, this is the closest to a full blown options analysis.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't remember whether there was a full discussion. I suspect there was, but I would have to go back to the papers myself. But certainly I think these are papers that are designed to prepare the Prime Minister for discussions with the President.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If you read the paper, I think one of the conclusions you are likely to come to is that if you think regime change is going to happen by action by the opposition groups, even if supported, you may have to wait a long time.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And even with an air campaign it's going to be pretty tricky. So the logic of this is that regime change equals a ground campaign. There's all sorts of concerns in the paper, but that's the strong conclusion you would get. Do you think that was --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think it is, and I think it also bears out

[7] A version of this paper has appeared in the public domain.

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So yes, I think that is the conclusion of it, and I think it then leads you to say, well, if that's the way that the argument falls, then it becomes very important indeed to try and do it through the UN route. Get the inspectors in and avoid this. So that was the conclusion I was drawing at that stage.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to be clear, so the conclusion you drew is if you want regime change, that equals a ground campaign?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Probably.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But one way to avoid it would be to make the UN process work?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Rather than the UN process being a route to regime change?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. And I think it's about that time, maybe Crawford, maybe a bit later, but I think the Prime Minister says, look, we can either change Iraq through the UN process. If it accept inspections and it respects the resolution, it will be changed. The only alternative is to change it militarily. But I think that was the logic, yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to confirm, you can't really recall with whom this paper was discussed, other than --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I can't. I might well be able to find out for you by going back to the papers.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It's interesting we don't seem to have records --

SIR DAVID MANNING: And it may be, as you say, that actually they went up to him and he wrote them over a weekend or

something. But certainly at this time we were preparing the Prime Minister for discussions in Washington.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then just the second point is that around this time therefore, although it's the case that when the phrase "regime change" crops up, as it does start to do now in public, just after Crawford, it's couched around saying there are many ways to achieve that.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It's pretty clear that if you can't make the UN route work in terms of actually disarming Saddam, that you can't really ignore the possibility that a large military operation is a likely way that this would be achieved?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I think that's true. There were some slightly way out ideas in addition to that. The idea that somebody might assassinate Saddam, and there were hopes, I think, in some quarters in the American system that might happen. I remember asking John Scarlett, then Chairman of the JIC, to look at the stability and strength of the regime in the summer. That was one possibility.

Some of the Arab leaders told Bush, and I think probably the Prime Minister, look, we will try and persuade him to leave, get him to go quietly, and at various times people flirted with that. It never looked very convincing to me.

But I think once you get to the spring of 2002, the old concept of regime change as something about fomenting internal dissent with support from outside and pressure from the Arabs starts to give way to the sense that the Americans are going to plan to do this militarily, and it's at this stage that it seems to me if you want to avoid that, you've got to get them back into the international system through the UN.

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SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thanks.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Moving on, I want to really focus on the visit of Cheney in March. I think there's a very comprehensive note of that.

Did the Prime Minister appreciate the change that had occurred? Because Cheney basically said that September 11 had highlighted the vulnerabilities, and the US must move to the defensive and the administration should do whatever it takes.

I think it's also stated that the Prime Minister said that it was highly desirable to get rid of Saddam, arguing this was in the interests of regional stability, probably better than even the threat of WMD, but that we needed clever strategy that would have to work.

How did they react to Cheney's change of tempo in terms of what he was conveying to the Prime Minister at this meeting?

SIR DAVID MANNING: He would have known that Cheney was among those who were most hostile to Iraq and long had been. So I don't think, when Cheney came with his message, it was a particular surprise. I think when the Prime Minister says you've got to have a clever plan, he is saying to Cheney, well, look, you know, it's not going to -- I think he's probably saying you've got to go back through the UN system. This is my interpretation of those words, but I think he's clear in his own mind that it's very important to try and keep the international community together on this.

I think the Prime Minister was sympathetic to the idea that Iraq would be a better place without Saddam. As I've said, I don't think he ever hid that. But I think in talking to Cheney, he is sort of indicating he's sympathetic to the idea Iraq is a better place without Saddam, but you've got to think about context in the way of dealing with this.

As I recall, Cheney went off in the high hopes that he was going to tour the Middle East and get all kind of Arab governments to sign up to this, and goes back to Washington and finds that actually it's not quite as simple as that. I think this was something that damped down the enthusiasm of the neo-cons/hawks in Washington at this time, and I think it's in that context the Prime Minister sees Cheney.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were obviously hearing privately the full range of views within the Bush administration because there was no unity within that administration.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But how sympathetic was he to the views of the neo-con wing, or was he just trying to find a way how we shaped our response and how we aligned ourselves with the United States?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he was absolutely sympathetic to the idea, as I say, that Iraq would be better off without Saddam. I don't think he had any problem with that at all. [redacted]

So if the proposition is: does he think Iraq is better off without him? Yes. Does he think that will help regional stability? Yes. But there's a difference, I think, from that and saying that he's sympathetic to the idea that regime change is the purpose of the activity. He always made it clear there had to be disarmament. That was what we were looking for, and I remember him saying to Bush later, "Look, if Saddam accepts the terms of 1441, we are going to have to take yes for an answer, George", and Bush saying, "Yes, I know, Tony".

So I think it would be a mistake to assume that this

conversation means the Prime Minister has signed up to some sort of concept that Cheney has got, and I think Cheney wouldn't have hidden that he would like to go and invade, and he did want to invade later in the year actually.

But I'm sure that's not where the Prime Minister was on this. But was he sympathetic to the idea that we would be better off without Saddam? Yes.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: At that stage how confident were you that you could actually influence the thinking, or were you just responding to the way the policies --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I wasn't confident, but I thought my job was to try, and on two levels. One, on the role I had as an official, reflecting the British Government's view that we needed to go back to the UN, we needed to get the inspectors back, the issue was disarmament, not regime change. But I also felt very strongly personally that it was the way we should go. So, if you like, my own prejudices reinforced the policy I was trying to pursue.

I wasn't confident it would work. It was quite clear to me that a head of steam was building up. I think there was a sense that the administration had --

-- that military force had worked in Afghanistan, that they had now been presented with some great historic theme. This was going to be the global war on terror. This was a 1945 or a 1991 moment when they were going to change the world for the better on their watch. It was very tough, but it was an historic moment and they would do whatever it took.

We didn't really have that perception. I certainly didn't have that perception. So I was very conscious that there was a very strong sense of historical destiny at work in the Bush

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administration at this point, fuelled by the sense that they had done something very important in Afghanistan and were taking on a huge new security challenge.

But I was also conscious there were different views within the administration. One of the problems about talking about the Americans is that there are so many Americans.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just one brief last question. You said these were your personal views. How much were you trying to influence the US administration, and also our own Prime Minister?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I certainly argued strongly for the UN route with the Prime Minister, and subsequently argued very strongly that we needed two resolutions. I also argued very strongly with him that we needed more time.

So yes, but I think that, you know, that's what you are paid for. I remember -- I never expected to do this job, and I remember when the Prime Minister asked me to do it, saying to him, "What do you want me to do?" And he said, "I want you to tell me what you think", and to give him his due, that is exactly what I did, and that seemed to me the value of it. In the end he's the minister. He chooses. But yes, I did argue with him, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we need into April. Rod.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Chequers meeting before Crawford.

Before that actually happened, apart from the options paper, you had minutes giving advice from the Foreign and Defence

Secretaries, and they were both advising that Iraq should be situated within the wider proliferation challenges.

Geoff Hoon argued that Iran may be a greater problem. Jack Straw began his minute saying:

"The rewards from your visit to Crawford will be few. The risks are high both for you and the Government."

It's a pretty downbeat advice when the Prime Minister is about to go and have a very important meeting with the US President. He goes on to argue that:

"It has been hard to glean whether the threat from Iraq is so significantly different from that of Iran and North Korea as to justify military action."

Two questions from this. Firstly, did you sense that these two key Cabinet ministers were trying to pull back on the Prime Minister's reins in giving this sort of advice?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think probably I did. How far, I'm not sure, but I think certainly the Foreign Secretary was keen to play it -- to make it very clear there were risks with this, and not to be apparently more forward on Iraq than was wise for the Government, especially when he didn't know exactly where that policy was going to take us. So yes, I think it probably was an attempt to say let's just see where the Americans are going on this. It's a position I would certainly sympathise with.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: What was then the rationale for actually focusing on Iraq first?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think there are a number of reasons for focusing on Iraq. One is that the Americans were determined to focus on it. We weren't given a choice, I think. In the international system, whether it wanted to have a good look at Iraq at this point or not, it really had no option because Bush

was going to do this, I think.

The question was therefore how far could you get inside the argument and try and shape it and shape what happened, and I think that's where the Prime Minister was in April. I think he felt it's coming. They are going to do something. We have to try and be in a position to affect the policy.

He believed, I think, that given his own relationship with Bush, he probably had a good chance of doing that. So therefore he was determined to have that discussion, though, as I have said, he didn't need any persuading that Iraq was a problem. It would be quite wrong to pretend that he was dragged kicking and screaming into thinking we have got to do something about Iraq. I think he felt Iraq was a serious destabilising influence in the system, but I don't want to pretend that it would have been his top priority at this stage if it hadn't been one of Bush's top priorities. I think it wouldn't have been.

We are talking here against a backdrop of worries about India and Pakistan. [redacted]. There are huge issues out there as well. So pushing this to the very top of the agenda is not obvious, and actually is not actually what was the most discussed issue at Crawford anyway. The Middle East peace process took far more time than Iraq.

But I think the second reason that Iraq was in a different category, and I think Jack Straw refers to that, maybe not in those papers, but subsequently or earlier to the Prime Minister, is that Iraq, unlike Libya or North Korea or Iran, has actually had these programmes, has used chemical weapons, has invaded its neighbours, and has got 16 UN resolutions demanding that it behave in a certain way. So I think its prominence, if you like, as an outlaw in the international system is much starker and its track record is much worse. I think that's the

argument.

But it's quite a difficult argument to make, and I think he's alerting the Prime Minister there, and he did on other occasions, to the fact the people are going to say: why are you picking on Iraq?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Going back to the first of your points, Mr Blair has on many occasions, publicly and privately, both at the time, and indeed in his evidence to us, used an expression which roughly is, "It's worse than that, I actually believed this was the right thing to do". There were other occasions when he said, "If the Americans hadn't been wanting to do this, I would have been pushing them to do it".

Is it fair to say from that that he was much more forward leaning in terms of doing Iraq, getting rid of Saddam Hussein, than his principal advisers, including perhaps yourself, from what you have said?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he was. I think this goes back. This is all of a piece. I think he was a very prominent actor on the international stage as Prime Minister. I think if you look at the foreign policy track record, Iraq fits into a pattern. It's not an aberration. His interventionism in the Balkans, the active role he took over Kosovo, the more minor but rather significant, I think, success in Sierra Leone, the role he played in Afghanistan, he's very much an activist in foreign policy, and I think much more inclined to push and to take the bold action than probably other members of his Cabinet.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was he open to contrary opinions? If somebody had argued powerfully at the Chequers meeting against that point of view, would he have listened to them?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he would have listened, Rod, but I think he was somebody who was very comfortable in his own

convictions about this, and I think believed that he had the capacity to influence the international system in quite profound ways, had quite a lot of success doing this, had good relationships with most -- but not all, and we may well get into this -- of his foreign counterparts, and I think he had a sense that he could actually act for the good, he could change things, and that this was absolutely a role that he felt he could command.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And this conviction that you describe obviously went back over the four years before you went to work for him, when he had been Prime Minister and these events had happened successfully. So by the time you got there, and by the time these discussions happened in 2002, it is fair to say it was pretty strongly embedded in him. It would taken quite a lot to shift it.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I don't want to suggest he's not open to argument. As I've said earlier. He was absolutely up for argument and he didn't hold it against you. But I think this is part of a deep conviction that there are moments when you can change things, you've got to have the courage to do it, and he was up for that.

It's not directly relevant to this discussion, but I found myself in Macedonia during the crisis with Kosovo. I was sent down to help out. This is in 1998, or whatever, 1999. [redacted]

So the fact that he was determined to take action three years later in this context did not surprise me.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Chequers meeting, how important was it?

SIR DAVID MANNING: In terms of setting the --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: From the record -- we have this problem which we discussed with Mr Blair and others. You didn't have Cabinet committees formally constituted. You don't therefore have a clear paper trail of records. But Mr Blair said it didn't matter if ad hoc meetings were with a capital A and a capital H or a small A and a small H. We had rolling discussions around this subject.

But certainly from the paper trail, April is the first obviously convened big meeting to look at Iraq in this period since it was obvious the Americans were shifted on to a different course, over actually the previous six months at least.

So it looks like an important meeting, and yet we can find no record of it, other than in Alastair Campbell's diaries.

So do you know why it wasn't recorded, if it wasn't record, and how important a meeting was it? What's your recollection of it? And can you recall who was there, which isn't clear either?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't remember it as being outstandingly important. But I think it does take place at a moment, as you say, when the idea that the Americans are shifting is crystallising, certainly crystallising for me, and it is between April and July that it becomes clear, I think, that they are really gearing themselves up to think about this again.

I don't remember it being a super point of decision or of changing perceptions, but I might be wrong about that. But my recollection is undoubtedly that things accelerate in the second quarter of the year, leading up in my own case to going to Washington and talking to Condi and the President.

Until April, until the ranch, I think it is still much more the aftermath of Afghanistan. Yes, there's some noise in the

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system about Iraq. Yes, we understand they are thinking about it. But nobody seems to be getting very far with it, [redacted] [redacted] But I think after April there is a sense, and we know then that Bush has set up a planning cell. In June I think we sent somebody down to Tampa. You know, the tempo changes around this time.

Now, I don't remember Chequers being critical to this, although it may have been that this is the moment when Blair starts to expose to his ministers --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you remember how long this meeting went on?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you remember who was there?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't remember.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I can offer some memory joggers, Alastair Campbell records General Pigott as being there. I think we know that Richard Dearlove was there. It's not clear that the Foreign Office were there or Geoff Hoon. The Chief of the Defence Staff was there, but he didn't remember having been there.

SIR DAVID MANNING: It may have been quite specifically the Prime Minister asking the military, how could you do such a thing. I can remember a similar meeting on Afghanistan at Chequers, and certainly then he asked the head of the Special Forces to come and talk to him about how would one have to do this, is it doable? And it may be that that is the genesis for this meeting. It may be very, very much a meeting about what is the military feasibility of this, but I can't recall.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: One interesting representative of the military who was there was Cedric Delves, who was the officer

from Tampa.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Right.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We were there for Afghan reasons, but of course it's where CentCom was beginning to plan Iraq.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you imagine why there wasn't a record of this?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't remember. I can't, no.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. According to Alastair Campbell's diary, General Pigott took the view that the central aim was WMD, but it then went on to say:

"TB felt it was regime change in part because of WMD but more broadly because of the threat to the region and the world."

That would seem to reflect what you have also already said about his thinking, and perhaps therefore reflected the sort of view that he was taking into Crawford to the discussions --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think there's a sort of ambivalence and an element of contradiction in this all the way through, which is, look, actually it would be much better if he went, if Saddam went. But we accept that if he accepts the strictures laid upon him, the conditions laid upon him, if he accepts that he has got to allow the inspections back, that's it, we have got to live with that. And that this will have changed the regime in its very nature, [redacted].

I think on one level the Prime Minister would certainly have hoped very much that the change would have meant that Saddam would go, and that even if you managed to impose the UN

conditions, this would so destabilise him internally that he would go.

So I think he is thinking in those sorts of terms, but certainly throughout this period he is perfectly clear, anyway with me, that if Saddam subscribes to this, that's it. We are in the business here of disarmament, and a disarmed Iraq equals a changed regime. And I don't think this is just wordplay.

But I think on an emotional level he felt this is a very bad man. He has done dreadful things. If he goes, that would be great.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it then goes to Crawford. We have got a record of Crawford which you did, from the basis of debriefing by the Prime Minister on bits that you wasn't at. So we didn't need to go through that in a lot of detail.

But, broadly speaking, what was the Prime Minister's objective with regard to Iraq, which we fully recognise was not the only matter on the agenda. There was important stuff happening on the Middle East peace process. What were his Iraq objectives at Crawford?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it was to find out where Bush was going on it. I think he wanted to find out for himself what did Bush really think and what were Bush's intentions, [redacted] [redacted].

I think he used the dinner on the first night to probe the President on this. As I recall, he said to me afterwards, look, Bush is clearly not going to -- Bush is interested in going the international route and he's not simply going to become -- I can't remember his wording -- the creature of the American right or something like this.

He came away, I think, sort of reassured that it was quite possible to persuade Bush to use the international system,

rather than to bypass it. It's the same sort of argument over Afghanistan at the beginning. Are the Americans going to be completely unilateralist, or are they actually going to try and take the international community with them?

I think his view after that meeting was that he felt that Bush was interested in going the international route. But I think it was basically to try and get a sense for himself of where he felt Bush was going and what Bush was thinking.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And Richard Armitage later told you in May that the Prime Minister had discussed the question of a British armoured division taking part in the invasion with the President at Crawford. This had got into the American bloodstream there.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I didn't know that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Immediately after Crawford, the Prime Minister makes his College Station speech, and Whitehall interprets what it's told about Crawford, which was fairly limited, plus College Station -- and we've had this from different Whitehall officials -- as, in the words indeed of a Ministry of Defence paper that you won't have seen at the time or indeed subsequently necessarily, an internal MOD paper:

"The Prime Minister's speech in Texas contained a commitment to regime change if necessary and justified. Commitment on timing has been avoided."

Then that same paper going on:

"To achieve a successful regime change, the UK would need to be actively involved. One might also argue that the Prime Minister has effectively committed us."

So that was how one part of Whitehall -- and we have had similar evidence from another part of Whitehall -- interpreted this. Have they got the right message?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it sounds more forward than I would

have interpreted it on the basis of what he said to me after the meeting.

I think the message that he wanted to be with the Americans in the broad sense would be correct, yes. And I think throughout the crisis he felt if push came to shove, the Americans should not be left to do this on their own. But I think at this stage still he believes there may be a better way of doing this, and I think his willingness to stay engaged will also have been a calculation that that would have improved the chances of persuading the Americans to go back to the UN.

So I don't myself think, and certainly I didn't have any reflection of this in April or May, whenever that paper was written, that he had made his mind up he was going to send troops. I think he was always ready to do it, but always hoped he wouldn't have to.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You were obviously the closest person to the horse's mouth on this one. Some have argued, as you know, in public that Crawford was the sort of decision point for the Prime Minister, that our policy changed through Crawford. Is that accurate? Or actually was Crawford simply a further evolution of a track that the Prime Minister was on, and not the final evolution anyway?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it felt evolutionary to me, but it also, I think, crystallised the sense that we had that American thinking had gone up a gear. The fact that the President told the Prime Minister, I have set up a team, I have asked them to give me options, that we were then invited to send somebody down to Tampa to see what these options were.

So I think there was certainly a sense that, as I say, the gear had changed. But I certainly didn't feel it was a moment of decision, no.

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: David, into June, but I'm just reminded of something Rod mentioned. Your visit to Washington in May, you spoke to Richard Armitage. He passed on that a British officer had said an armoured division would be coming from the UK.

Do you interpret that as a sign that military planners were getting ahead of the policy, or simply that mutual encouragement in a military circle led to an overinterpretation?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I honestly don't know, Chairman. It certainly was news to me. I'm surprised that they had said that because certainly later, in July I think, when there is a request from the MOD to the Prime Minister to give an indication of what he would be willing to sign up for, he refuses. So it doesn't seem logical to me.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is something happening, May/June, in the US system with a rise in the influence and centrality of DOD and Rumsfeld by contrast with State?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think that probably is true. Whether it's just those two months, I don't know. But the dynamics in Washington throughout the year are of a dominant DOD .

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I think too it's worth saying that DOD is again a complex

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place. You've got a whole series of people in DOD. You've got the chiefs. You've got Rumsfeld. You've got civilians, people like Doug Feith. So there are an awful lot of moving parts in this.

But it was perfectly clear as the months went by that Colin Powell and the State Department were in a much weaker place than the other big players.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could you reflect for us briefly, David, on the key bilateral contacts between London and Washington/the US at the time? Donald Rumsfeld comes to the UK in June, talks to the Prime Minister and talks to Geoff Hoon, but the Hoon/Rumsfeld axis is not a strong one, it seems from the evidence.

SIR DAVID MANNING: That was certainly my impression.

THE CHAIRMAN: At the same time, the Straw/Powell axis is strong, but not influential in the American end.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think that's right. It was very strong, and I think there are times -- and Jack Straw will speak for himself, but I think he and Colin Powell spoke several times a day during this crisis on occasions. [redacted]

THE CHAIRMAN: One potentially quite important factor for us in this comes out of a minute that the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw wrote to the Prime Minister on 8 July, in effect saying that the military planners, the US military planners, are running away with this enterprise. They are not paying sufficient regard to the strategic context within which the whole operation, economic and political as well as military, needs to be raised.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's really because the Straw/Powell axis is

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running out of muscle. So it has to be raised to the Prime Minister's level. Is that really what's happening when Jack does that?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I guess it probably is, though it's quite clear throughout 2002, and indeed throughout 2003, that it is the Pentagon, it's the military, who are running this thing, and Powell is trying to make his voice heard.

THE CHAIRMAN: Finally, and then we will take a break, is the Prime Minister concerned about the strength of the DOD lead in the planning process and the fact that it is narrow rather than broad, or is it something that really the Prime Minister regards as being between him and the President?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he probably did regard it as between him and the President, but he was certainly clear that you had to put this in a wider context.

One of the difficulties, I think, all the way through this -- and I have said the Americans had this vision and Bush had this vision of a new Middle East. You know, we are going to change Iraq, we are going to change Palestine, and it's all going to be a new Middle East.

But there were two big flaws in this argument. One is they

won't do nation building. They think this is a principle. So if you go into Iraq, how are you going to achieve this new Iraq? And the military certainly don't think it's their job. The Prime Minister throughout is very clear that there has to be a clever plan afterwards, the UN have to be involved, and you can't do this simply as a military operation.

The second thing he is absolutely insistent [redacted] is the Middle East peace process.

So I think he is very clear that it isn't just a military operation, but getting the American machine to respond to this proves to be enormously difficult.

THE CHAIRMAN: So this time and in this sense, and I'm thinking of Jack Straw's July minute, he is really reflecting back to the Prime Minister what is already in the Prime Minister's own mind about the need for a much broader strategic envelope within which the Iraq enterprises should be planned?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think that's right, and I suspect the Prime Minister hoped that he could influence Bush in that direction. But his influence actually on Bush in achieving these things was more limited than he hoped, and [redacted].

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's take a break for five minutes and then come back.

(A short break)

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I just want to explore the change of dynamics between the intelligence agencies and policy makers post 9/11.

Can you give any observations how the relationship changed between you, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary with

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the intelligence services and C in particular, Dearlove?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, my sense after 9/11 is that because the whole terrorism issue moved so rapidly up the agenda, and because there is a sense that we are vulnerable to asymmetric threats in a way that we haven't been in the past, there is a new recognition of the importance of the agencies, a new willingness among ministers to fund and resource the agencies, and a much greater dependence on advice from the agencies on threats that are not the conventional threats that we have been used to.

I think if in addition you add the fact that you have two rather remarkable personalities as the heads of the agencies at this stage, Richard and Eliza subsequently in Security Service, and if you find that the American system is using the agencies really rather extensively, then it does change the pattern and the way that we work, partly voluntarily because the government puts much more emphasis on the agencies and much less, in my view -- and I think it's a mistake -- on the traditional departments, but partly because we don't have a lot of choice because this is the sort of network that is developing.

I don't know what feels like in the system now, but in a way I think you have to accept that the heads of agencies are much more like the traditional Permanent Under Secretaries, that their departments are frequently better funded to deal with these issues than the traditional departments are, have more resource, can act more quickly, and I certainly felt that my own old department was struggling at times with resources and demands in a way that was not true for the agencies.

So I think there has been a shift in the way Whitehall operates, and I think it's inevitable that, as a result of that shift, the heads of the agencies have greater weight in the

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system than they certainly did when I was a junior or middle ranking officer.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because it was suggested to us that it was in fact the failure of other departments to get up to speed, and the fact that the intelligence role was elevated.

SIR DAVID MANNING: It may have been. I'm sure you could argue that they missed their chance, they missed their opportunities. I'm sure there were deficiencies. I remember being disappointed by the response to requests that I made to other departments, not about Iraq. But I think it reflected too a sort of shift of priority, and the way in which some of the traditional departments were sort of either hollowed out or put under pressure to perform in ways they might not have been resourced to do.

So I would certainly defend them against simply the charge that they just weren't up to the job. I think it's much more complicated than that.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The fact that there was such elevation in terms of policy, and the personalities, as you said, were strong, and Blair and Dearlove got on really well, the fact that he had this direct link and discussions with Blair, because originally, my understanding is, it was the responsibility of the Foreign Secretary; did that have an impact on the relationship between Dearlove and Jack Straw?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I didn't see it. I wasn't aware that Jack Straw was resentful of Richard Dearlove.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was it a difficult relationship?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I genuinely do not know. I certainly wasn't aware of that.

The formal position didn't change. Clearly Jack Straw was

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the minister responsible for SIS and for all their activities, and I assume that all their activities went through the usual submission process.

But one of the things that happens as the crisis accelerates, of course, is that time is very short. So if messages are being passed, through whichever agency actually, there's a tendency then to deliver it. Whether the bureaucratic procedures that one is used to are then suitable is moot, and I think quite a lot of the time there was a feeling, I must get this into the system.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you have no indication the relationship between Jack Straw and Dearlove --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't have any indication of that, no. I didn't know that.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: One tailpiece. By the way, David, I think it may be because of that microphone pointing in the wrong direction, but if you could lift the volume a little bit.

It is the contrast between the agencies, which are self-confessedly, by culture and inheritance and role, not policy departments -- they don't give policy advice -- but they are actually, are they, with the thinning out of the traditional departments as a source of formalised policy advice, being drawn into that role, but without the natural experience, perhaps even confidence, to occupy it fully? Would you have seen, as it were, in combination then, a diminution of the quality of policy advice coming to the top and centre of government?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I find this very difficult to answer. I think there is truth in this, yes. I do think they give more policy advice than they did in the past. I'm not sure they

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necessarily went looking for that, but I think, because the way that the whole process has changed under the pressures I have described, I think they found themselves almost sucked into giving that sort of advice from time to time.

I'm not suggesting there's some sort of takeover bid, but I think, because of the way the whole situation evolved after 9/11, they would have found themselves more in -- if not a policy making role, certainly a policy influencing role, than was traditional, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Turning back to Rod now.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: After the Chequers meeting, the next internal meeting that features in the records is the one of 23 July 2002[8] [redacted]

[redacted]. But here we do have a note of the meeting, and it's got most of the key players at it: Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, CDS and so on.

Do you recall what prompted that meeting with the Prime Minister?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't recall there was a specific event, no. It may simply have been he had these pretty regularly. He had meetings fairly regularly. I don't recall -- it certainly would have helped me because I was about to go to Washington, but I don't recall what specifically prompted 23 July, no.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You had meetings fairly regularly. You didn't have minuted meetings of this kind, with this cast list very regularly.

SIR DAVID MANNING: No.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: One of the great difficulties we've had is in tracking down who was advising the Prime Minister when, other

than yourself, because your own records, and indeed the Foreign Secretary's, are very meticulous. But there's a lot of confusion otherwise.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I'm afraid I can't recall why or what it was particularly that he wanted to call this.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: You don't recall this as necessarily a very different or important meeting?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No. It may have been that he wanted to have a big meeting before the break for the summer recess. I think it might have been that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes. It's the first one that I'm aware of that the Attorney General has attended, and of course his attendance at Cabinet was a rare event. At later stages he's in and out of the game. He's not a constant player in this.

At this meeting he gives some fairly firm advice that regime change was not a legal case for military action, and the only ground for action was Saddam's disregard of the UN resolutions on disarmament.

Did that shape or reshape the way in which the Prime Minister was going to have to present the case in public, and did it influence the sort of advice that you were giving him on the diplomatic strategy?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know whether he felt there was a pressure on him to reshape his public presentation. It certainly strengthened me in my view that we needed to go back to the UN, and indeed, of course, eventually we do. But it seemed to me -- and I said this all the way through to him -- that the question of the legal base was very important, and there was a debate to be had about whether the resolutions -- at

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[8] A version of the record of this meeting has appeared in the public domain

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least as I understood it, and I'm not a lawyer -- were already adequate. But it seemed to me that if you were arguing on the basis of the UN resolutions, it was necessary to go back to the UN. I think my reading of what the Attorney thought then was that we had to get back to the UN.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: The week after that meeting you go to Washington. You are carrying a letter from the Prime Minister headed "Note on Iraq", several pages long, and you meet not only Condi Rice, but you also have a meeting, which you again record, with President Bush.

Could we just take the Prime Minister's note first. Who would have drafted that?

SIR DAVID MANNING: He would.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: He would?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: All the way through?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And he habitually drafted his own correspondence?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Absolutely, and was very reluctant, in my experience, to take any amendments. Certainly I tried to amend this note and I failed.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: In what sense did you try to amend it?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I tried to take the first sentence out.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why did you want to take the first sentence out?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I didn't think we should say that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because ...?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It was too sweeping. It seemed to me to close off options, and I didn't see that that was a sensible place to be.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who else would have seen the note in draft?

SIR DAVID MANNING: The only other person I'm aware of who saw the note in draft was Jonathan Powell. It was late in the evening, and Jonathan and I saw this, and I went to Jonathan and said, "The Prime Minister should not say this", and we went up to the flat. We talked through with him, and I said that the first sentence should come out and Jonathan agreed, but the Prime Minister decided to leave it.

I have always assumed, incidentally, because he saw it as a rhetorical flourish, not because at that stage he was thinking anything in terms of what the scale of commitments might be. But it was a sort of emotional statement, I think. But it seemed to me that it went further than we should have gone.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you think it was heard in the same sense that the Prime Minister may have intended it to be heard, namely as a pat on the shoulder rather than a commitment?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Very hard to say, Mr Chairman. I just don't know. I suspect I thought there was a risk it would be taken at face value. I can't tell you whether it actually was, but it was part of the sort of solidarity piece.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Combined with what the White House had already heard about, rightly or wrongly, indications that we were planning to send a land division, a ground division?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. As I said, I'm not quite sure where this indication came from, because I don't think that came from the Prime Minister. You would have to ask him, but I'm not aware that at any stage in the summer he gave any such

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commitment. Certainly if he did it wasn't in my hearing, and it does not fit with his response to, as I said, the Ministry of Defence request a few days later. But if you do take those two pieces together, yes, it would certainly be a big commitment.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: How often did the Prime Minister decline your advice on a matter like this?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, a matter like this, there are not many such moments. But certainly, as I have said, he was willing to listen to advice, but he was absolutely happy to pursue his own course, and that's fair enough. I always saw myself in the role of giving the best advice I could, but he was elected and it was him to decide.

But the Prime Minister had strong views about things. He was absolutely open to debate, but on a lot of things, if he'd made up his mind, he'd made up his mind.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you think that he should have shown this to the Foreign Secretary before it was sent?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, this was very much an issue for the two of them. The Foreign Secretary was aware that the Prime Minister sent these notes to the President. This was not the first or the last. It seems to me that the Prime Minister saw this as almost outside the system, his personal relationship with the President. A little bit like Jack Straw saw his discussions with Colin Powell; so not quite off piste, but these were on a very personal basis. So I think you have to put this in the context of the Prime Minister's own view about his, as it were, personal relationship with the President.

Now, I assume that if the Foreign Secretary was unhappy about these notes, he would have said to the Prime Minister, "You shouldn't be sending these notes". But I think it would be quite a difficult thing to do.

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: You later were authorised by the Prime Minister, when you came back from Washington, to deliver to the Foreign Secretary a copy of this note and a full copy of your records --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Which I always asked to do.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- on a very restricted basis. It wasn't supposed to go elsewhere. It was seen by one or two officials in the Foreign Office.

SIR DAVID MANNING: And the MOD.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And the MOD?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I tried to ensure both the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary saw these, and usually the Prime Minister agreed. I can't actually recall him saying no, but I made a point of saying it's very important.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we weren't aware that it had gone to the MOD.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't promise you every single one did, but certainly I tried to ensure that both Secretaries of State were as well informed as possible, because it seemed to me in that role that it was very important to be a link man, to make sure that there was transparency about what was happening.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because even if this is slightly off piste and fairly personal, ████████████████████████████████ ██ ██ ████████████████. To what extent would the Deputy Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer have been aware that this correspondence was going on at this stage?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I doubt whether the Deputy

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Prime Minister was aware at all. I do not know about the relationship between the Prime Minister and the then Chancellor, but that there were contacts is certain because I remember one night being up in the flat and the Prime Minister ringing Gordon Brown up to talk about Iraq. How often that happened, I do not know, but it certainly happened from time to time. And the thing moving much further forward, certainly the Chancellor was absolutely critical in getting the vote in March to go to war.

So I think there was probably quite a lot of discussion between them, but I couldn't tell you how much, and it would certainly have been on a sort of private basis, on the telephone, I think.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: And within the circle of close advisers, would a degree of awareness have extended to Alastair Campbell, John Scarlett, Richard Dearlove?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Probably, yes. I can't tell you on every paper, but certainly, yes, broadly speaking, I think they would have known, yes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Anybody else like, say, Sally Morgan?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Probably.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Any others?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, Jonathan saw everything.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

SIR DAVID MANNING: And was crucial in the way the Prime Minister operated. So everything went through Jonathan or was copied to him or came out through Jonathan.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did he make an input, orally or in writing?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Oh yes, absolutely. But certainly

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Alastair Campbell, Sally, the political team around might not have been involved and seen every paper, but they were certainly very conscious of the way that the situation was evolving. I can't think of other people in the house, as it were, in Number 10. Clearly people -- the official team, me and Matthew Rycroft. Matthew would have seen everything. But I doubt whether there were other people involved in the political side who saw.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: As the official and senior diplomatic adviser, were you having to argue against other voices within this in-house circle that were pushing in different directions?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, to be honest, I was never put under the sort of pressure that the media like to suggest: "Alastair Campbell who beats up the officials". This never, ever happened to me. He was careful, certainly as far as I was concerned, always to respect what I was doing and my advice. So I never felt that I was pressured by him.

I on occasion volunteered my own private political views to him and to Sally Morgan about things, but that was because we were in offices next door to each other. But I never felt that I was put under pressure and I never felt that they were trying to either intrude, or exclude others from the debate.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Jonathan Powell was an ex-diplomat. As he told us in public evidence, he'd written a minute which he described now as one he rather regretted, very forward leaning on regime change at a very early stage, in late 2001, if I remember rightly.

Was he in any sense counteracting any of your advice and views?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think Jonathan would have been further forward on regime change than I was, yes. I think so.

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We had never had any great arguments about it. The fact is that, as I have said to you, he too thought that that sentence should come out. But I think he was certainly, I think, more receptive to the idea that you could pursue regime change than certainly I was.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: I won't go through all of your discussion with Bush because it's well recorded and I don't want to be repetitive.

What broad impression did you come away from that meeting with about where Bush stood and what he was assuming of the British position?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I thought when I got to Washington that probably, as usual actually, the Bush regime underestimated the pressures on their allies, particularly us, that they didn't understand the political realities in the UK, and I can remember saying to Condi Rice on several occasions, look, we have politics too.

There was a tendency in the Bush administration to think that Blair could walk on water, frankly, and that whatever they decided to do, that would be fine. Blair would bring along the Brits and the Europeans and others.

So giving them a sense of the political realities here seemed to me to be very important, and as far as I was concerned, that meant the UN route.

Now, I think that at the end of July Bush had probably made up his mind he was just going to go and attack Iraq at some point over the next few months -- it's certainly what Cheney wanted, as far as I can see from the papers -- and that he had probably subscribed by then to the view that the UN was a distraction, that one or two others would come and that would be useful, but that he could probably go on the basis of the

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existing UN resolutions and get on and do it.

Now, I couldn't prove that to you. It seemed to me that when I had dinner with Condi Rice, and I was pretty explicit with her that it was up to them. If they wanted to go on their own, that was fine, but certainly we wouldn't go. I think that is why overnight she must have spoken to him, and why I was asked to go and see him the following morning, and I think that the discussion I then had with him, when I was trying to impress upon him the political realities, the fact that we certainly couldn't do this without going back to the UN, that we were up for disarmament, not for regime change, I think that had an effect.

Now, it's easy to flatter yourself and to start deciding that, my goodness me, if it hadn't been for my discussion, it would have been quite different. So I'm wary about making this claim. But I certainly came back feeling that it had reopened a debate that might have been pretty much closed, that Bush was prepared to go away and think about it, and certainly the insistent way afterwards that he said, I really want to see the Prime Minister over here, makes me think that we got the debate anyway reopened.

The fact that in September the Prime Minister went across and, [redacted] Cheney was sitting in the study at Camp David [redacted] listening to the argument, I interpreted -- and again I can't prove this -- as Bush wanting Cheney to hear this argument for himself, and trying to bring the Vice President's office with him on a decision that he had pretty much then taken to go back to the UN.

But I think it was absolutely in the balance in July, and I do think that probably the visit I made at least made them rethink it.

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: What sort of Iraq did you think at that stage the Americans were seeking to create? The Prime Minister spoke of the prize of Iraqi democracy. The Americans at earlier stages had really indicated that they might be heading for another Sunni strong man. How far had they thought this through, and where were they at?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, [redacted]
I think it depended which American you asked.

I think there was a feel-good factor among some of them. We will overthrow this tyrant. There will be an upsurge of enthusiasm and popular relief. In some way or other, Iraq will remake itself, which is why I say I think they had a sort of vision of 1945 or 1991, that you get rid of these terrible regimes, and it may be a bit difficult, but something new will evolve.

The State Department and, as we know, DOD were clearly doing planning about the upshot of this, but it was not very clear what they thought was going to come out of this, except that it was going to be better than what they had already, I think.

If you accept the premise that certainly the American military didn't think they did nation building, I think they hoped that a combination of internal relief, the introduction of external forces, the Chalabis of this world, international aid, something would, as it were, emerge and evolve.

They were not keen on the UN, and again this is another aspect of arguing very strongly for the UN, because it seemed, certainly to me, that once you take the lid off a place like this, and you get yourself into -- we didn't have much ground truth. We didn't actually know very well what would be going on in Iraq. We would very much need the UN to be there, and certainly I and the Prime Minister in his own conversations had

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impressed upon the US administration the importance, after any military action was taken, of getting the UN back in there.

But I don't think they had a very clear sense of what to expect. I think it depended who you asked, but there was a lot of optimism about it, rather than tutored understanding of what it was likely to be like.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: At what point and how far did you and the Prime Minister get into a debate with the White House about the future shape of Iraq? Was it from about here onwards?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, no, I think before that I had been urging them to think seriously about UN involvement. But yes, I think all the way through the -- I don't know whether the Prime Minister discussed a blueprint for Iraq -- I don't think he did, I don't recall it -- with the President. He might have done in his private conversations. But insisting that they had to think about what came next, insisting on the importance of having the UN in there, he was very clear about that. And I suppose the fact that the Americans were doing a lot of planning for Iraq was a reassurance to him. .

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Where was the Prime Minister getting his advice from on the future of Iraq? :

" ."

How was he learning about Iraq and what might happen?

SIR DAVID MANNING: In fairness to him, I just add what he also

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pointed out. If you are going to do regime change, Afghanistan, it had better work. Otherwise why are you doing Iraq?

I think he was conscious of that. The advice that he was getting about the future of Iraq would have been coming from the Foreign Office. I commissioned some work from he Foreign Office, and the Foreign Office also sent people across in the autumn to the States -- I can't remember -- and certainly somebody from the OD Secretariat, Jim Drummond, went with them. I think it may have been -- let me think -- Chapman. I can't remember his first name.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Edward Chaplin?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Edward Chaplin led a team. So I think the sense of what would happen was advice from the Foreign Office. There was a great deal of tension over DFID's role, and --

SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's the specifics of handling the aftermath. What I'm groping for here is the wider issue of doing the calculations, the information base that the Prime Minister was working off, how much he knew about sectarian divisions in Iraq, the state of the country, the history of the Middle East, and whether democracy could reasonably fly there. Because within the circle you describe, you had served as ambassador to Israel, but there wasn't actually an Arabist within this group of people.

SIR DAVID MANNING: No.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: How good was the advice you were getting from the Foreign Office, and how much impact, and was the Prime Minister getting advice from other sources?

SIR DAVID MANNING: There were a series of papers that were written for him -- I forget exactly what the pack is, I haven't got it with me -- for the summer 2002, which was summer reading.

He took it away. This is what we think we know about Iraq. These are the pressures. And I think some of that was generated in the FCO, some by the agencies, and some even may have been imports from the US, DIS, their equivalent, I think.

Then there were other papers that John Scarlett wrote from JIC about the nature of what we understood about Iraq, and there was work coming through from the Foreign Office.

But I think the idea that we knew exactly how Iraq was going to turn out, I don't think anybody pretended that, and I think there was a sense that this was one reason it was very important to try and have the UN involved there because they had the experience and they would help to organise the immediate aftermath, which would lead you into constitutional processes, finding some way of promoting the reconciliation that was undoubtedly going to be necessary. But I don't think anybody said, here is a blueprint, this is how it's all going to work.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think we would like to spend just a little time on the September dossier. Martin.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: There was a discussion at the end of June/early July, about the need to establish the framework for an information campaign, and on 2 July Peter Watkins wrote to you, and he refers in his letter to "draft public documents which you are currently considering".

Could you tell us what these were?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the draft public documents, I think at this stage, are papers that have been gestating for some time, and I think John Scarlett is writing because the Prime Minister wants to put out -- in his three conditions for explaining to the Americans three things that are absolutely critical, as far as he is concerned. One is public presentation, and this actually precedes Iraq. Afghanistan -- there is a dossier on

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Afghanistan, and he wanted to repeat this experience, if you like, setting out the best case he could, explaining to the public what he was seeing and why he was alarmed.

I can't remember the dates of this because I wasn't involved in the drafting, but certainly there is a paper about this preceding, or a draft that precedes this, and then, as far as I recall, it's put on hold.

Then I think we come back to the so-called dossier when he returns from summer leave. It's basically a compendium, I believe, of the intelligence. In the first two weeks of September, this is what is refined -- and I think this is what it's referring to, this draft -- by John Scarlett, and I think in consultation with, as it were, the public presentation people in the shape of Alastair Campbell.

Now, I have to say to you that I was not involved with this because, not least in the first two weeks of September, I was trying to persuade the Americans to get Bush to make a speech in the UN, saying that he was going to go back to the UN. I was aware, these things were sort of being copied to me, but I certainly didn't take a direct interest or role in it because there simply wasn't the capacity, frankly, to do this when people like John and Alastair were working on it.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Did you commission any specific papers in this area?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think so. I can remember being against these dossiers in Afghanistan, I suppose in my neanderthal way, and saying to the Prime Minister, this is a precedent you are setting, you lay yourself open to arguments about is it complete and so on. But we had a Government that believed in the Freedom of Information Act, and was determined to get stuff out there and wanted to be upfront, and I think

felt that it had been a useful action in Afghanistan, and I had been wrong about that, and wanted to repeat this exercise for Iraq. I think that is honestly the genesis of this dossier.

Then there is a whole process of John Scarlett -- and I know, having seen him around the corridors -- trying very, very hard to finalise this, and then the Prime Minister writing the foreword to it. That in a sort of -- perhaps it isn't a nutshell. It's a rather large nutshell. But, anyway, that is my memory of the origins of this process and what was happening.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And during this period, throughout, as it were, 2001/2002, what form did you receive intelligence on WMD and other general intelligence, and how regularly?

SIR DAVID MANNING: We received it through [SIS] material. So that would be delivered. We received it orally when Richard or others were coming for a briefing, and of course we received it in the JIC assessments.

The JIC assessments, I thought, were very important, and I always marked them to the Prime Minister who, as far as I'm aware, always read them. When we got -- I'm sure you know -- the red book, the JIC assessments came up, and it seemed to me -- and he used to take them away at the weekend, and he certainly read them.

So the most important overall view for these things certainly came from the JIC assessments, but he did see [SIS] material as well.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And you yourself in reading these, before you sent them through to the Prime Minister, were you able to form your own judgment? Did you have, let's say, hesitation?

We read, for example, in the different assessments, the very important one for 10 May 2001, where reference is made in the actual key judgments at the opening to, on the one hand, our

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knowledge of development of Iraq's WMD ballistic programmes is patchy, and then on the other hand, intelligence provides grounds for concern and suggests that Iraq is becoming bolder in conducting activities in defiance of its obligations.

How did you yourself, as it were, balance these --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I have always felt that intelligence is an imprecise science. You only need intelligence because you don't know what's going on. If you knew what was going on, you wouldn't need intelligence. So, by definition, what you are trying to do is find intelligence that will help you understand a cloudy or opaque picture better.

In a way, I find it quite reassuring when people say the intelligence is patchy. But overall the weight of the intelligence was very persuasive. If you look through the JIC papers, and you go back well before the immediate crisis, to well back into the 1990s, the sense that intelligence is demonstrating WMD programmes and capability, an intent to restore those programmes if they have for some reason been thwarted, a willingness to use this in terms of on the ground if there is military action, the weight of this is very persuasive, I think, and I certainly saw no reason to challenge the overall judgments in these papers.

There was also a degree of external validation. This is a very difficult area to get into, but as far as I'm aware, and SIS would know better than me, none of their sister services were saying, we don't think he's got it. And I do recall, because I saw it even if I shouldn't have done,

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The issue wasn't, did he have it. It was, so what? What are you going to do about it? There was also, at the time of the dossier you have been referring to, the dossier produced by the IISS. Again, this provided a measure of validation, I think, for the assessment that everybody was making. As I recall, it was slightly more alarmist than our own, actually, but I'd have to check that.

Afterwards you discover that actually the ballistic missile programme, they were in breach. So on this particular piece that you have highlighted, this is the one thing Blix does find actually, that they were in breach of their undertakings on ballistic missiles.

So yes, should you ever believe every detail of the intelligence? No. But overall, the weight of it seemed to me to be pretty powerful and persuasive.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And did you have a sense of, as it were, increasing and gathering danger? I look again, for example, at the assessments of 27 February and 15 March, that Iraq could manufacture significant quantities of biological weapons agents within days and agents for chemical weapons within weeks. Were these things which, when you sent them up, you had any discussion with the Prime Minister on?

SIR DAVID MANNING: They were very striking those judgments because it meant that in a very, very short time, if those judgments were correct, and I had no reason to doubt them, Saddam could reconstitute programmes which would be a direct threat.

I think it's important to say that in this context we did not believe the American intelligence community's assessment of Iraq's nuclear capability, and I remember telling the

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Prime Minister this. And he never, as far as I know, referred to that as a direct and immediate threat. And we never bought [redacted] view that Iraq had been meddling with Al Qaeda and was in some indirect way responsible for 9/11.

But we didn't doubt the evidence such as the intelligence suggested it on CW and BW. If it was right, it meant actually that this stuff should be produced very, very quickly, and if you believe containment is collapsing, then that suggests that in very short order, Saddam would be able to deploy this stuff.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Now, also looking at this period in spring/summer 2002, Iraq of course isn't the only country which is coming up through the JIC assessments. We have a letter from the Defence Secretary to the Prime Minister on 22 March 2002 in which he writes:

"In objective terms, Iran may be the greater problem for the UK. [redacted] [redacted]."

Three days later, the Foreign Secretary writes to the Prime Minister:

"In the documents so far presented, it has been hard to glean whether the threat from Iraq is so significantly different from that of Iran and North Korea to justify military action."

How did you judge this relative risk from WMD coming through in these different countries?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think it was a very powerful argument that Iran was at least as serious a problem. But to go back to what I said earlier, I think the issue with Iraq was that it was subject to a whole series of UN Security Council Resolutions that it was in breach of, and that we had in Iraq somebody who had used this stuff. It wasn't just an aspiration to have WMD. He had had programmes and he had actually deployed

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these weapons and used them. So the sense that you were dealing here with somebody who had a track record and was very dangerous was quite acute, I think.

Now, Iran was more theoretical. The difficulty of managing Iran's aspirations -- it was much less clear. You couldn't say they'd used this stuff, they were in breach of UN Security Council Resolutions and so on. They weren't. Suspicions about them were very great, and the fact that a great deal of time was spent by the EU3, as they are called, in trying to get a negotiation going about this and pulling the Americans in behind them, which may be something we will come on to, suggests how urgent we thought Iran was.

But I think it was a question of judgment about which of these programmes you thought was more urgent. The Americans certainly decided Iraq was more urgent.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And do you remember a discussion with the Prime Minister or by the Prime Minister with regard to the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary's quite forceful presentations? Did he put the points?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't say I remember a particular day when this was discussed. It was certainly part of the debate, yes. But I think the reality was, as far as the politics, the international politics were concerned, that the Americans were focused on Iraq, and the issue was how were we going to manage this.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The question of intelligence takes a curious turn really at the time when the dossier is coming, and that is C briefing the Prime Minister on a new source, which is believed to be coming online, and relates to the accelerated biological and chemical agents. Do you recall discussion of this impending new intelligence?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I can't recall whether it's this particular piece, but I do recall the hope that C had at this stage that [redacted] and I do remember him saying that, and I do remember him telling the Prime Minister that.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [redacted].

SIR DAVID MANNING: [redacted].

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Do you think that would have influenced him with regard to the introduction, for example, of the dossier and to his general view of the --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think it's as specific as that. [redacted][9]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And was the Prime Minister aware at the time that this source had not been specifically validated?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Finally the question which we have discussed with many witnesses, the question of the 45-minute claim. Did the Prime Minister understand that this related specifically to battlefield munitions?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know whether he did or he didn't. I honestly couldn't tell you. It was set out in the papers. Whether he had actually digested what it meant, I don't know.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And you at this time are not, as you have

[9] The witness explained the wider importance of the material.

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explained to us --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I wasn't involved with the dossier at that stage, no. If I'm honest with you, it didn't seem to me to be terribly important, as central to the argument. I mean, either you believed Saddam Hussein was intent on developing weapons of mass destruction and might be willing to use them, or you didn't. Whether it could hit you in 45 minutes or not, this is an important piece of information, but it didn't seem to be central to the argument about whether or not you were trying to deal with Saddam overall. Either you thought he was a threat, whatever his munitions could do, or you didn't; or you thought I'm going to deal with it this one or another way. So I can't pretend to you that I was particularly focused on the 45-minute thing myself either.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One final question on the dossier.

Given what you had read and what you knew, going back a year and more, did you have any sense, when you read the dossier, that this really was not the complete packet? You in a sense will have seen and known more things, more alarming things than what was presented.

SIR DAVID MANNING: As I said to you, I have always had my doubts about dossiers, because I think by definition they are selective. By definition, if you get into this business, you are trying to select pieces of intelligence that with great agony people have agreed to clear, and you have argued with the Americans about, can we say this or can't we say this.

They are by definition an incomplete picture, and I think they are always going to be open to criticism, and I think governments get themselves into lots of trouble when they try and put out for the public intelligence-based assessments.

So I'm not in favour of them, but it isn't specific to this

dossier. I didn't agree with the one on Afghanistan, and I didn't think dossiers were a good idea for this either. I think you go and explain your case to the public, but I don't think you should do it on the basis of trying to use intelligence reports that have been excised and have been massaged and whatever.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just a quick process question.

You explained that when the dossier was being prepared, you were very busy doing UN-related stuff and weren't part of the direct chain of command on that.

What was the normal chain of command on intelligence-related material? Did stuff normally go through you, up and down to the Prime Minister? How did it work?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It often went through me. If I wasn't there, and a lot of the time I wasn't, Matthew would have put it up to him because Matthew would have seen everything -- Matthew Rycroft -- that I saw.

Jonathan would have seen everything independently too, and there were occasions certainly when both Jonathan and I marked stuff to him. As far as I know, I'm the only person who marked the red book to him, but I certainly wasn't the only person who marked the [SIS report] to him. I think it would have worked -- because one or other of us wasn't always there by any means, it would have worked on a slightly ad hoc arrangement. But there were three people there, all of whom would be seeing the same intelligence, and I think sometimes certainly it would have been marked to him by more than one of us.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But on occasions, say, when John Scarlett or Richard Dearlove were briefing the Prime Minister, would normally either you or Matthew Rycroft have been there?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, normally. Not always, I think, but normally. John Scarlett in particular tended to brief at the beginning of the Prime Minister's small meetings, when he would have had the Foreign Secretary there, the Defence Secretary and the Chief of Defence Staff, probably C, it might be one or two other people, depending on what the subject was, and usually the Prime Minister asked John to set the scene. What is happening? What does the intelligence show us? So normally that's how those meetings began.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence, over to you.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As you say, at this time you were preoccupied with the UN route. So some questions on that.

On 29 August 2002 you reported to the Prime Minister [redacted] that:

"Bush had been given a great deal of thought to Iraq during his summer vacation at the Crawford ranch."

He had worked carefully through the ideas in the note we've discussed before, and he had concluded the best way forward was the UN route.

What interests me is what thought had been given to the position if Bush had taken a different view, especially in the light of the Attorney General's legal advice?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think the formal thought is not on paper. I think the assumption was if he went on his own you couldn't go.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's certainly what Jack Straw told us in public hearing.

SIR DAVID MANNING: It was certainly my assumption, for two reasons really. One was that I thought the domestic political

position was just impossible for the Prime Minister. It wasn't my call -- I was an official -- but it seemed to me the politics around this were enormously difficult, and I certainly found myself talking to Dr Rice about that, which is why I raised it. But the other thing was it seemed to me legally it would be very, very difficult.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think the Prime Minister recognised that, despite who would be with him, whatever?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't -- I don't know, but I suspect he knew that his own party wouldn't have allowed it. It was a tremendously difficult issue inside the Labour Party, and I think for him to have signed up without having gone back to the UN, without having made any progress on the Middle East peace process, which was a sort of totemic issue, I think it would have been very, very hard for him. I'm not saying I know exactly, but my assumption is he knew that it would be very hard to do.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in practice you had what appears a real achievement in terms of having moved the American system away from scepticism about the UN route to going through the UN route. But do you think they fully embraced the UN route?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I think the description I would say is we moved them from scepticism to reluctant acquiescence. I don't think there was a sudden conversion. I think there were elements of the administration that were very relieved and pleased, [redacted]. But I don't think there was a mass conversion of the Bush administration, [redacted]

[redacted].

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Quite early on you've got some indications of the problem of having got the Americans engaged with the process, of how realistic they are going to be about what the process can deliver. So in your note of 3 September 2002 you record Dr Rice saying:

"[redacted]."

So is that an example of the --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. There's a tremendous tension. Having first of all got them there, and then to get them to back what became 1441 was a very difficult and labour-intensive process.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then there's the meeting at Camp David, and you do a note at the end of that, your 8 September note, where you describe it as a remarkable meeting, where you say that Bush had apparently signed up to a draft resolution that could not be interpreted as a transparent pretext for military action.

So is this just another example of the tension? Bush is prepared to agree to the principle, but the discussion at Camp David is quite detailed about how the resolution should be framed. But you were reasonably confident after that, at that point, that --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I was. I was only too well aware from my own experience that there would be plenty of people trying to make him row back, which is exactly what happened. We had a nail-biting two weeks, actually -- well, it may not be quite as long as that -- until he stands up, and he stands up with the

wrong draft of the speech anyway. So it was a fairly hairy moment.

But I did think that he was persuaded, [redacted]

I do think, in Bush's defence, having decided he was going to do it, he was serious about giving it a proper shot. I think it's at this moment that he says to the Prime Minister he accepts that if by any chance Saddam does sign up for this stuff, he'll have to accept we have to operate in a different way.

Certainly Condi Rice is saying at this point privately to me she accepts that it would be a changed regime. It wouldn't be the regime they wanted, but if you have a Saddam who has accepted the provisions of this kind of thing, then they will have disarmed themselves.

Now, the Americans would still have felt that fell far short of what they actually wanted, but I do believe at that point they recognised the logic of this.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, we have got a pretty full account of the actual negotiations over the resolution. Just one question on that, which is how difficult it was to get the Americans to row back, if you like, from the first draft that they were pushing, and what sort of effort the Prime Minister had to play in that.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the real credit goes to Jack Straw. Jack Straw led the British negotiation for this in a series of telephone conferences, with Condi Rice leading on the American side, Jeremy Greenstock working the New York end. I was part of the team from Number 10. [redacted]

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That's what ultimately happened. By our making it clear there could not be automaticity, which is what they wanted, we ended up with 1441, but it was a very hard slog and it took much longer than we wanted. We didn't get there until the middle of November, and this all happens in September.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: To what extent then, when you get the resolution, do you think the Americans believed that that they have now done what was necessary? They have delivered a UN resolution to Blair, they have gone that route, but now they assume that the way is actually clear for military action. It's just really a question of how that --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think that's true. I think that second proposition becomes true probably for most of them in December, but I think they did not know in November what the response would be. I think they knew perfectly well privately that we had given Saddam a get out of jail card if he chose to use it. If he had said, "Okay, come in, inspect, no problem; by the way I've found some rusty stuff and I'm towing it into the car park, and you can have a look at it", it would have been extremely difficult, I think, to have argued at that point for the Americans that Saddam was not co-operating. And I think they knew that, and there are moments during those few weeks

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when Bush has said to the Prime Minister, "I accept that we may have to take yes for an answer". Certainly I can remember Condi Rice saying to me [redacted]

Now, I think it's in December, when Saddam produces his declaration, that they conclude this isn't going to work, even though Bush has made it clear to the Prime Minister that he is open to the suggestion that we need a Second Resolution.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think this is a very important point, just to clarify one point on the negotiations. Straw was talking to Powell. You're talking --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, it's one conversation, a negotiation on the text. It was a teleconference.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So everybody was involved?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, everybody was involved, and we are literally grinding through line by line. You get agreement, and then they ring up and they say the agreement is off, and you've got to do it all over again. And Jack Straw steered us through that process.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You have indicated something which I think is quite important. I just want to take us through some of the implications of this.

On 21 November the Prime Minister met the President at the Prague Summit. The record says:

[redacted]

My guess is the feeling at that point was that, on the assumption he did have the WMD, either he admitted it or it would be found.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then on 11 December --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Sorry to interrupt you, but can I also add that I think Bush always thought that Saddam would never comply.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. On 11 December, which is after the Iraqi disclosure document, you wrote:

"Condi made no effort to hide the fact that the administration would now be looking to make the case for early military action against Saddam."

So at this point do you think that the Bush administration really is in any respect prepared to let the UNMOVIC process take its course, or was it now set on --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Deep reluctance, I think, and again, huge pressure from this side to persuade them to give Blix his chance to do a proper job. It was a big effort. Doubts about Blix personally. Impatience with the timetable. So there was no enthusiasm for the inspection process, but it had been mandated and they let it go ahead.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And how good do you think was your intelligence on Saddam's likely strategy in response? Were you just working on assumptions --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No. You know, the intelligence had said -- and the JIC papers say this -- he had a plan for obstruction, that there were various measures he would take, that if the inspectors got close, they would move the stuff away, they would stage car crashes to delay them, and so on.

So I think we knew that he was likely to be as obstructive as possible. That was the working assumption. So I don't think they went in, as it were, blind to the way he was likely to respond, and of course their predecessors had had plenty of

experience of this up until 1998. We knew how the Iraqis tried to handle these inspections. So I think they were prepared for a very difficult time.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: ?

SIR DAVID MANNING: .

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:

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SIR DAVID MANNING:

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SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one final point on that. There's your report of the Prime Minister's conversation with President Bush on 31 January

Now, that is an act of provocation that is being discussed with the UK, and it's not clear from this what the Prime Minister's response was to that suggestion.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't think he responded specifically to any of these suggestions in this paragraph. I think he listened to Bush thinking aloud about what he might do.

I must say, sitting there myself, I didn't take any of this

very seriously. [redacted]

. But I cannot tell you that when I heard this, I really thought it was a serious proposition. Certainly if it had come forward as a serious proposition, we would have to say, we absolutely don't subscribe to that.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So the basic conclusion from this, you would take it, is not so much that [redacted], but that the US was impatient and that they were not as committed to the UNMOVIC process as it might have assumed from the --

SIR DAVID MANNING: I never felt their heart was in it. I think once it began they were absolutely content to try and help Blix and to make it work, but I don't think they thought it would work, and I don't think they felt that this was ever likely to. It was a distraction.

You can look at these propositions that [redacted] At the same time they are talking about, do you think it's possible to persuade him to leave? Do you think the Arabs will get Saddam to go and live in Belarus? All kinds of things are going on, which is the exact opposite of this actually.

So there was a lot of loose talk. The issue is whether you write this stuff down when people are sort of standing holding a cup of coffee or not, and I chose to write it down. But I can't say that I think the Prime Minister thought it was a serious enough proposition even to refute it.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In effect, sort of looking for a quick fix?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It does, exactly.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All of it?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Martin, a different topic.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: ?[10]

SIR DAVID MANNING:

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SIR MARTIN GILBERT:

[10] Sir Martin asked about a particular attempt to obtain intelligence on Iraq and whether, in the witness' view, more could have been done in that area. The witness said that he didn't think so, though it was not something with which he had dealt himself.

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SIR DAVID MANNING: The place I always thought that there might be possibilities was in New York. First of all, they had Jeremy Greenstock there, who understands the Arab world extremely well and they all knew that. He's an enormously authoritative figure. Secondly, they were on the ground there.

So it always seemed to me, this was where you could make these contacts, and that is what -- Rod is much better qualified than I am to talk about the UN, but all sorts of things can go on in the UN away from the public gaze.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's break for another five minutes, David.

(A short break)

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's restart. Martin, over to you again.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn now to the Second Resolution, if I could.

As you know, many were concerned when one was passed that this was somehow a veiled cover for the invasion of Iraq. Jeremy Greenstock's negotiations make it clear that the international community really had come to the very limit of any diplomatic consensus with the passing of 1441.

Do you think, given the negotiating history of 1441 and the

problems involved, that it made sense to try for a Second Resolution?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I always thought we had to. I didn't think you could rest on 1441 because we had said we wouldn't. We had said there was no automaticity, it was essential for us, and it therefore seemed to me that if that was your position, you had to agree that if 1441 were not complied with, you would go back to the UN for a further discussion and a resolution to act on the fact that it had not been complied with.

Now, other people disagreed. This was a debate inside Number 10, inside the Government, inside the western community, but certainly my view was that.

I also thought that if you wanted to keep the international community together, it was essential to honour the commitment that you had given that it wasn't automatic, that we would have another debate.

Now, in fact this was always a bit academic in a sense because it was in the power of any country or any member of the Security Council to go back to the Security Council and insist on another discussion anyway. So whether or not we had said there would be a Second Resolution, it would have been perfectly possible for another member of the Security Council to slap one down.

So there's a certain amount of angels on pinheads for this, but it seemed to me, in terms of the presentation of the position we take and of our insistence that the UN were critical, that we did not believe that 1441 was automatic, that we didn't go back. I thought it was essential for the Prime Minister politically, though that was a judgment for him really, as I was an official, but it seemed to me it was absolutely essential domestically in Britain. But for all the

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other reasons given, I also felt that we needed to go back to the UN and say, "We have failed. What are we going to do?" And we should put the UN on the spot.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: At what point during your own private diplomatic conversations did the question arise? In a sense the Prime Minister told us in the public hearing that it was worthwhile having one last ditch chance -- I think the phrase he used was -- to bring people back together on the same page.

At what point during the proceedings was it clear that this was unrealistic?

SIR DAVID MANNING: It became clear in January and February that it was very, very tough. This is a period when relationships between leaders become very strained, and to a certain extent just break down, to be honest.

The French sort of go into overdrive against the idea of the Second Resolution in February. The Americans tell us, well, we will get you the Second Resolution, we know the Prime Minister needs one, and are, I think, considerably surprised when they find actually they can't deliver a Second Resolution.

And I think the degree to which emotion and anger are affecting the argument at

the very top of Government during this period is very considerable.

So it looked pretty bleak, to be honest. On the other hand, it seemed to me tempers might cool. It would have been dramatically changed, the whole tempo of the crisis, if Hans Blix had had a serious find, and initially it didn't look impossible.

Hans did start turning up some interesting things. He found those missiles. He found the test stand. He found the engines. He found some rusty old bits and pieces. It was beginning to look as though, certainly in those initial weeks, and certainly when he gave his first report, which I think is at the end of January, but forgive me if I've got the date wrong, it wasn't a completely forlorn process. My view was he should be given the time to do it, and if there were a proper find, we would get a Second Resolution. And if over a series of months we didn't find anything, then the mood would have changed anyway, and whether we needed to get a Second Resolution or rethink the whole crisis, at least you had a shot at that.

Of course it didn't work out like that in the end, but it did look very, very difficult.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Before I come back to that, on another aspect, in your conversation with Dr Rice on 3 January 2003, when you explained to her that we would need a Second Resolution in order to take military action, you said:

"This was not because our determination to deal with the Iraqi problem had diminished in any way. Rather it was about the political realities in the UK."

How far were the Prime Minister's motivations, our motivations, political? How far was the legal aspect the dominant one?

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SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, the legal aspect -- I always recognised the importance of the legality of this, but, as I said to you, I'm not a lawyer, and this was absolutely not an area that I was involved in. This was going to be something the Attorney was going to have to decide. So the legality of it was something that the Government certainly had to consider. But remember, the Americans don't think they have got a legal problem.

What worried me -- and, as I said earlier, it pre-dates these exchanges -- is the sort of assumption in the United States about freedom of manoeuvre that the Prime Minister and the British Government had, and this assumption that because he seemed to be so dominant on the international scene at this period -- this is when the Prime Minister is at the absolute peak of his international powers -- that he could do anything: there were no constraints, there were no problems; he had no political limits, and certainly I felt one of the things I had to do in explaining the position we were in to the Americans was the realities. A million people had marched down Whitehall, and they needed to understand this. I'm not sure I ever got through, but it was a point I insisted on trying to make.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You don't think that in a way these caveats undermined our credibility in terms of that we were not able to --

SIR DAVID MANNING: [redacted]

The moment that changes is when the Second Resolution is taken down, and they suddenly realise that he's going to have to

go to Parliament and get a vote. Then they are very worried. But I never felt they gave the effort for the Second Resolution the degree of impact it should have had because they never really felt it was as important to us as it was.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again from your perspective in the actual negotiations, do you think if the French had not opposed when they did and as they did, that the middle ground six would have come to the US/UK position?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Not in the timeframe that we are discussing, but certainly, after talking to President Lagos in Chile, and the Canadian proposal was out there, I think the idea that the crisis might have evolved in a different way is not wholly fanciful. It's probably not very likely. But it seemed to me certainly worth a chance. So I think if there had been more time, I think that the six in the UN -- their minds weren't necessarily closed. What they really resented, and what Lagos had made very clear to me, was being the ones who had to carry the burden of this resolution, while the French and the Russians and the Germans sat on the sidelines and said it's all your fault.

Now, if you had got a different dynamic going in February, March, April between the leaders on the basis of whatever Blix was saying, and there seemed to be more common ground, then it was possible that you could have found some kind of common resolution.

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Whether this in time would have led to new discussions and a rather more sensible temperature I don't know, but it seemed to me the best shot.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So at what point did the central question of more time come up against the American military timetable?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think it had been there, you know, from the preceding year. I think the people who were very much in favour of taking military action against Iraq, would have liked to have done it at the back end of 2002, if not earlier. There is -- I forget when, but there's even a suggestion earlier than that, let's try and go in in the autumn, I think.

The issue, I think, of timing becomes acute after 1441 and the declaration. Once Saddam has produced his 12,000 pages and the Americans decide this is not serious, then they just want to get on with it really.

But they are committed, because we have 1441, to going through the inspection process. I think early on, as I say, there were signs that maybe Blix was going to turn something up. So maybe the inspection process was going to provide exactly the pretext they needed.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So in a way, by the time of the Second Resolution negotiations, the American military timetable is already somehow so fixed that time is going to run out?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, that's the argument. I asked Colin Powell at one point, can you fight in the summer? He said

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yes.

There were various arguments. The troops had been building up over many months. You clearly don't want to keep people hanging around in Kuwait, which is not a great place to be sitting, and on ships in the Gulf. So there's a sort of pressure to move forward.

There's also the American political timetable ticking. Bush wants this well out of the way before going into the mid-term election process in -- the build-up for the elections the following year. They don't want to find themselves doing this at the back end of 2003, rather than going earlier and having it well out of the way and peace re-established before he's up for re-election. So there are various pressures of that kind.

But the argument that you can't fight in high temperatures -- I'm sure it's much, much nicer not to. You have a military adviser here who is much better qualified than I am. But I was struck when I put that specifically to [redacted] and he said, "[redacted] [redacted]". It is not an absolutely clinching argument. You could delay.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there ever serious consideration, if you like, of a parting of the ways with the United States if we felt more time --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think the Prime Minister thought there ever was. I think he had hoped very, very much to avoid military action. He wanted the issue to be disarmament, and through disarmament to bring about regime change. He wanted the United States to work through the international system. He wanted to preserve the international system and keep the international community together, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11. But ultimately, if push really, really came to shove,

I think he believed he must stand by the United States. It was important for Britain to be there. It was important for the transatlantic relationship, and he would be there if he had to be.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We need to come to the French question. Rod.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: By early March it was becoming clear that we weren't going to get the Second Resolution. How big a problem was that then going to create for the Prime Minister, politically and legally?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it was certainly a big problem for him politically, in my judgment. I'm straying now really into domestic politics, but it seemed to me always that it was very important for him in terms of British public opinion as a whole, and certainly opinion in his own party.

We had made a point in our approach to this crisis of saying, "We're going to the UN, we are going to do it through the UN, and we are also going to get progress on the Middle East peace process".

By the end of March Bush is still equivocating about declaring the road map, which is what I was certainly arguing with Condi on a daily basis for, which would certainly help domestic opinion. So I think the idea on top of that that you weren't going to get the Second Resolution, even though you'd proclaimed a need for one, was very difficult. So it was an issue for him.

Now, on the question of the legality of going without it, I'm not an expert. I note what Jeremy said about the difference between what is legitimising and what is actually legal, and I think it's much more than an elegant Foreign Office

formulation, if I can put it like that.

The truth is we had not had a UN resolution for Kosovo, but no one was up in arms about that. I felt all the way through it was essential to try and stay in the UN, but I'm not going to sit here and say to you I felt that the case was open and shut on the legality, particularly after 1441 which talks about being in breach and having a last chance. It does seem to me that that is a legal judgment, and I don't actually feel qualified to argue that case. I think you can come out on either side.

But in terms of would it have legitimised us, yes. I think Jeremy is absolutely right about that. I felt strongly that we needed to try to get it.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So one way or the other, it was a very big problem. But the Prime Minister, as you have said, was determined to stick with the Americans.

So what thoughts did he and the circle around him have about how you got out of this hole of not having a resolution? How were you going to get to the end point? You knew that Bush had a date. It was coming up pretty fast, and the Prime Minister wished to be there with him.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think his view was that you had to take the resolution off the table, the UN, and say we had tried but we had failed, and then accept that the process had reached an end. You have done your very best. You were going to explain that publicly to the British people, and you were going to take part with the Americans.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: How were we going to explain the failure of the UN?

SIR DAVID MANNING: That we couldn't get the votes.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: At what point did we decide that we would

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blame it on the French?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I don't know that it was ever as conscious as that. I recall Chirac making his statement, and I recall, I think, Jack Straw making a statement in Downing Street to a microphone. I may be wrong about this. But I'm not aware there was ever any conscious decision to do this. I think it was opportunistic.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Chirac's statement was ambiguous. We have had two completely different interpretations given to us, and you can pay your money and take your choice, one of which was that he said that they would veto military action for all time to come under all circumstances, and the other of which was he had made clear he was talking about that resolution that evening, and that "quelles que soient les circonstances" referred to whether or not the French vote against counted as a veto or simply a vote against because there weren't nine positive votes. It's quite clear which interpretation we adopted.

The Prime Minister spoke to the President at 3.20 on the afternoon of 12 March -- that's almost 48 hours after Chirac had made his statement -- and they agreed

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SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think they certainly concluded -- certainly the Prime Minister concluded -- there was not going to be a Second Resolution.

Chirac's statement comes after those weeks of frenetic activity when people like Villepin are touring the world, telling people not to vote for it. So it doesn't come in a vacuum, this thing, .

So that is the framework they are working in, and I think probably they genuinely did think that Chirac was absolutely not going to allow there to be a Second Resolution.

I think that's true at that moment, but I come back to the point I made earlier. One of the reasons I felt if you could stretch this out was that these kind of spikes of confrontation and emotion might be managed in a longer period. But I think at this point, yes, it was, as I have said, opportunistic. They didn't see this coming.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was the Prime Minister aware of the messages that came through from the Elysee and the Quai d'Orsay after Chirac's statement to say that we were interpreting it in the wrong way, and more or less encouraging the thought you have just articulated, that if the process could run longer, the French might well take a different position? Did that get through to him?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think he was aware. I don't think he

would have bought the argument that the French will take a different position.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you would be more inclined to have thought --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I thought it was worth a shot. I didn't think Blix had had very long to work, and I thought he worked against the backdrop of a very difficult emotional and highly charged situation and that the Americans were rushing it, and that we needed to give Blix more opportunity to show whether we could find something or not.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted].[11] It was an extraordinary

[11] In the preceding redacted text, the witness speculated on French thinking and, in particular, that of President Chirac.

achievement to get him on board for 1441, and therefore the understanding, the expectation that he'll do everything possible to stop going beyond, is deeply embedded long before he pops up and says what he says.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [redacted]?

SIR DAVID MANNING: [redacted]

[redacted].

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was there also a feeling that Chirac was trying to exploit this crisis to advance a French, even a Gaullist view of France's position in the world, at the expense of the United Kingdom and the United States?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, there was. Stephen Wall would be a much better person to talk about this than me, but the assumption -- once cohabitation collapses in 2002, and Chirac re-emerges with a Prime Minister of his own party, he is in a much stronger

position again

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I think the Gaullist reflex was quite strong, and he felt unchained a bit after the RPR won the election.

Now, it doesn't mean to say that everything he does and says is explained by this. I think on Iraq he genuinely was much more concerned that the aftermath would be difficult than others were, and did understand the complexities of the Arab world in a way that maybe others didn't.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Within what at one point was called "new Europe", which we seemed to have been part of, the UK was the sort of linchpin among Coalition partners supporting the Americans.

If we had not been able to take part in the action, say because the House of Commons had not approved it, what would have happened to the contributions from the others? Do you think that Spain and Poland and others would have gone on? Or was this an additional pressure on us, that they were standing behind us and they would fall over without us?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I assume that the Spaniards would have gone on. I don't know, but Aznar was absolutely determined, and was very, very clearly in favour of getting on with it and not trying to sustain the effort for a Second Resolution. So I think that Spain certainly would have been there.

I don't know about the others, but I imagine that they would have stood by the Americans, not least because you are in a situation now where these countries are still very concerned about the American guarantee vis-a-vis the Russians, and I think they would certainly have been willing to put token troops up in order to ensure that the American umbrella was still up.

THE CHAIRMAN: David, I would like to spend just a couple of minutes on reactions in the region, setting the context, looking at early 2003, near inevitability of an invasion.

I suppose two specific questions first. One is: what was the judgment about how Libya would react, given what had been going on between ourselves and Libya over quite a long period up to this point?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, Libya was one of those countries, as I said, that fell into the category of what are we going to do about Libyan WMD. I think there was a feeling that they would get the message if Iraq were dealt with.

I may be wrong about this, Chairman, but I think it was more complicated than that. I think after you get Gaddafi

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trying to work his way back into, as it were, international polite society, irrespective of this.

I'm sure they noticed the pressure that was on, and I think they probably concluded that -- others would know better -- their programme wasn't going very well anyway, so if they gave it up, they could cash in their chips and get the Americans' attention, which they duly did.

This is very much to the Prime Minister's credit. I do not believe the Americans would have re-engaged with Libya on WMD without him.

THE CHAIRMAN: What about Iran? Leaving aside what came later, but Iran in early 2003, how would they view the invasion, did we judge?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think they would have been caught between their dislike of Iraq, and their delight that Saddam had got his comeuppance, and the worry about having the Americans living next door.

THE CHAIRMAN: But not expecting a violent adverse reaction, as indeed there was not?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, and 2003 is a wasted opportunity in my view. This is a different discussion, but after 9/11 there are signs, I think, that the Iranians wanted to find a way of re-engaging.

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I have always felt that was an opportunity lost, and perhaps the last moment when we might have found some negotiated way of dealing with the Iranian nuclear problem.

THE CHAIRMAN: That was with ?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, .

THE CHAIRMAN: The other thing, I suppose, is how concerned were we in coming to our judgment about the effect of an engagement in the region on the stability of other interested parties in the Gulf, Saudi, et cetera?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it was a major factor. It was one of the things certainly that, you know, the JIC wrote about. It was, I think, always very hard to read what they would do. It was clear that there wasn't much public enthusiasm among the regimes, though of course the Kuwaitis and Qataris were willing to say they were up for it.

I think that the regimes were often different from their people. The Arab street, a lot of the time, saw Saddam as a bit of a hero because he had taken on the Americans. And overhanging everything was this inability of the western community to grapple successfully with Israel/Palestine.

This was an enormous issue. It was something that had exercised the Prime Minister, certainly since I first met him, which was in Israel when I was ambassador there, and was

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something that he raised regularly with me: what are we doing? And he raised endlessly with Bush. And we got assurances which turned out actually not to be worth very much.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Military contribution. There's quite a lot of paperwork in the middle of October 2002 about the different military options. We obviously don't have time to go into the full detail of this, but you're, as I read it, pretty sceptical about the need for a large ground component.

There seemed to be two arguments that you were particularly sceptical about. One of them is the view that was put by the Defence Secretary:

"A further factor that cannot be entirely discounted is the negative reaction of many of our own military, particularly in the army, if we do not provide a land contribution."

Then you wrote:

"CDS is worried about this."

Could you elaborate first on that issue?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it didn't seem to me that the reason for joining a land invasion of Iraq should be about whether or not the military would like to take part. It seemed to me that the decision should be for state reasons, for political reasons, and that we were already contributing importantly to the military effort. What the Americans wanted from us particularly, as I understand it -- and, Lawry, you are more of an expert on the military than I am -- was the bases that we had, Cyprus and Diego Garcia, that they had huge admiration for our Special Forces, and we continued to supply an important component through what we were doing in the air. And Rumsfeld, [redacted] had said we don't even need you.

Now, if we were going to go in on the basis of action on land, then there might be very good reasons for it, but the fact

that the military wanted to do it didn't seem to me to be persuasive enough.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have a sense that the military were agitating in MOD, in Whitehall, but also in their contacts with CentCom and so on, to make sure that they did have a role?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I've got to be very careful about this because I did not see any papers suggesting any of this, and in fact they seemed to me to adopt different positions at different times.

In the spring/summer of 2002, my recollection is of their concern that they might be committed by the politicians to doing things that would be very difficult to deliver because they were braced for a firemen's strike, and that politicians never get real, really, about the number of things that the military could be asked to do simultaneously. And I think they may have felt particularly they wanted the Prime Minister to understand where those lines were.

By the autumn, my sense is that that reluctance has shifted to an enthusiasm for taking part, and that there are three different options, as I recall, that were on offer. One was a sort of status quo option. One was to add more, probably ships and aeroplanes, and then finally there is the big option to go in for a land attack.

By the autumn, the pressure is to offer the third option. But there were a number of things that worried me, and as I said in the public hearing, I absolutely was an armchair general. So I have to be very careful. But I worried that if it was really difficult to do it because of a firemen's strike three months earlier, why wasn't it difficult now?

Secondly, we had been told that we would go through the north, but it was becoming extremely clear ██████████████

[redacted] the Turks were never going to let us go through the north. So what would that mean?

If the Americans felt they could do this operation without us, and the things they really wanted were 1 and 2, why didn't we settle for 1 and 2?

I was also unhappy about what I understood the American ground plan was. I was particularly unhappy about the risk that we would find ourselves fighting in a CW and BW environment very early, because there was intelligence -- I think it's subsequent to this period, but there was intelligence anyway that suggests we might have done, and that we would find ourselves fighting through the streets of built-up cities, and I thought we needed to know a lot more about this actually.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We'll come to those things.

The other argument that's used is this is a way of buying influence with the US, that there's some relationship between the size of our contribution and the degree of influence. What was your view about that?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it's not a wholly spurious argument. We had, after all, had defence reviews, as you know very well, which argued that we must be capable of fighting with the Americans in hot wars, and if we suddenly show we can't do that, we are not willing to do that, that changes the perspective. So this is not a wholly spurious argument.

On the other hand, in the case of Iraq it did not seem to me to be a clinching argument. I thought that our willingness to take our fair share had been very clear in Afghanistan.

We had also worked enormously hard over the whole piece on Iraq[12], and were working very hard over Iraq. So I didn't feel that our influence was likely to suffer particularly if we said

[12] The witness later said he probably meant Afghanistan

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there's a limit to what we can do and this is it.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to ask one more question on Turkey in a second.

At what point did you think we decided to send a land component? There was a formal decision in January, but somehow, despite all your reservations, despite, apparently, the Prime Minister's reservations --

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I can only assume, because I don't know, and I have looked through the papers because I thought you might ask me this, and I don't know. I think the answer must be in a discussion between the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary some time in October.

The Prime Minister is asked to make some decisions in September because there is a planning conference, as I recall, at CentCom, and we are going to be asked, are you up for this or not? Because we have got to get on and do some planning.

As I recall, he authorises me to write out and say: you can say that we will do up to the second option, and if you want to draw up plans on the third, you may, but do not assume the political decision to do this has been taken, because it hasn't.

He was always conscious in the discussions I had with him of the sort of balance you had to strike between showing you were willing to take military action, but as a pressure to get the UN route to work. This is at the height of the debate about the UN resolution. So what you don't want to do is be arguing with everybody you need a resolution 1441, but actually you are sending all your military equipment out there, because it looks as though you are contradicting yourself.

I think some time after that he and the Defence Secretary must have concluded that they needed to do that. But that's a complete guess on my part, and I do not know.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it's a rather big decision.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I agree with that.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one question on Turkey. [redacted]
[redacted].

Again, the sort of persistence here from MOD lasted well into 2003. Why do you think was that? You clearly were of the view in October that this was not likely to happen.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, but, again, I was wrong about a lot of military things. So there's no reason why I should have been right about this one. I think probably the answer is because the Americans were telling our military, don't worry, we will fix it, and I think certainly the Americans themselves were surprised at how difficult the Turks proved to be. This actually plays into American diplomacy as a whole, how difficult everybody was with the Second Resolution. [redacted]
[redacted].

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The aftermath planning. Again, we have had a lot of discussion about this, so I don't want to spend a lot of time on it.

The Prime Minister wanted confirmation that there would be a winning concept, and aftermath planning was, on the British assessment, part of whether or not there was a winning concept. There does not seem to be any suggestion that the United States ever had -- there was any confidence in Whitehall of the quality of American aftermath planning. Is that fair? And to what extent was that integrated into our thinking about how we should plan with our own forces, and how we tried to work with the Americans on this problem?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I think the first part of your question, the assumption was that the planning done by State and

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by DOD would be adequate. But was it? No, clearly not. That must be true because we know the mess that ensued. It was also tied to the view that the UN would have to come in and provide an overall, as it were, framework, not least because nobody else was as well qualified to do that. So I think those propositions are right.

Sorry, what's the second question on it?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just how that affected our own approach.

Can I just quote -- the Foreign Secretary raised an issue on 17 January on aspects of planning for the aftermath.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You said then, in a manuscript comment:

"Good questions, but I don't think they affect your decision in principle."

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes. I think the Prime Minister by this stage has decided we are going to do this, but they are good questions.

I think too we were initially responsible for quite a small area. I know in the public hearings the Chairman made the point to me that we were legally responsible for the whole country. But the reality, as far as we were concerned, was we would be administering this piece in the south.

There were important differences in assumptions. After all, we thought we would be going into a more benign environment. This was a Shia area. And I think our own military are very good at managing on the ground [redacted] I went to Baghdad in May. The way in which the Americans were operating was dramatically different from the way that our own people were operating, and very quickly once we were on the ground in Basra and so on, the local military commanders were encouraging to have meetings,

local democracy and so on.

So I think the assumption was that we would only be responsible for quite a small and quite a benign bit of the country.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then just finally on this, the role of the UN you stressed quite a lot. Do you think that we may have been investing too much hope in what the UN could bring to the situation, even if we had had the Second Resolution, and to what extent was there evidence that the UN was prepared to play the sort of role that we might have in mind?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think they would have been clearly very reluctant to do it without the Second Resolution, and they were very reluctant to do it because, I don't think it's any secret, the Secretary General was not an enthusiast for any of this.

But I think, given the UN agencies and the UN experience, they would certainly have found it very difficult, but there was probably nobody better to do it. If there hadn't been such a mess on the security front, it may be that the UN could have done really quite effective work quite quickly. I don't pretend to be a great expert on the UN, but certainly I think once the security situation collapsed, it was impossible for the UN to do the sort of things that we hoped and envisaged.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I've got one very short question, David, on one aspect of the legal story. We are not going to address the substantive issues because we have done it within the public hearings. But we have seen from some classified documentation -- hence private -- that apart from yourself and Jonathan Powell, Sally Morgan is also very much involved in discussion on legal issues inside Number 10. I just wonder what her role is vis-a-vis the Attorney General and the legal

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question.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think there were two meetings when I was present with Sally and with Jonathan -- I think there were two -- and I was asked to brief him on the politics, the international politics surrounding the whole issue, and I think, probably until quite late, he wasn't necessarily au fait with every twist and turn of this saga.

I assume that Sally was there in her political adviser role, and would have been, as it were, the Prime Minister's eyes and ears on this. I wasn't present when they discussed legality as legality, but certainly Sally and Jonathan were there when I briefed on the politics of it, and I think Jeremy may have done the UN piece as well. But I don't know what Sally's day-to-day relationship was.

THE CHAIRMAN: But as far as you can understand it and perceived it, within the envelope of what a political adviser would reasonably do?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think so.

THE CHAIRMAN: Interpreting an aspect of the political scene?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think so. I assume, Chairman, that she was telling the Attorney what the Prime Minister's views were about this in terms of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I just wanted to get that straight.

The other player from the same kind of sourcing is Lord Falconer's role. He of course is a lawyer, but he too is associated with these discussions on the legal issue. Was that essentially legal, do you suppose?

SIR DAVID MANNING: As far as I remember, and someone will give me a piece of paper that proves it's wrong, but I don't think I was ever present at a meeting when he discussed this with

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Lord Falconer. I may be wrong about that. I have no memory of it. I certainly remember the two meetings with the Attorney. So I think I would remember it.

THE CHAIRMAN: And he had not been present at those?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Martin, over to you. Back into Iraq.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You mentioned your visit in May 2003 when you met Jerry Bremer, among others.

Three questions, really. First of all, your assessment of the situation at the time you were there; how well you felt we and the Americans were working together; and did the visit leave you optimistic or pessimistic with regard to the future?

SIR DAVID MANNING: When I went at the end of May to prepare for the Prime Minister to go there and to try and provide whatever ground truth I could for him, it was on the back already of very disturbing problems. The Americans had failed to provide the sort of security that you would expect, I think, from somebody who came in as liberators, and we had been through the nightmare of the looting and so on. So it was already troubling.

It wasn't so troubling that I was unable to stay in the old embassy on the riverbank in the middle of Baghdad, which had to be abandoned shortly thereafter. So things had not reached that kind of pass, and there certainly was a mood of some hope and optimism. But having said that, you know, there were certainly clouds.

It was also, I thought, very striking that [redacted] If you were an Iraqi, and you saw the Americans coming past in their tanks with their hats on, this was completely different from -- I went around Baghdad with [redacted] our guys. They

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were in soft top vehicles and they just had side arms, and we stopped and we talked to people on the street corners. We saw no Americans doing this.

[redacted]

Coming back to what I said earlier, the assumption among the American military was that they were there to win the war and get out by the summer. They didn't do nation building, and it wasn't their business to go out on to the streets and make friends with the Iraqis.

Now, there were exceptions to this, but it was, I thought a strikingly alienating image that you had when you were in Baghdad.

Sorry, what was the next bit?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The actual working relationship between us and the Americans.

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, you are on a fault line here, really, because this is when ORHA gives way to Bremer.

I went to see ORHA in action, and it was indeed a pretty shambolic and depressing kind of experience. You know, a room smaller than this with a cardboard label on the door saying "Ministry of Housing" and things like that. So one could not say that these people were well prepared to run the country.

On the other hand, I think ORHA has got an exaggeratedly bad press, [redacted] Jay Garner, after all, did know something about Iraq [redacted] and had been involved in the whole Kurdish operation. He was absolutely clear that you should not disband the military, and he wasn't going in for great massive de-Ba'athification programmes, something, incidentally, I had discussed with

Condi Rice [redacted].

But was it shambolic and badly prepared? Yes. They had, I think, expected they were going to be faced with a serious humanitarian crisis. There wasn't one. I think they also thought they would be working in a WMD environment. There wasn't one. And I'm not sure they had been told they would be running the country. It's hard to know, because of course we didn't have visibility. This is all now in Department of Defence stuff, State Department shut out, and I think very surprised to find that the President has given the running of Iraq to the Department of Defence, which says they don't run countries. So it's rather difficult really.

Thereafter Bremer comes in, and the initial impression is of an extraordinarily energetic authoritative determined figure who [redacted] increasingly shuts the Brits out of any serious debate inside Baghdad, I think, is very autocratic, takes decisions like the decision on de-Ba'athification and disbanding the army without reference to anybody, as far as one can see. I don't know whether you have had a chance to talk to any of the Americans, but [redacted] told me that this decision came completely out of the blue, two weeks after they had all sat round, the principals, agreeing this was the last thing they were going to do.

So you had this guy on the ground. [redacted] I think he brings great energy, but an extraordinarily narrow focus. He sits in the Green Zone. He doesn't communicate much, doesn't get out much. He works ferociously hard, but this is a guy, as far as I know, with no

experience of the Middle East and has been given a carte blanche to do what he likes by DOD.

It becomes very, very difficult to work with him, and he takes a series of decisions very early on that then result, or certainly contribute deeply, to the disintegration of the security position.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: And you report this back?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I'm getting ahead of myself. I found him impressive, but I cannot say to you that I found him sympathetic.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How long had he been there when you arrived?

SIR DAVID MANNING: If he was there when I arrived in May, I don't remember it. I remember meeting him for the first time at the airfield in Kuwait. But I can't give you a date.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can we move on? Time is now beginning to run out on us.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: On the same subject, by June/July 2003, the Foreign Secretary is expressing extreme frustration, [redacted] and insisting that the Prime Minister should flag these points up very forcefully with President Bush.

A month later -- that's 5 June, you've got these in your pack -- 2 July, you put up an equally strongly worded or almost as strongly, slightly more diplomatic, note to the Prime Minister, again asking him to get across to President Bush that it's going wrong:

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"Face crisis of confidence in Iraq. Have we got enough troops? I don't think so. [redacted] [redacted]."

Did the Prime Minister get the message across clearly to the President about this?

SIR DAVID MANNING: He wouldn't have given it in the terms that Jack Straw or I gave it to him, I don't think. To be honest, a lot of the time the [redacted] messages were carried by me to Condi. I think he probably would have expressed these concerns to Bush, and said we have really, really got to do something about it, [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

But he certainly wouldn't have spoken in the forceful way that I minuted to him, no.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: This huge frustration that you both expressed here suggests very strongly that we've lost influence with the Americans, lost the ability to influence what's happening, and you have partly just given the reason for that, which relates to Bremer. We are a joint occupying power, but Bremer is reporting only to Washington and he's not paying a lot of attention to Jeremy Greenstock.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think that's a very fair summary. Jeremy would give you the sense on the ground. There were months of difficulty for Jeremy, and even when I was in Washington and newly arrived, Jeremy would sometimes ring me from Baghdad and ask me to go and talk to Condi about his difficulties. It's in the autumn of 2003, I think, that she sets up something like the Iraq Stability Group, something like that, that is designed actually, [redacted] [redacted]?

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SIR RODERIC LYNE: What are the elements of this? The Prime Minister/Bush/you/Condi channels have to carry a huge amount of the load of trying to manage the aftermath, but as you say, Bush can agree to things but orders don't go down the line. Then do we have an effective channel to Rumsfeld at this point?

SIR DAVID MANNING: No, I don't think so. In defence of our own people, I'm not sure anybody ever had an effective channel to Rumsfeld, [redacted].

I think what is instituted, and I can't remember, Rod, when it happens, is we start regular videoconferences, and that gives the Prime Minister the ability to bring people into the discussion, sitting round him, and Bush has some of his key players sitting round him. I can't remember all those involved. They would predominantly been the National Security Council, but I don't think exclusively. So there is an attempt to, as it were, engage the administration more broadly through these videoconferences.

They only really get going, I suspect, after I have left. Nigel would be able to tell you, but it seemed to me we absolutely had to have regular -- if I can just back up for a moment, because I think it's important in understanding what happened, I remember when the Prime Minister went to India for the G8 summit -- so it's a bit before this -- and had a breakfast with the President, and Condi was there as notetaker and I was there as notetaker. [redacted]

He obviously knew there was a problem. We all said there is a problem, but it would be wrong to pretend they didn't know they had a problem. They did. [redacted] but even before this, the Prime Minister and the

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President are discussing this problem, and on this occasion it's actually raised by the President.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just thinking of lessons learned, finally, in a similar situation again, is there anything more we could have done about it? As you say, we've got videoconferencing and the rest. But is the central problem that we were hooked up to what has been described to us, including by Americans, as a dysfunctional administration in Washington?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Yes, I think it was dysfunctional. I'm sure you shouldn't sit at the table and say you couldn't have done something better. Of course you could have done it differently or better in some ways. But the basic truth that they were dysfunctional is, I think, unarguable with.

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So I think a huge effort was made. But did it have much effect on the way Bremer behaved? I don't think it did really, no.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. Lawrence, last chapter.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Last chapter as ambassador. You go to Washington, having played a very central role in the UK

Government, knowing the main American players. Obviously there's somebody back in London now doing your job. But do you think you were able to have good access and have good influence in Washington because of your past role?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I distinguish between those two things. I certainly had good access. It doesn't convince me I necessarily had great influence. I think one has to be realistic.

I was certainly at a huge advantage in going to that job in that I knew the Bush team, yes, and I could see everybody from the President down, though I very rarely did see the President. I was in a position to pick up the phone and say, "The Prime Minister is very worried about this". But I saw myself as supplementing what Nigel had to do, and having set up these videoconferences, and having established this close link between Number 10 and the White House, you don't want the ambassador storming in and undoing all of that. So you've got to go in and play a supporting role. So you've got a different part in the play.

I think we had some influence, yes. I think they knew that -- I always used to say to people in the embassy, if we're any good, we're part of the debate in London and we're part of the debate in Washington, and that's what we had to try to be. I think if they believed that was the case, they would listen to you, [redacted] But a lot of what London wanted fed in was fed in to the principals' meetings [redacted] So we were not entirely without influence.

But I don't want to exaggerate what we could do. If the Prime Minister couldn't do it with Bush, or ministers couldn't

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do it with their counterparts, or Nigel with Condi, then I'm very unlikely to be able to do it.

The thing I did try very, very hard to do was to get them to understand why the Middle East was so important, because it seemed to me that in the day-by-day battle over Iraq, a lot of the time this kept being lost. But that's a different story really.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:

SIR DAVID MANNING:

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:

SIR DAVID MANNING: and certainly if I was at the White House talking to Condi or Steve or somebody, and insurgency came up, there was much head scratching. What were the insurgents? After all, they weren't supposed to be there. The war was supposed to be over. So who were these people.

So yes, it came up, but I can't pretend to you I was part of the analytical process about it really.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Bob Woodward had a comment that this was an administration in denial.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I think it only really came to in the autumn of 2003. I think by 2004 the crisis is really very, very severe. The situation in terms of the insurgency is very hard to control. It seemed to me by

the summer of 2004, and I think I wrote to Michael Jay about this, there was a real risk of strategic failure actually. I think they did, by this stage, realise things were very seriously going very seriously wrong.

But you have to remember too, it's against the backdrop of increasing difficulties. Is it May that we get Abu Ghraib?

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: February.

SIR DAVID MANNING: February. The situation on the ground in Iraq is dreadful. The situation domestically in America is dreadful, and the whole thing is all consuming, as far as the Bush administration is concerned. They have hardly got the energy for anything else.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I ask you just a few questions about what effect did UK influence have over American policy in this period, just starting with the one that you have mentioned.

Arguably April 2004, when you've got Sadrist uprising, Fallujah, and Abu Ghraib right at the end, is a point where the British may be being listened to more than earlier because clearly things are going badly wrong.

Was that your experience at the time? Were you involved in the discussions about what to do about Fallujah, for example, which seems to --

SIR DAVID MANNING: No. I saw it sideways. I would have been copied into the paperwork. [redacted]

But they were very preoccupied by those problems, and I think anybody who had something to offer on a way through on all of this, would be listened to. But there were huge debates within the administration themselves. Just because you might persuade

one part of the administration -- this is true throughout the whole system, of course -- it doesn't mean to say that everybody is going to accept it.

There were difficulties of analysis. How far were the Iranians stirring this up? How far was Muqtada al-Sadr? ██████████? I think there were real problems of understanding what was happening on the ground, which I assume we had too, not least because these were not in our area. This is also a period where there's a very strong contrast between how we are managing Basra and what else is happening in the country.

So I'm sure we were consulted about this, I don't think we were in a position to deliver answers on the ground. We certainly had ideas about how you managed the difficult social and ethnic tensions within the country.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You mentioned Basra being relatively benign at that time. Within a couple of years we were managing Basra, not by the methods that we might have liked in 2003, but by basically trying to protect ourselves in a pretty hostile setting.

Did that affect the way that the Americans were viewing the UK and the British military?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, I didn't feel it directly. I'm sure it affected the American military, I got whispers of the disobliging things being said as time went on, and certainly by the end of my time in Washington the view was that Basra was a mess.

In fairness, I think, though, the view of the British military was pretty high until you come to the actual Basra problem. And the Basra problem, as they said and we said, was you've got a city of several million people. You've got 10,000

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troops. It is destabilised by insurgents, by criminality. Our guys thought they were going to be there for a short time. The way that the post-war planning has worked out means they are there for a long time. It's not necessarily surprising if you find yourself in lots of trouble.

But it certainly undermined us. There's no doubt about that. That and the capture of the naval fast boat group. There was certainly a shift of perception in the United States about the military performance by the end of my time, yes.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Finally, the surge. It seems that we didn't have much sight of this shift in American policy. Is that fair?

SIR DAVID MANNING: Well, it was one of the ideas that was out there, because it surrounds the whole debate about Baker-Hamilton, and the Baker-Hamilton report seemed very important at the time. Actually it turns out not to have had much effect on anything.

But in 2006, at the beginning of 2006, when things were so bad, and Jim Baker was asked really to chair this and to come up with a new approach, he did this and he produced his report in December 2006, just as the Prime Minister arrived. The Prime Minister played off it, and said to Bush he thought there was a lot of good stuff in here, including re-engaging with Iran and trying to engage with Syria and making progress on the MEPP. But in that report and 79 recommendations, there is a suggestion for a surge, but a surge that's short term, with a view to spiking and then coming home in 2008.

Now, building up troops was one of those things that was being kicked around. I remember Steve Hadley asking me what did I think about building up troops, in a cocktail party discussion actually. So they were obviously thinking about all the sorts

of options at this point.

But I don't think that -- the President certainly didn't give the Prime Minister the impression on 6 or 8 December, whenever it was, that he was about to decide on this, though, looking back, there's a sort of inevitability and logic about it. It was the key issue for him. [redacted] he would have hoped in better shape in 2008 than it was in 2006.

For what it's worth, I thought the likelihood of a surge working was not great, and I think that was certainly the prevailing view. It turned out to work a great deal better, I think, than the sceptics believed, or probably even its advocates dared to hope.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But you would accept that the actual consultation on what was a major policy departure was pretty clear?

SIR DAVID MANNING: I don't know, because if they had had that, I would have expected them to do it with the PM on one of these videoconferences, or through MOD. They certainly didn't consult me on it.

THE CHAIRMAN: David, we have only got three or four minutes. We would like very much to invite any final reflections you have that are necessary for this private session in terms of Iraq, and the UK/US relationship particularly.

SIR DAVID MANNING: I haven't got any profound thoughts, Chairman, really. The only thing I might just add is a word on the bilateral relationship.

I have always been a very firm supporter and advocate, but I do think that Iraq should provoke thoughts about how far we are seen to be completely tied to an American position. I was

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uncomfortable about that in Number 10. I tried to avoid using the term "special relationship" when I was in the United States, not because it isn't special. It is. But I think it distorts the way we think about ourselves and our foreign policy, and we exaggerate the impact we can have in America, I think. America has lots of special relationships.

So I think one of the lessons learned from the Bush period, I think, is not to overestimate how much we can do in affecting American policy. I'm not saying we should underestimate it. We do have a role. But I think we sometimes get trapped into thinking that the special relationship is as special for them as it is for us, and I think it limits our wider foreign policy options.

It certainly had a profound effect on our policy at this time towards Europe. There was an opportunity cost here, and maybe that was always going to be the case. As I have said, I thought the Prime Minister always in the end would have gone with the United States. He hoped not to have to choose, but when it came to it, I'm sure he would have chosen that.

But I do think we do need to reflect on this reflex foreign policy attitude of the special relationship.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have now less than a whole minute.

On a side note, going right back, you told us about the growing -- not so much influence as necessary position of the intelligence agencies. We do have one clash of evidence about SIS between different witnesses, some saying that they oversold what they could deliver and underdelivered it, but others saying no, that's not right.

I just wondered where from Number 10, your central position, how it looked.

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SIR DAVID MANNING: I can only say, looking back, you know, that the fact was the intelligence does feel as though it delivered more than it really did. I think quite quickly after the invasion it became clear that some of them felt that too.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think, with that, can I thank you very much for an extremely valuable session.

The transcript, I'm afraid, will have to be looked at in this building at your convenience.

With that, thanks again. I'll close the session.

(The hearing adjourned)

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