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Wednesday, 6 January 2010

(10.00 am)

GENERAL SIR PETER WALL AND MR JON DAY

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

GEN SIR PETER WALL: Good morning, Sir John.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, let's begin. Welcome to everybody

including our two witnesses, General Sir Peter Wall and
Jon Day from the MoD.

Following our session yesterday, when we heard from
Simon MacDonald about policy decisions from 2007 to
2009, we are going to hear in this morning's first
session again about policy decisions for the same
period, from the perspective of the Ministry of Defence.

The session will, we hope, take a broadly
chronological approach starting in the summer of 2007
and looking at how planning for military drawdown
developed during this period and how events in Iraq
influenced decision-making. I'm also going to ask
questions about the completion of the UK's combat
mission in Iraq and about the prospects for continued
bilateral relations with the Iraqi military.

Our witnesses for the session are Lieutenant General
Sir Peter Wall, DCDS (Commitments) and later DCDS (Ops),
which was the same post.

GEN SIR PETER WALL: It was the same job. The terminology

1 changed because of the streamlining in the MoD.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Confusing.

3 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It certainly confused ourselves.

4 MR JON DAY: I can plead guilty to that.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Jon Day, you were DG (Operational Policy)

6 when you became Policy Director in the MoD and that has

7 been renamed as well.

8 MR JON DAY: As the Director General (Security Policy).

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think we shall taking up to two

10 hours for this morning's session, and I hope it will be

11 acceptable to do that without a break because we will

12 then take a break for a short session following that.

13 Just to repeat the usual formula, witnesses are

14 giving evidence based on recollection. We will check

15 what we hear against papers to which we have access and

16 remind witnesses, as in every case, they will later be

17 asked to sign a transcript of evidence to the effect

18 that the evidence they have given is truthful, fair and

19 accurate, with which preliminaries, Sir Roderic?

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. Thank you both for struggling

21 in in this inclement weather and, Sir Peter, good to see

22 you again.

23 We have heard from a number of your predecessors in

24 the role of DCDS (Commitments) and what that role

25 involves. Unless there is anything you want to add

1 that, I don't want to spend too much time on that. We
2 have got some interesting stuff to get through in the
3 course of our two hours.

4 Mr Day, I think one question that would be helpful
5 just as a preliminary, if you could tell us a bit about,
6 is how civilian advice is integrated into the advice
7 that is given for the chiefs and ministers?

8 MR JON DAY: I don't think there really is civilian and
9 military advice in any separate sense. For a long time
10 the Ministry of Defence has been a fully integrated
11 organisation, with civil servants and the military
12 operating and working side by side and integrated into
13 the command chain. So there was a single stream of
14 advice that went to the chiefs and to ministers.
15 Obviously, they are individuals -- who
16 contribute towards that.

17 The primary policy adviser to the Secretary of State
18 is the Permanent Secretary, who is a civilian, and the
19 primary military adviser is the Chief of Defence Staff.

20 Beneath that, there is a policy and
21 operations team that is run by Peter's successor and by
22 me, which is fully integrated. Within that, the post
23 I was holding for most of this period, then called
24 the Director General (Operational Policy), works
25 directly to the DCDS (C) or DCDS (Ops) and is, if you

1 like, his political adviser.

2 So I provided civilian advice on issues relating to

3 Iraq, both direct to the General,

4 collectively through to the

5 Permanent Secretary, the CDS and the Chiefs of Staff,

6 and directly and collectively through to ministers.

7 I was the MoD representative, either on my own or again

8 with Peter, on a range of Cabinet and cross-government

9 committees.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. I think that's clear and

11 helpful.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just interject? Lieutenant General at

13 the time in question but now General?

14 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Correct.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can we now turn to the chain of command,

17 as it ran from London to Iraq and indeed within Iraq?

18 One comment we had from General Fry, when he was giving

19 evidence before Christmas, was that there was some

20 criticisms that he had heard, I think, from the

21 Americans, about who MND South East were really

22 reporting to. Was there confusion about that?

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, I don't think so. I mean, in every

24 coalition operation there is a national position that

25 has to be accommodated within a broader coalition

1 context, and so the chain of command, strictly speaking,
2 from theatre was the GOC of MND South East, various --
3 you will be talking to lots of them, I know -- reporting
4 direct to the Chief of Joint Operations who reported
5 direct in command terms to CDS. That's the chain of
6 command. Now, there is a number of other advisory
7 chains and policy-related chains that work around that,
8 but that was the national chain of command, and, of
9 course, the GOC of MND South East also reported in
10 a coalition context to the American corps commander in
11 Baghdad. So inevitably there was a requirement to
12 ensure that the Baghdad view and the Basra view related
13 to London aspirations would chime properly.

14 It is fair to say that for a lot of the campaign,
15 the corps headquarters was completely absorbed by what
16 was going on in the centre and north of the country and
17 tended to give quite a lot of autonomy to the Shia
18 south, which, as you have heard already, had a very
19 different complexion to it. It was really a separate
20 campaign in some ways.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But in effect, the GOC MND South East had
22 two bosses, one in London and one in Baghdad. If those
23 two bosses didn't agree, what did he do?

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: One in Northwood, speaking strictly --

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, sorry, one in the UK and one in

1 Baghdad.

2 GEN SIR PETER WALL: -- and one in Baghdad. It was our job

3 to ensure that though the national ambitions and

4 aspirations and the coalition objectives hopefully, as

5 the campaign progressed, reflected through Iraqi wishes

6 rather than just the Multi National coalition lead, that

7 those aligned.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But there must have been some occasions

9 when they didn't. If push came to shove, which one won?

10 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It depended on the issue. This is the

11 nature of coalition warfare, and, you know, I'm not

12 a historian, but some of you know more about this than

13 I do, this has always been an interesting challenge for

14 people on the ground to solve.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I remember Pristina, for example.

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, and there are lots of other

17 examples. It depended on the issue, but, of course,

18 this sort of chain of command issue wasn't solely

19 a military one. It affected the wider government

20 engagement as well. So there were a number of issues

21 where General Petraeus in consultation, for example,

22 with CDS, would agree a particular position on a certain

23 issue, particularly to do with things like

24 prioritisation of activity or the timing of operations

25 and that sort of thing.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: As you say, this is normal within
2 a coalition, and looking at the history of this
3 coalition, do you think this was something we were able
4 to manage in a reasonable way without excessive tensions
5 or major disagreements at any particular point?

6 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, I think so, but it did require
7 engagement and liaison at a number of levels and in
8 number of places to ensure that all of that remained,
9 you know, on the right bearing and that included Jon and
10 I engaging in Washington, it included CJO's liaison
11 officers in Tampa in Florida, in Central Command. It
12 involved a number of British officers in the force
13 headquarters with General Petraeus and in the corps
14 headquarters with the various corps commanders, where we
15 had the deputy command appointments and a number of
16 other staff in key planning roles. So the ability to
17 apply checks and balances to any potential divergences
18 of aspiration was good.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We will come on to one or two specific
20 examples later on this morning of episodes where we and
21 the Americans might perhaps have taken a different view.

22 Mr Day, I just wonder while we are still on the
23 preliminaries if you could give us your view in the
24 period that you have been in your current job and the
25 previous job dealing with Iraq on the coherence of

1 decision-making within Whitehall. How has it been for
2 the last two or three years?

3 MR JON DAY: I think it is fair to say -- and I have been
4 dealing with operations of one kind or another since the
5 Falklands war, horrifyingly enough, but for the most
6 part I think this is the most joined-up Whitehall
7 structure that I have had any experience of. This
8 depends in part on personalities, but the structures are
9 far more coherent and far more closely integrated. So,
10 for example, the involvement of other government
11 departments in our weekly OP-COS and OP-MIN briefing
12 sessions gives a greater degree of engagement and visibility to
13 the wider Whitehall community of what is going on
14 militarily on the ground than I think has ever happened
15 before.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: At what point do you think it became so
17 joined up and coherent?

18 MR JON DAY: That's very difficult to say, because I started
19 in this role in the middle of 2007.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm trying to tap into your experience
21 since the Falklands, but, particularly, do you have
22 a view of at what point between 2003 and 2007?

23 MR JON DAY: That I would have difficulty saying because
24 I wasn't involved directly.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But from talking to your predecessors,

1 your experience of it might be better than some of
2 theirs?

3 MR JON DAY: I think I can only talk from my direct
4 experience, and compared to previous operations that
5 I have been directly involved in Whitehall and in
6 NATO, for example, the period from 2007 to 2009 has been
7 far more effective.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is encouraging. We are a lessons
9 learned exercise, as you know, and one of the things we
10 have heard from many previous witnesses is that the
11 processes of decision-making at earlier stages were, in
12 their view, not as coherent and joined-up as ideally
13 they would have wanted them to be, so it is good to hear
14 from you that, since 2007, they have been.

15 MR JON DAY: They have.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. Can we now turn to the
17 situation in Iraq in the summer of 2007?

18 In February 2007, the then Prime Minister had announced
19 a phased reduction that was going to take place in UK
20 forces in Iraq, initially of 1,600 troops, I believe.
21 By the summer of 2007, there were still 5,500 British
22 troops in Iraq. What, at this stage, this rather late
23 stage in Operation Telic, were they actually doing?
24 What were their primary tasks at this stage?

25 GEN SIR PETER WALL: You will be aware that at the beginning

1 of 2007 we embarked on an operation called
2 Operation Zenith, which was about getting British
3 forces --

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just be clear, Operation Zenith?

5 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, that was a code name given to it,
6 which was about getting UK forces off the ground in
7 a combat role in forward bases in Basra province and
8 back into the -- progressively to a more limited number
9 of bases, and this ran through 2007 to the point where
10 we removed our final battle group off the ground into
11 Basra air station from Basra Palace.

12 The reason for this was that General Mohan, who was
13 Prime Minister Maliki's security supremo in Basra,
14 working with General Jalil, the chief of police, had
15 realised that the issue in Basra was primarily
16 a political one and that the Shia polity was reflecting
17 its sort of bids for power in a number of cases through
18 directing its militias against our forces, and this was
19 clouding the issue and preventing the Iraqi forces of
20 10 Iraqi Army Division, which, at that stage, was still
21 not a fully fledged organisation, it was still embryonic
22 and developing but was out on the ground operating. It
23 was preventing them really from sorting the wheat from
24 the chaff, if you like and being able to deal directly
25 with some of these malign Shia militias or criminal

1 influences that were at the time directing all of their
2 energy against us.

3 So what General Mohan wanted us to do was
4 progressively to withdraw into a generic reserve role,
5 whilst maintaining an understanding of what was going on
6 on the ground in Basra so that we could re-engage, if
7 required, and we were a sort of psychological stick that
8 he held at his disposal in conjunction with us to
9 re-engage, if necessary, in those situations where the
10 forces of 10 Division and the Iraqi police were not able
11 to cope.

12 So a lot of our activity was about reorganising
13 ourselves and getting ourselves into this new posture,
14 whilst continuing to support, and, where we could,
15 mentor Iraqi forces, particularly the army. That was
16 our primary occupation. We had forces on the border and
17 we had our Naval training contribution down in Um Qasr,
18 but in terms of Basra City, we were concentrating in
19 Basra Airport itself and that was achieved by early
20 autumn, ie August/September.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You are reflecting the situation we also
22 heard from other ones yesterday that, by this stage, we
23 were becoming part of the problem, as it was put to us
24 yesterday. Did we agree with General Mohan? Did we
25 think he had got it right on this?

1 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We did, and one of the reasons we
2 agreed with him was because we felt that, although there
3 was going to continue to be quite a lot of militant
4 tension between the various Shia factions, of which
5 there were lots, and they were evolving all the time and
6 morphing all the time, there was a self-limiting extent
7 to which the Shia were going to inflict sort of mutual
8 damage on themselves because ultimately they recognised
9 that, you know, there was a big prize in the south, and,
10 therefore, they were prepared to have a power struggle
11 and a political struggle, but not to the point where
12 they were going to inflict so much damage on themselves
13 that they weren't going to survive to enjoy the benefits
14 of the wealth that was going to emanate from Basra over
15 time and is now doing so.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did we think that by this stage the Iraqi
17 security forces, 10 Division that you referred to, was
18 essentially capable of doing the job that we were
19 vacating by getting our troops off the ground?

20 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Not to the extent that we wanted them
21 to become over time, where we could disengage from
22 a supporting role completely, but there was a challenge
23 here because, first of all, 10 Division was on the
24 ground operating, and, therefore, didn't have much
25 capacity to do training. They didn't always want us

1 mentoring them close to because we tended to attract the
2 wrong sort of attention from the Shia militias. So we
3 were engaging in a monitoring, mentoring and training
4 role with 10 Division that was, frankly, not as engaged
5 as we would have liked to have been for those reasons.

6 We were however providing a lot of enablers,
7 surveillance, helicopters, medical support, that sort of
8 thing and we were running a separate behind the wire
9 training set-up in a base in Shaibah, which was an NCO
10 academy and a company training facility. So we were
11 doing what we could, bearing in mind that they were
12 operating on the ground on a daily basis.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, our original thinking was that
14 obviously we would only start withdrawing our troops
15 from the ground once the security situation allowed that
16 to happen. The levels of violence had come down.
17 Actually, this wasn't the case. The implication of what
18 you are saying is that the violence was at a pretty
19 extreme level.

20 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It reduced quite significantly when we
21 disengaged our people. What tended to happen was that
22 the logistic efforts to sustain these forward bases from
23 our sort of nucleus in Basra air station, which is some
24 way to the west of Basra, required us to run convoys
25 through Basra, which themselves became the principal

1 targets of this malign influence, this Shia resentment
2 from these militias.

3 So our very presence, just the fact of sustaining
4 ourselves, was a catalyst for disorder and violence
5 which had a very detrimental effect on people in the
6 local area. So our original premise, that we would
7 carry on doing what we were doing until we had
8 attenuated the threats to a level, was a bit simplistic
9 because we had, as you say, become part of the problem.
10 So we needed to take a different stance.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Although by the time we were doing this,
12 the Americans were doing the exact opposite with their
13 surge, and that's because the situations were
14 essentially asymmetrical in our area and the areas where
15 they were surging.

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, they were dealing an insurgency
17 which was not monolithic but much more integrated than
18 the disparate Shia politically-driven activities that we
19 were dealing with down in Basra.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was anybody on our side arguing that we
21 should actually do the opposite to what you described,
22 that we should send more forces out there to get on top
23 of the situation at this stage?

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, because the whole idea behind the
25 Mohan plan was to get Iraqis into the lead, as fast as

1 possible and, you know, part of the motive for
2 disengaging was to get the Iraqis to engage themselves
3 more and, you know, we now know that that has turned out
4 to be a successful approach.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was there a debate in Whitehall, Mr Day,
6 about whether or not we should send more forces at this
7 stage rather than withdraw?

8 MR JON DAY: There were always options on the table, but,
9 frankly, no.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We still had in this new role, over 5,000
11 troops, as you say, providing a "psychological stick",
12 I think was a phrase you used, for General Mohan and
13 with the ability to re-engage if asked or needed. Did
14 they actually have to re-engage?

15 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, we were against a selected target
16 set, we were running a lot of surgical operations
17 against particular elements on the ground, primarily
18 those that were supported by Iranian influences rather
19 than the sort of more Basrawi-centric political and
20 militia agencies. So we were running quite a lot of
21 operations, yes.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Mr Day, what was the thinking then in
23 Whitehall in the summer of 2007 about the path towards
24 further reductions and towards moving out of Basra City
25 and handing over the province to provisional -- to

1 Provincial Iraqi Control, PIC?

2 MR JON DAY: This was seen as the, if you like, the glide
3 path towards transition. The focus was on transition to
4 Iraqi lead and we were focused on the different ways for
5 getting there. We didn't, at that stage, have
6 a particular set of cast-iron timelines. They evolved
7 over time, but in the summer of 2007, the
8 focus was on Provincial Iraqi Control.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So our approach was conditions-based
10 rather than time-based?

11 MR JON DAY: It was very much conditions-based.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The principal conditions were?

13 MR JON DAY: There were a variety of conditions. The
14 conditions were essentially at that stage -- well, the
15 conditions evolved over time, but, essentially,
16 Iraqi security forces that were capable of controlling
17 their environment. We also planned to hand back the
18 airport to the Iraqi civil authorities, over time. And
19 in November, the Prime Minister announced his
20 economic Basra plan, which was a contributory factor as
21 well. But essentially --

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Better Basra plan?

23 MR JON DAY: Yes. But essentially, the first
24 stage was to transfer responsibility through Provincial
25 Iraqi Control.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: I would like to unpack a little bit more the
2 training and mentoring roles and responsibilities that
3 we had in MND South East. For me, partly because of my
4 own background, it divides quite sharply between the
5 military mentoring, the bringing on of the Iraqi
6 security forces and the policing role, and yet, when you
7 look at the security situation in the round,
8 particularly in Basra City, policing is clearly very
9 much part of it.

10 So perhaps, could I start with very much lessons to
11 be learned in mind, the problem of training, mentoring
12 and getting a whole set of doctrines for policing in
13 a Middle East country, drawing on such UK background and
14 experience of policing as we have, is that actually the
15 way to do it next time, or is there a quite different
16 model that we ought to pursue, given the difficulties of
17 local allegiance, corruption, and all those other things
18 that we are very familiar with, in getting a police
19 force formed and actually enabling it to enforce the law
20 in a way that we would find acceptable?

21 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think that building police forces in
22 these situations is a core requirement and you need to
23 recognise that the nature of policing is not going to be
24 particularly close to what we would recognise on our own
25 streets, but moving in that direction will be the goal

1 over time.

2 We clearly recognise that you start off in these
3 situations with police that operate more in a militia
4 style mode providing security rather than necessarily
5 focusing primarily on the rule of law and I think that,
6 you know, we did not get particularly engaged in the
7 development of the Iraqi police service as much as the
8 Americans did, using, for example, contractors like
9 DynCorp, and although we did, in the latter stages,
10 start to provide the integrated command structure that
11 allowed the army and the police in Basra to interact
12 effectively together, you know, pursuing models that we
13 had used in other campaigns of integrated command modes
14 and other stuff, and we did that quite successfully,
15 there seemed to be some sort of conscious reticence to
16 getting involved in building the Iraqi police service.

17 It may be that that was, you know, a valid
18 assumption in light of the time that we had and
19 recognising that the Basrawi people themselves put much
20 more store in the army as a force for stabilisation than
21 they did in the police.

22 We do, of course, have a similar situation running
23 in Afghanistan at the moment and I think the jury is out
24 on whether, you know, on how we should engage in
25 developing that police challenge over a period of time.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: But no obvious lesson to draw from the Iraq
2 experience?

3 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think there is a lesson, which is
4 that we in the UK do not have a model or any machinery
5 that can do expeditionary policing, although we did
6 manage to deliver that in Kosovo, and if we look back to
7 those experiences, we could perhaps have been more
8 successful.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you. Mr Day?

10 MR JON DAY: On that point, I think this stems in large part
11 from the nature of our domestic police force
12 organisation. Other countries who have more of
13 a gendarmerie model --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Or a carabinieri.

15 MR JON DAY: Spain, Italy, France, I think have a different
16 approach to this, or are able to take a different
17 approach to this. This is an alternative model, but
18 I think that depends -- that will depend on us changing
19 our domestic structure and that will, I think, be the
20 cart driving the horse.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: So in effect, we were doing a bit, as much as
22 was practically possible, but not actually wholly
23 effectively in terms of rebuilding a workable and
24 acceptable police force in MND South East?

25 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Until we have got some sort of

1 capability that can do this in campaigns of reasonable
2 endurance, then there is always going to be a bit of the
3 jigsaw missing in our solution.

4 MR JON DAY: I think the answer is multi national, that it
5 should be the coalition or NATO or whoever is organising
6 the operation. There should be more focus placed on how
7 you allocate the different specialities of the countries
8 concerned. So if, for example, the Italians had had
9 detachments in MND South East on a provincial-wide basis
10 I think that would have been rather different.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. One last question on the policing
12 front before coming back to the military. You described
13 how, in effect, the security situation, particularly in
14 Basra City, was one where different Shia factions were
15 from time to time using our forces as the board against
16 which they could bounce their ball by mounting attacks,
17 claiming credit, getting credibility, visibility.

18 Was that also true for policing, that it was quite
19 a distinct policing problem with local allegiances
20 divided, relationships with, and indeed sometimes
21 corruption by, militias, or was it more generic to Iraq
22 as a whole on policing across the country?

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I am afraid I don't really know. What
24 I do know is that in keeping with some of the elements
25 of 10 Iraqi Army Division, the Iraqi police service in

1 Basra was very heavily penetrated by representatives of
2 these militias.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's come back, if I may, to the main
4 effort, which was military training and mentoring?
5 Could you say a little bit more about how we went about
6 it? The American approach, as I understand it, was
7 essentially: where possible, embed in Iraqi security
8 forces American elements. We, I think, took a slightly
9 different approach. Am I right?

10 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We did until the period after the
11 Charge of the Knights in March 2008, when we revamped
12 our approach with considerable success. I think there
13 are two reasons why we had a more measured approach to
14 engagement in the period 2006/2007, particularly in
15 2007. One is the fact that we weren't particularly
16 welcome accomplices to 10 Division because we used to
17 attract the wrong sort of military attention from the
18 Shia militias.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: That's very much specific, of course, to the
20 south-east.

21 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It is, and it is very specific to the
22 10 Div units in Basra, because there were other 10 Div
23 units that we mentored Baghdad, with whom we had
24 a wholly different embedded mentoring relationship,
25 which really emphasises my point, and I think it is fair

1 to say there was also a slightly risk-averse approach on
2 our side, born of the prospects of small groups of
3 people operating in urban areas, running the risk of
4 kidnap, isolation and that sort of thing, some of which
5 we had already had in the case of the Jameat incident in
6 2005, and I think that there was a combination of
7 factors, including the ones I mentioned, that led us to
8 a slightly more tentative approach than was being used
9 elsewhere.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: The Charge of the Knights and the relative
11 success in suppressing militia activity opened up a new
12 field in which we could operate closer to Iraq security
13 forces?

14 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, it did, for a number of reasons.
15 First of all, the Charge of the Knights, which was
16 a very successful and fortuitous operation, albeit it
17 came slightly out of left field for all of us in the
18 coalition --

19 THE CHAIRMAN: More of that later.

20 GEN SIR PETER WALL: -- it did remove quite a lot of the
21 malign influences. It also brought with it a lot of
22 enabling forces from the Multi National Corps because,
23 as Charge of the Knights happened, effectively the
24 prioritisation of operations around the country was
25 changed overnight by Prime Minister Maliki's initiative.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: It sucked in forces?

2 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It sucked in forces from the centre as
3 the core main effort. Of course, having started Charge
4 of the Knights, albeit it was a slightly haphazard plan,
5 it had to be made to work. So it sucked in a lot of
6 resources and those enablers allowed our embedded
7 mentors to operate at lower risk and more effectively
8 with the brigades of 14 Division which is what 10 Div
9 had become over that period.

10 So we ended up with -- you know, by the admission of
11 various members of the American leadership, including
12 General Odierno, with something that turned out to be
13 almost a state-of-the-art mentoring approach down in
14 Basra after the Charge of the Knights, and we pursued
15 that from March 2008 until early 2009, when 14 Div, in
16 all its elements, was perceived to have reached the
17 right standard to operate independently.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. A last question, and it is an
19 amateur's question, but it is with Northern Ireland back
20 in my mind. It is how far it is possible to conduct
21 a successful and effective training/mentoring role
22 without being situation aware as to what is actually
23 happening on the ground.

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I don't think it is. I think we have
25 learned from this that we need to be embedded and we

1 need to be in a partnership role. It is very
2 interesting that, you know, the lessons of the mentoring
3 effort in Basra before Charge of the Knights, going back
4 to 2005, were factored into our approach in Afghanistan
5 with embedded trainers in rather a different way. So
6 I think that lesson has gone home.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. One last thing -- and I am afraid it
8 is a reversion to the policing topic a bit. It is: is
9 there a distinction to draw in the recent history from
10 2007 onwards, in Basra City in particular, between
11 penetration by militia forces for essentially political
12 purposes and corruption for essentially criminal
13 purposes? Are these two separate, or are they the same
14 phenomenon with different faces, and, if they are, how
15 do you tackle it?

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think they are different motivations,
17 but they are entwined, and I think that mixture is going
18 to reflect itself in different ways in different
19 localities within a city as big as Basra with
20 a population of 2 million people, and I would question
21 our ability to discern one from the other with any
22 accuracy.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. It might be in the class of: you can't
24 really do that. That's how the situation is. That's
25 how people are. Okay. Roderic?

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: General Wall, I would like to turn to the
2 next stage of the evolving situation on the ground in
3 Basra in the autumn of 2007.

4 Having changed our role on the advice, as you say,
5 of General Mohan, there was then a significant point
6 in September 2007 when we actually withdrew the
7 remaining British troops from Basra City out to the
8 airport and consolidated them there. Who decided this?
9 Was this the GOC, was it others? What dictated the
10 timing of that move? Was it seen as a withdrawal?

11 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Well, this was a -- the whole notion of
12 Operation Zenith, which, as I say, was conceived in
13 early 2007, was something that everybody, right up to
14 General Petraeus' level, had signed up to. It depended
15 on quite a lot of enabling from the corps and the force
16 and it became an accepted plan, albeit that the specific
17 timings of the moves from each of the sort of forward
18 bases was going to be, you know, sequenced and adjusted
19 depended on the situation, and the ability of the Iraqis
20 to backfill, because we weren't vacating these places,
21 we were handing them over to the Iraqis.

22 So in that sense it wasn't a withdrawal, it was a --
23 by the coalition -- when I say the coalition, between
24 Multi-National Forces and Iraqi forces -- it was
25 essentially a relief in place by Iraqi forces of British

1 forces in these places that were important for providing
2 a safe and secure environment within the collective of
3 the localities of Basra.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So Zenith, right from the beginning, had
5 anticipated that we would do this, that we would move
6 out of Basra Palace?

7 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Absolutely.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because we had become rather sitting
9 ducks in Basra Palace?

10 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We were able to mount operations from
11 Basra Palace which allowed us to achieve a local
12 initiative, but the implications of that in the round
13 were viewed by General Mohan as unwelcome for the
14 general security of the environment and the impact it
15 was having on innocent people, because, essentially, we
16 were attracting a fight to everything we did, whether we
17 were trying to resupply ourselves or go on the offensive
18 or go on framework operations out of Basra Palace, which
19 our forces were doing on a regular basis. We were
20 essentially the focus of violence.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was it at this point the most heavily
22 rocketed and mortared place in Iraq as --

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, it was.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You say General Petraeus was in agreement
25 with this. Were the Americans fully in agreement on the

1 precise timing of this movement?

2 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Well, it certainly wouldn't have

3 happened without the corps commander's agreement, I'm

4 sure. So there was no sense of -- I think there is an

5 extent to which tactical decisions about timing would be

6 vested in the General or the brigadier, and he will be

7 keeping the higher headquarters aware and they will, you

8 know, they will have a view on whether they wish to take

9 a position on that, whether they are content to delegate

10 those decisions to the tactical commander.

11 I can't specifically remember, because I was working

12 here in London at the time, the details of those

13 decisions, but none of this was a surprise to anybody

14 and the extraction operation that was mounted was, you

15 know, well supported and was deliberate and was

16 obviously done in a way that was going to minimise

17 casualties and any negative effects on the people in the

18 surrounding area in Basra.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we got the impression yesterday

20 from Mr Simon MacDonald that the Americans would have

21 actually preferred us to delay this move a bit. They

22 didn't want us to act quite as soon as that.

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I do not have any recollection of that.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You don't recall, either of you, any

25 pressure from them --

1 MR JON DAY: There was a continuing dialogue. I don't
2 recall any pressure to specifically --

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- for us to stay in Basra City --

4 MR JON DAY: There were questions about timetables, but they
5 weren't significant. They were weeks rather than months
6 and the agreement that was reached -- the timetable that
7 was eventually followed was reached in agreement with
8 the Americans.

9 GEN SIR PETER WALL: The critical condition for everybody
10 was that this was going to be handed over in a coherent
11 way without the militias getting themselves in between
12 ourselves and the 10 Div forces and that was achieved.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Having done this, having consolidated out
14 at the airport, how well placed did this leave our
15 forces to deliver what was necessary for strategic
16 overwatch?

17 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Well, this was -- I mean, we weren't
18 quite in the period of strategic overwatch, we were
19 really more in a combination of tactical --
20 tactical/operational overwatch, where, as I say, we had
21 this -- we had three key tasks at this stage, in
22 addition to enabling and protecting ourselves.

23 One was this mentoring and monitoring role, which we
24 had a battle group doing, and I have explained that that
25 wasn't quite as engaged as it became later and the

1 reasons why. We had a battle group up on the border
2 that was involved in border security and trying to stem
3 the flow of materiel from Iran that was essentially part
4 of the IED fabrication network and we had our reserve
5 battle group, our strike battle group.

6 That strike battle group was part of General Mohan's
7 sort of psychological reserve, if you like, and his, you
8 know -- something he put great store in. You know,
9 a recognition amongst the Basrawi people that there were
10 other forces out there that could get engaged, should
11 they need to, and we had an operation that was
12 essentially about trying to sustain our understanding of
13 the situation, to enable Iraqi forces to do what they
14 had to do, which was a continuation of what we had
15 already been doing with our surveillance helicopters,
16 medical, that sort of thing, and an ability to mount
17 demonstrations, should we need to, as a sort of reminder
18 of this reserve capability, and then, should it be
19 necessary, you know, a deliberate intervention
20 operation, should General Mohan call for it.

21 So that's what we were doing.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There obviously must have been some
23 downside to being out at the airport. I think you have
24 explained the very powerful reasons why we did this.
25 Would you like to expand on that?

1 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, I think it was very difficult for
2 us to maintain a feel remotely for what was going on.
3 We had various technical surveillance means. We had
4 various contacts through human intelligence. But that
5 was no substitute for the sort of awareness and feel you
6 have when you have got people on the ground interacting
7 with their Iraqi partners.

8 We didn't mount regular operations to go out and
9 mentor down to battalion headquarters level using the
10 mentoring battle group I have described, who would fly
11 out on to the ground and spend time with their Iraqi
12 partners, which was welcome but it wasn't sustained
13 enough to give us the sort of intrinsic feel that we had
14 been used to when we had had people downtown the whole
15 time.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Presumably, you are a bit less of
17 a psychological stick if you are out of sight and at
18 some range.

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I'm not sure actually. I think that
20 General Mohan put great store in the fact that people
21 knew there was something over his shoulder, and I don't
22 think that your average Basrawi, or even your average
23 militia man would have been, you know, aware of our
24 shortcomings in terms of situation awareness. They
25 still would have known that, with the right sort of air

1 support, artillery support, and armoured engagement, we
2 would pose a very significant challenge to them.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We heard yesterday from Admiral Style
4 that we were reaching a point at which there wasn't
5 really very much we could do, and he said, after
6 Operation Sinbad, that the level of consent that we
7 enjoyed in Basra inevitably declined and that we didn't
8 have the resources to do substantial hearts and minds
9 operations. So we still had a large number of troops
10 there, slightly remote at the airport, a psychological
11 stick, mentoring, border patrol, but did we actually
12 have more -- a higher level of force there than we were
13 really able to use effectively?

14 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, I don't think so. When you look at
15 the situation we are in, where we had our own lines of
16 communication and supply to sustain, coming up from
17 Kuwait. We had a very significant airport to secure and
18 run. We had those three battle groups tasks I have
19 described and some wider force protection tasks. Set
20 against a population of a couple of million in Basra,
21 5,500 troops is not a huge number.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we weren't understretched in those
23 roles?

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We weren't understretched, no, but we
25 certainly had limits to the number of things we could do

1 concurrently.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Mr Day, I wonder if I could now turn to
3 the very specific question of the ceasefire by the JAM,
4 which -- I mean a national ceasefire was announced on
5 29 August by Moqtadr Sadr and I understand that there
6 was a separate ceasefire negotiated locally in Basra.
7 Were there contacts between British Government and the
8 Sadrists in Basra about this?

9 MR JON DAY: Yes, I mean, I can confirm that there were
10 contacts between the UK and the Sadrists in Basra from
11 the spring of 2007, and that as a result of this
12 continuing dialogue, a series of -- I think I prefer to
13 use the word "understandings" were reached with core
14 elements of the Sadrist JAM militias in Basra. These
15 understandings ran from mid June 2007 and they therefore
16 pre-dated and were separate from the national JAM
17 ceasefire in late August.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you say what the motives were for the
19 British Government in talking to the JAM in Basra?

20 MR JON DAY: I think the government had a number of motives
21 for authorising this dialogue. First of all, it was
22 part of the coalition's outreach to groups involved in
23 violence consistent with, though separate from, what was
24 happening with Sunni groups further north.

25 Second, we wanted to encourage the mainstream JAM to

1 move from violence towards a commitment to democracy and
2 to demonstrate to them a path to that goal, especially
3 in the context of local government elections, which were
4 then expected in early 2008, although in practice didn't
5 happen until early 2009.

6 At the local level we wanted to drive a wedge
7 between the mainstream JAM core, who were nationalist
8 and we believed were reconcilable, and the extremist
9 elements that the General has referred to, often
10 identified as special groups, which were supported by
11 Iran and pursuing a largely Iranian-inspired agenda.

12 Also, at the local level we wanted to encourage
13 a fall in violence in and around Basra and to make time
14 for the Iraqi army to develop its capability
15 sufficiently to confront the unreconciled militias
16 successfully. The Mohan plan that we were talking about
17 earlier. And finally we wanted to reduce the threat to
18 British and other coalition forces.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You have listed a number of different
20 reasons there. Was there some prioritisation between
21 these motives?

22 MR JON DAY: I wasn't conscious of any such prioritisation
23 at the time, no.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How were the Iraqi authorities involved
25 in this negotiation and were the Americans aware of the

1 contexts that were taking place between the JAM and the
2 UK?

3 MR JON DAY: As we discussed earlier, Basra was very much
4 a British responsibility and this was a British
5 initiative. But it was strongly supported by the Iraqi
6 security authorities in Basra and it was approved by
7 General Petraeus and the office of Prime Minister Maliki
8 were kept informed. So, yes, there was full engagement.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why do you think the Sadrists entered
10 into these negotiations and agreed to a ceasefire?

11 MR JON DAY: Well, our assessment at the time was that the
12 dialogue benefited those parts of JAM who opposed Iran's
13 influence in Basra, ie the nationalists and those who
14 want to enter a -- wanted to enter strongly into the
15 forthcoming political process. So it was the people who
16 were essentially looking for a way out of violence.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Coming back to a point I was discussing
18 earlier with General Wall, it has been said that the
19 British moved out of Basra City and just left the
20 militias to police themselves. Do you think that's
21 unfair?

22 MR JON DAY: Yes, I think it is unfair. As you heard from
23 the General, we consolidated at the airport as part of
24 a planned and coherent transition from coalition lead to
25 Iraqi lead, responsibility for security. As I said, the

1 local Iraqi commanders, the Government of Iraq and the
2 coalition all agreed with the approach and the timings.
3 So, yes, I think it is unfair.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If I come back to the reasons that you
5 gave for us entering this negotiation, to what extent
6 were they actually fulfilled? What impact did the
7 negotiations actually have on security? Did they
8 actually help to advance the political process in
9 Basra City?

10 MR JON DAY: Yes. Well, the most visible manifestation of
11 the dialogue was the reduction in JAM violence.
12 Indirect rocket -- indirect fire, ie rocket attacks, on
13 coalition bases in Basra fell from -- well, 1,300
14 rounds, I think, in July to 20 in October, and
15 casualties reduced significantly. I think we had had
16 seven combat deaths in July and zero in October. So
17 there was a visible manifestation in that sense.

18 But it also inevitably contributed to the
19 implementation successfully of Operation Zenith,
20 although it is worth noting that Zenith started at the
21 beginning of the year, well before these negotiations.
22 But they certainly facilitated the later stages of its
23 implementation.

24 But the critical strategic dividend, as far as we
25 were concerned, was that the overall decline in violence

1 helped encourage the resurgence of real political
2 activity. A move from the gun to the ballot box,
3 if you like, using Northern Ireland terminology. Among
4 the results was the agreement in early December, among
5 all Basra political groups including JAM, to support the
6 rule of law and to support the Iraqi security forces as
7 the guardians of the rule of law. This, frankly,
8 I think had been inconceivable earlier in the year.

9 That was followed on 16 December by Provincial
10 Iraqi Control -- the transfer of security leadership in
11 Basra to the Iraqis.

12 Another consequence, which I think is -- was felt to
13 be quite important by those on the ground at the time,
14 and I think with hindsight was so, is that prior to the
15 understandings, coalition-sponsored reconstruction work
16 in Basra had almost come to a stop. The understandings
17 reduced the threat to military and civilian workers and
18 that allowed work on projects such as the Basra
19 Children's Hospital to start up again and to enable us
20 to plan to do more work elsewhere in Basra.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's quite a dramatic fall in the level
22 of violence that you describe. But was that temporary?

23 I mean, how long did this ceasefire actually last for?

24 MR JON DAY: The ceasefire -- the understandings --
25 the dialogue with the -- with JAM continued. It was

1 a long-term engagement, but this aspect of the
2 understandings really came to an end with -- or
3 following Provincial Iraqi Control.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did these understandings, as you call
5 them, limit the ability of our forces to intervene in
6 Basra City after they consolidated at Basra Airport?

7 MR JON DAY: No, I don't think it did. As we have
8 discussed, we had already accepted that Operation Zenith
9 would give day-to-day responsibility for security inside
10 the city to the Iraqi security forces. We retained the
11 ability to re-engage, if asked to do so by the Iraqis,
12 or if the threat to the airport required it. But since
13 most of our strike operations, our detention operations
14 and the other mobile security missions were in response
15 to local threats to our presence, it wasn't surprising
16 that our relocation to the airport and our
17 understandings with JAM would cut the tempo of these
18 operations considerably, not least because we also then
19 had the national ceasefire declared by Moqtadr al-Sadr.

20 So I don't think it did have a significant effect on
21 our ability to do what we wanted to do at that stage.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So when it came later on to the Charge of
23 the Knights it didn't limit the ability of our forces to
24 assist?

25 MR JON DAY: No, not in any way. The Charge of the Knights

1 didn't happen until March 2008, by which time that
2 aspect of our dialogue with the Sadrists in Basra had
3 come to an end.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We will come back to that in a minute.

5 Sir John, I think you had another question.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, one that slightly stands on its own. It
7 might have come up yesterday with Simon MacDonald, but
8 didn't actually.

9 It is the issue of British Government policy towards
10 and assistance to Iraqi staff who worked for us. There
11 was an issue that came up very much in the press and in
12 political circles here in August 2007, the nature of
13 threat to people like interpreters, locally engaged
14 staff more generally, should they be relieved from the
15 sense of threat that any of them had by being given
16 settlement rights here?

17 I just wonder if you could say something, Mr Day,
18 about MoD policy at the time and as it has developed
19 since. We are probably going to ask DFID as well with
20 a different angle on it.

21 MR JON DAY: No, you are right. It did emerge at that time
22 and it emerged as a quite significant political issue.
23 It was -- it is an issue that we have not really faced
24 in quite the same way, I think, probably since Aden
25 and, therefore, we had to look at our policy. We had to

1 create a new policy.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: There is a Hong Kong case.

3 MR JON DAY: Not in quite the same way.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: It isn't threat so much.

5 MR JON DAY: Not in the sense of people claiming that they

6 were under direct threat because they had worked for the

7 British and there is a much smaller pool of people

8 involved in this than there is in Hong Kong.

9 Essentially, what we did was, in consultation with

10 other government departments, to establish a policy that

11 would identify those people that we felt were genuinely

12 at risk and to provide them with a range of options for

13 relocation either inside the country or out of the

14 country if the judgment was that they were under

15 sufficient threat that their lives were at risk.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: That policy has evolved and is now in place?

17 MR JON DAY: It has been in place for some time. It was

18 implemented quite quickly in the circumstances, under,

19 I think, legitimate pressure from Parliament and from

20 the media.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Can you say anything, just before we

22 leave it and move on, about the scale of take-up if

23 I can put it that way? As the situation in Iraq has to

24 some degree improved, has the pressure fallen away from

25 individuals?

1 MR JON DAY: It has, yes. I think I honestly can't recall
2 the exact numbers but it was a matter of hundreds rather
3 than thousands.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you. There is a side point.
5 Perhaps I will come to it a bit later, but it is: after
6 the withdrawal from Basra City, and then after the
7 transition, how far it was possible for our civilian
8 efforts in the economic and reconstruction sphere to
9 attract locally engaged staff? But that's perhaps
10 a different question.

11 Can I turn to something we discussed yesterday, and
12 indeed before, and it is the impact of Afghanistan on
13 our Iraq commitment. The balance of priorities between
14 them. Starting perhaps in October 2007, the
15 Prime Minister Gordon Brown, visited, and, after the
16 visit, announced a further drawdown in our troop levels
17 and that he expected troops deployed to Iraq to be
18 reduced to 2,500 by the spring of 2008, only some six or
19 eight months later.

20 Can I ask how the MoD's advice was framed to enable
21 that announcement to be made, given our rising
22 commitments in Afghanistan and the pressure to increase
23 them further?

24 MR JON DAY: I am conscious that this has been a subject for
25 discussion. Inevitably, with two operations running in

1 tandem, two significant operations, there is
2 a continuous process of balancing effort, balancing
3 priority, balancing resources.

4 From my perspective, between the middle of 2007 and
5 the middle of 2008, the clear priority, I felt, in
6 Whitehall and in the MoD was delivering success in Iraq.
7 So if there was a balance between the two, that was the
8 priority.

9 That would, of course -- success would free up
10 additional capabilities for Afghanistan, especially
11 enablers such as helicopters and ISTAR. But I did not
12 get the sense that there was a direct competition and
13 didn't get the sense that we were under pressure to get
14 out of Iraq before the conditions were right so that we
15 could rebalance into Afghanistan.

16 Now, during that time, obviously, the commitment in
17 Afghanistan was increasing, but the two -- I think the
18 ability to do them both was deemed to be manageable.
19 There were obviously some areas where we had to focus
20 our resources in one or the other, or it would make
21 sense to do so, but I didn't get the sense, during the
22 period you are talking about, that we were under the
23 sort of pressure I think you are alluding to.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: We heard yesterday from Simon MacDonald
25 a view that there wasn't a contest of priorities, that

1 we had to do in Iraq what we had to do, and would do
2 that, and what was available for Afghanistan would be
3 what else we could do on top.

4 MR JON DAY: I think I'm agreeing with that.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. That said, you have got -- these
6 numbers are rounded obviously. You have got the troop
7 level in Afghanistan going up from 6,300 to 7,800 in
8 late 2001, and again up to 8,100 in June 2008 and on to
9 9,000 by April 2009.

10 That's a massive increase, relatively speaking,
11 looking at the scale of our commitment in Iraq, and
12 I suppose the question that has to be asked is: did we
13 lower the standard of what we would regard as success
14 and achievement in Iraq for the end state in order to
15 accommodate this or not?

16 MR JON DAY: My personal view is that we did not.

17 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I would endorse that view strongly.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I mean, we would have been starkly
20 aware of any awkward decisions that said: do we send the
21 next item of equipment or specialist capability to this
22 place or that place? I don't recall having to make
23 those sorts of calls.

24 We were, of course, aware that the kind of
25 intellectual challenges for our training organisation of

1 trying to prepare significant sizes of force for two
2 separate theatres made it run pretty hot, but I think
3 we coped with that period without any compromise to the
4 effort in Iraq.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: We have very recent evidence from
6 General Nick Houghton as CJO that he was having to make
7 allocation decisions obviously between the two theatres,
8 particularly for the scarcest of resources. That's
9 inevitable.

10 He also explained, and Simon MacDonald confirmed,
11 I think, that that did not reach a political level of
12 decision-taking, that it was essentially professional
13 and military. Can you confirm that?

14 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just ask one question: had this
16 taken us into territory that went beyond the territory
17 anticipated by the strategic defence review? Because we
18 were now engaged simultaneously in two medium level
19 operations of fairly long duration. Had it actually
20 taken us above that water mark?

21 MR JON DAY: I think there are two elements to that. The
22 first is that, yes, we were now involved in two medium
23 level operations, enduring medium level operations
24 which, although they were at the lower end of the medium
25 scale envelope, which was more than the planning

1 assumptions in the SDR had envisaged. I should,
2 however, stress that those planning assumptions were
3 planning assumptions. They were not designed to cap
4 what we would do in particular circumstances.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So they were on the conservative end of
6 the scale?

7 MR JON DAY: What, in terms of the two medium scales?

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

9 MR JON DAY: Yes, they were.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: We had a comment from Air Chief Marshall
11 Jock Stirrup in the middle of 2008 not that it was about
12 planning assumptions at the top or lower end, but rather
13 that the British military as a whole was not structured
14 or resourced to do two enduring medium scale operations.

15 MR JON DAY: That's true, it wasn't.

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Particularly so in the case of enabling
17 capabilities, that this style of operations had turned
18 out to be very demanding of.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: So it is not just, as it were, how many of the --
20 I think there were eight -- available battle groups you
21 pitch into the Iraq theatre or the Afghanistan theatre,
22 it is key assets and scarce enablers that determine the
23 balance?

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes.

25 MR JON DAY: More so than battle groups.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. So coming back to Iraq in this late
2 phase, there was not, as it were, a stretch or
3 a constraint on what was available, in terms of enablers
4 as well as boots on the ground?

5 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No.

6 MR JON DAY: One of the other factors in this is
7 harmony guidelines. What this obliges the forces to do
8 is to exceed the timeframes that individual soldiers or
9 units spend in theatre.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

11 MR JON DAY: But again, that was a planning guideline rather
12 than a clear straitjacket.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Which you can do for a time, but
14 progressively through time it becomes harder and more
15 costly.

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was there ever a discussion, in terms
17 of bringing success in Iraq, after the withdrawal to the
18 airport, that this might involve, given a change in
19 circumstances, the need for an increase in troops, an
20 increase in engagement?

21 MR JON DAY: Specifically I can recall one circumstance in
22 which the theatre reserve battalion in Cyprus -- we
23 considered whether or not that might need to be
24 deployed.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: There was always that option?

1 MR JON DAY: There was always that option.

2 GEN SIR PETER WALL: And it went for a bit.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Forgive me, this is pure nostalgia, but does
4 it resemble the use of the spearhead battalion for
5 Northern Ireland campaign?

6 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, that sort of thing.

7 MR JON DAY: Except my recollection is the spearhead
8 battalion tended not to be used.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: It was a bit of a --

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think we are going to impose
11 a self-denying ordinance on the Chairman on his
12 Northern Ireland recollections!

13 I would like to come back to the very interesting
14 and significant episode, which we have mentioned
15 already, of the Charge of the Knights, and I would like
16 to look at this in two parts: firstly, what happened,
17 how it happened, how we were consulted; and then
18 separately come on to what were the consequences of it,
19 the situation it created.

20 If I deal with the first part first, General Wall,
21 you said earlier that this was fortuitous that it came
22 to us slightly out of left field and others have said
23 the same, that we were surprised by it happening. You
24 told us that we had been working closely with
25 General Mohan and I think we had been working with him

1 on a different plan to control the problem of the
2 Sadrists.

3 To what extent had that approach had the support of
4 Prime Minister Maliki? Had he been prepared, before the
5 Charge of the Knights, to dedicate resources to
6 controlling the Sadrists in the way that General Mohan
7 wanted?

8 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I'm not really sure that we quite
9 understood what was in the Prime Minister's mind at that
10 time. But there were a number of things on the
11 stocks.

12 First of all, at the time, there was a recognition
13 from General Petraeus that there had to be some
14 sequenced operations to deal with specific threats in
15 major cities, and at the time, dealing with Mosul was
16 his priority whilst containing a number of other sort of
17 difficult situations with his surge force, not least for
18 the AQI threat in which UK forces were also playing
19 a role.

20 Recognising that when priority could be afforded to
21 Basra, and when Basra was ready, in terms of 14 Division
22 of the Iraqi army having matured to the point where it
23 was competent to take the lead in an operation, then
24 there was going to have to be a significant deliberate
25 operation in Basra. That was being planned by

1 General Mohan in conjunction with the advisers that we
2 provided to him and, of course, it would depend on quite
3 a lot of UK effort in an enabling and supporting role.

4 So when I say that Charge of the Knights was
5 a surprise, it wasn't in concept, it was certainly in
6 timing and the way it unfolded, and that surprise
7 afflicted everybody, I think, from General Petraeus
8 downwards, because, essentially, what Prime Minister
9 Maliki had done was said, "Your main effort may be
10 Mosul, but I'm going to Basra this week".

11 The plan was hastily put together, the forces were
12 quickly moved, obviously the 10 -- there were elements
13 of 14 Div there¹ -- but other Iraqi forces were brought
14 down, and so, too, sort of following the charge were --
15 very quickly were a lot of corps level American enablers
16 into which we put our capabilities that were already in
17 Basra in the air station, to support the effort, which,
18 having been initiated in a fairly hasty and surprising
19 way from our perspective as well as from the Sadrists
20 militias, I guess, had to succeed.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How much advance notice did you actually
22 have of this?

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I would say a couple of days at the
24 maximum.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Americans had known about it a bit

¹ In checking the transcript, General Wall has clarified that what he intended to say was that there were elements of both 10 and 14 Div of the Iraqi army in place at the outset.

1 further in advance?

2 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, they found out about the same time

3 of us.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But they, within a couple of days, had to

5 prepare themselves to play presumably a fairly large

6 period of time in --

7 GEN SIR PETER WALL: They moved helicopters. Obviously air [effort]²

8 could be redeployed. They moved some mentoring teams,

9 they moved a command node, a forward common node from

10 the corps headquarters to bring all this together. This

11 became, for that limited period, the fighting main

12 effort for the country. So inevitably, you would expect

13 the corps headquarters to be heavily involved.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How did we react when we did get this

15 surprising news?

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We first of all wanted to find out what

17 was going on, and then we wanted to work out what role

18 we could play in it, including getting into the more

19 intimate mentoring game to understand and shape what was

20 going to happen, what was going to come out of it.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were we happy with the plan or did we try

22 to influence it to happen in a different way or

23 different timescale?

24 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We had been working on the deliberate

25 plan in the weeks leading up to that and it had assumed

² The word "effort" represents a clarification supplied by General Wall in checking the transcripts.

1 a level of readiness and preparedness that was not
2 actually achieved on the day. This force deployed.
3 A number of the 14 Division units proved to be
4 completely unprepared for the task and were unable to
5 achieve their bits of the mission, but in the round it
6 worked.

7 In terms of our ability to shape the plan, I think
8 that grew as the thing unfolded, because it wasn't
9 a single event, it was a number of pulsed activities
10 over a period of a few days, and then, later on, a few
11 more. So, yes, our ability to influence the thing grew
12 as it unfolded, but there was also a very strong
13 American influence on this too.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did the Americans try to reshape this, or
15 effectively it was Prime Minister Maliki trumping
16 everybody?

17 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think he was, but dependent on a lot
18 of American support and engagement to ensure military
19 tactical success.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it was Iraqis in the lead?

21 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Americans providing a lot of support?

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: And us providing a lot of support as
24 well.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How much did we --

1 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We did all we could. We had our
2 mentoring capability, we had our logistic support
3 capability, we had our medical facilities, helicopters,
4 surveillance capability, fires, all of those were
5 brought to bear in various ways and various mixes to try
6 and support the effort. The Americans brought attack
7 helicopters, they brought more surveillance capability.
8 They did actually transform the tempo of operations in
9 Basra by bringing that capability.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We must have had a bit of a sense that
11 other people had come on to what had been our patch
12 rather suddenly at very short notice.

13 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Well, it was an Iraqi patch primarily
14 with us supporting the Mohan effort, and certainly
15 events were moving very quickly and we were having to
16 pay very close attention to keep pace with them.

17 We all know how it was portrayed in the media, but
18 actually --

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I can't remember how it was portrayed in
20 the media.

21 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It manifested what you are suggesting,
22 but I think that is glossing over an understanding of
23 the detail.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the media reporting was distorted?

25 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, it was distorted, because it

1 failed to understand that the Iraqis were already in the
2 lead with us supporting and this was an Iraqi-led
3 initiative to solve an Iraqi problem in an Iraqi way,
4 which, after all, was what we were all trying to do.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It was pretty risky. You have described
6 it as fortuitous, others have said, you know, it nearly
7 failed. How close was it to falling apart?

8 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think it was pretty close. One of
9 the Iraqi brigades imploded, effectively. Quite a lot of
10 people went absent. That brigade has since been rebuilt
11 and is very effective, but it took quite a long time.

12 It certainly would not have worked without all the
13 support that the coalition was able to give, which sort
14 of pulled the rabbit out of the hat.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would it be unfair to say that, when it
16 happened, we made the best of a bad job. It wasn't what
17 we would have wanted to have happened, at least in the
18 way that it happened?

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, I think we would have been
20 pessimistic about its chances of success, had it been
21 planned and executed that way deliberately. So we would
22 have been looking for a higher assurance before we would
23 have said it was ready to go.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it happened and it worked.

25 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It happened and it had to be made to

1 work.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it also, as you have just said,
3 showed us something about the weaknesses of the Iraqi
4 security forces?

5 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, it did.

6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So what lessons then were drawn from
7 that?

8 GEN SIR PETER WALL: As I said, we were planning this with
9 General Mohan on the anticipation that the 14 Division
10 capability would have matured to a point where this
11 was a lower risk operation, and it would still have
12 required all the same coalition enablers.

13 So stock was taken in April 2008, immediately after
14 the Charge of the Knights of the situation that 14 Div
15 found itself in and how long it was going to take to
16 turn that into a properly trained, properly equipped
17 organisation; which required the further development of
18 those brigades that had operated quite well during this
19 time in Basra, in Charge of the Knights, and the
20 complete rebuilding of the ones that had fragmented.

21 There were four brigades in 14 Div. There was
22 a divisional support element and there was, of course,
23 the command and control capability, all still dependent
24 on coalition enablers. Of those various six, seven,
25 eight force elements of about brigade size, each one had

1 a plan to get to the right level of competence, which in
2 the slowest case took us up to February 2009 and that
3 really defined our time limit because it was agreed
4 after Charge of the Knights that one of the things that
5 was essential to a successful final contribution to the
6 operation for the UK was the completion of the training
7 of 14 Div to the right standard. There was a graduated
8 standard of operational readiness assessments and they
9 had to get to level 2, which took that time, and in
10 addition to that, there were other attendant tasks, like
11 protection of Um Qasr, work on the border, and the
12 completion of the commercialisation of Basra
13 International Airport to be handed over to the Iraqis to
14 run, and those were really the tasks that then set our
15 conditions for success as we went into early 2009.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we were already the lead partner in
17 the training of 14 Div before Charge of the Knights.
18 After Charge of the Knights, it showed us how much work
19 we still had to do?

20 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did we change our methods?

22 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We did, yes. We were able because the
23 threat had been reduced and because we had a richer mix
24 of enablers, particularly surveillance capability -- we
25 were able to embed small teams down to a lower level

1 within all of the brigades of 14 Div. We were able to
2 take a more sophisticated approach by bringing in
3 a number of specialists from elsewhere in the army to
4 establishing an integrated command centre, the Basra
5 operations centre, which we built from scratch, equipped
6 and then trained everybody to use, all of which was
7 a considerable success.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The richer mix of enablers was American?

9 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, a lot of it was, yes.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: One of the effects of the Charge of the
11 Knights was that the American forces had now come down
12 to MND South East?

13 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, I think I would put that slightly
14 differently. Basra had assumed an appropriate level of
15 priority in the overall Basra landscape which meant it
16 attracted more core assets. The fact they were American
17 was true, but they were really core capability, which
18 hitherto was engaged as a priority in the Sunni areas
19 further north.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: To what extent were these American forces
21 carrying out tasks that, at an earlier stage in an
22 earlier Telic, British forces had been carrying out?

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: The game had moved on considerably, we
24 weren't doing strike operations on the ground at this
25 stage. We were mentoring 14 Div, as I have described.

1 The Americans were supporting that effort, but it was
2 really a new phase and it turned out to be the final
3 military contribution towards achieving those success
4 criteria.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But our original concept had been that,
6 as we moved out, the Iraqis would backfill, but, in
7 fact, what happened after Charge of the Knights was that
8 to a certain extent the Americans were backfilling. Is
9 that right?

10 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I don't think so. The Americans
11 produced a number of capabilities to support this
12 embedded mitting effort because by this time -- this
13 mentoring and training effort, because by this time
14 14 Division had become quite large. It had subsumed and
15 rebranded some of the elements of 10 Div and it required
16 a little bit more, you know, in volumetric terms, to
17 cover all the bases.

18 I can't remember the precise breakdown between our
19 effort and the American effort, but we had a complete
20 battle group moving forward with the various elements of
21 14 Div, and, you know, mentoring them on the job in
22 a way that had not been possible in the previous period
23 for the reasons I outlined earlier.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Embedded mitting sounds awfully like what
25 my wife does for Christmas for the grandchildren, but it

1 is a term of art we are all learning.

2 To what extent was there a sense here that the

3 Americans had perhaps lost confidence in the ability of

4 the British forces in MND South East to achieve what was

5 necessary, and, therefore, they were going to have to

6 come in and do more of it? Did it reflect that at all?

7 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I think they recognised that we had

8 a challenge that we couldn't satisfy with the forces we

9 had available and that, you know, in keeping with

10 a number of other areas that had assumed prominence, we

11 were going to require support from the Corps level.

12 That's what corps do, they provide support to divisions.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we didn't have enough forces to do the

14 job that they felt was required at this stage?

15 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Our ability to use our forces was

16 enhanced by the enablers that the Americans provided.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: When we run down too soon? Had we taken

18 too much off to Afghanistan by this point?

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We weren't taking forces out of Iraq to

20 send them to Afghanistan. We have been through that

21 already.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

23 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Had we run down too fast? Well, had we

24 retained an extra battle there that could have done this

25 mentoring thing, then, yes, we probably would have been

1 better off, but there was no rationale up to that point
2 to have that capability there, and, as Jon has said,
3 when we needed to deploy reserves from Cyprus, we did
4 so.

5 We did reinforce, particularly at the higher
6 formation training level. We brought a number of people
7 over from our rapid reaction corps headquarters in
8 Germany and employed them, about 50 or 60 relatively
9 senior people, to tutor the Iraqi more senior commanders
10 and staff. You know, so there was reinforcement in
11 certain functional areas.

12 This wasn't actually about an issue of mass, it was
13 about having the right nuanced capability in the right
14 place to achieve the education and tutelage that was
15 required for 14 Div to get them to the required
16 standard.

17 MR JON DAY: Could I just add on that point, I think it is
18 important to keep in mind that the American armed forces
19 have a level of capability that exceeds anybody else in
20 the world, including us. We are probably as
21 close as anybody to matching their capabilities, but we
22 are some way behind, and they simply deploy --

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You mean in quality, you don't mean --

24 MR JON DAY: In terms of the technological quality of their
25 enablers. They have a degree of capability and they had

1 then particularly a degree of capability that nobody
2 else had. They tended to keep that at corps level. So
3 the fact that they were moving it down to Basra was
4 a reflection of their priorities. It wasn't
5 a reflection of what we were or weren't doing, because
6 we did not and do not have that level of capability.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If we talk about something rather
8 specific like, say, helicopters, we have a finite number
9 of helicopters, we had to take decisions about how many
10 we deployed in Iraq, how many in Afghanistan and the
11 Americans famously have an awful lot of helicopters.

12 MR JON DAY: They do, but it is less about helicopters,
13 I think, than about ISTAR-intelligence surveillance
14 targeting.

15 GEN SIR PETER WALL: They had types of assistance that we
16 just didn't have in service. We now do.

17 MR JON DAY: There was a technological generation, that they were
18 ahead of us in bringing in.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think time is running on, Sir John.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: I think there are just two more sets of
21 questions. One is completing the mission itself and
22 then the follow through after our departure. I will do
23 the first, if I may. I suppose the starting point is
24 our Prime Minister's announcement in July 2008 about the
25 fundamental change in mission. We have two tasks left,

1 which is to train up and finish the training of 14 Div
2 and to hand over the air station to local forces.

3 Can I ask about the second one, handing over
4 Basra Airport to Iraqi security force control. It is
5 a key element in the supply lines for the whole of Iraq
6 for the coalition, which is still there in numbers. So
7 was the criterion as to when it was possible to hand
8 over Basra Airport, the air station, to Iraqi security
9 forces a joint one or was it one we took? What was the
10 level of decision?

11 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We were not just handing them over to
12 Iraqi security forces, we were handing it over to the
13 embryonic sort of aviation infrastructure of the Iraqi
14 nation. Some of this was being done through
15 commercialisation and contractor support --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry to interrupt, just for my
17 understanding, this is actually running a airport, air
18 traffic control?

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: It is running an airport which is
20 actually complicated by the fact that it is going to be
21 part civil, part military, and, increasingly, the
22 military part was going to have a significant American
23 dependency, and so inevitably all of this was done
24 collectively with the Iraqi agencies and the American
25 military to make sure that, you know, we came out with

1 the right balance of capabilities, where the Iraqis
2 could run the bits they needed to, and they actually had
3 the ability to run a civil airport, but that was done in
4 a way which was, you know, run in a complementary way
5 with the American military demands, which were quite
6 significant.

7 You know, it kind of -- it had been very difficult
8 to pull this piece together. We had been trying to do
9 it as early as 2003, to demonstrate early progress, to
10 get civil flights in and out of Basra, and it turned out
11 to be quite complicated, and by this stage it came
12 together and the aim was to finish it by the end of
13 2008, which occurred.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The other is finishing our combat
15 mission, which happened at the end of April. I wonder
16 if you could just say a word about what was the security
17 situation at the time in Basra, including the provinces?

18 GEN SIR PETER WALL: If you talk to young soldiers, they
19 will complain about how boring it had become in Basra in
20 the final months of the operation, because, you know,
21 the Iraqi-provided security was extremely successful and
22 our role in it, apart from some mentoring activity at
23 the margins, which was mainly higher ranking people, was
24 minimal to zero. So it had become very successful.

25 MR JON DAY: Can I just add, there was one specific role

1 which affected the timetable which was ensuring that the
2 provincial elections were held successfully and that
3 took place in late January.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, with reassuring results in terms of,
5 particularly, the Iran dimension.

6 MR JON DAY: Yes.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps one other thing. The Prime Minister,
8 Gordon Brown, put at this time a particular emphasis
9 also on economic development in our remaining
10 involvement in setting up the Development Commission
11 under Michael Waring.

12 I'm wondering about the security envelope within
13 which it was possible to carry that forward. It would
14 mainly have been by then the Iraqi security force
15 protection.

16 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, and augmented by contracted
17 security.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Yes. From our own perspective, that
19 was a satisfactory or at least a workable security
20 environment.

21 MR JON DAY: It was, because of the changed security
22 environment.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think it is enough from me.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just moving to the very end of the story,
25 July of last year, the continued British military

1 presence in Iraq, I think my final question would boil
2 down into three parts: what did we want? What
3 difficulties did we have in securing Iraqi agreement to
4 it and what are the prospects for a long-term or
5 longer-term bilateral relationship with the Iraqi
6 military?

7 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Well, we had been talking for quite
8 some time to the Minister for Defence, Abdel Qadir, with
9 whom we had a longstanding close relationship and
10 dialogue, about the extent to which they wished to have
11 a British influence on the education in particular of
12 their officers in the army, but also the Naval training
13 effort, which was a continuation of something that had
14 been going successfully for some time.

15 This, of course, harks back to the close
16 relationship between our forces in the past, and quite
17 a lot of Iraqi doctrine, behaviour and habit is pretty
18 consistent with what they have inherited from us in
19 a previous period.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Going back to the 1930s?

21 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Yes, going back a long time. For
22 example, even during the Iran/Iraq war a lot of what
23 they were doing was reliant on our doctrine and
24 pamphlets and that sort of thing. So this was
25 a reasonably natural evolution and sat in parallel

1 obviously with a very extensive American engagement with
2 the training of the Iraqi forces over -- into the
3 future.

4 So we had an aspiration alongside them to set up and
5 run an officer training academy, which was already in
6 being but needed revamping, a war college, and then, in
7 addition to that, to continue and refine the Naval
8 training effort in Um Qasr. There was a question as to
9 whether those were going to be done by us on a bilateral
10 basis, dependent on the legal basis and agreements that
11 could be struck, or whether we were going to do them as
12 parts of a NATO effort which would be a collective under
13 NATO with a different set of agreements, and that's what
14 we were working towards.

15 MR JON DAY: I think it is important to stress that we
16 looked upon, and certainly look upon now, the
17 Iraqis as the demandeurs; that we are keen to ensure
18 that what we are doing is what they want; and they
19 clearly attach importance to officer training and to the
20 British role in officer training; and they clearly
21 attach importance to the Naval side.

22 We have also in the past, for example, maintained
23 civilians inside their Ministry of Defence and mentor
24 their people in Baghdad. So there is a wide range of
25 potential areas that they could have chosen from and

1 what they were looking for, I think, was what they
2 considered to be our added value.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we didn't manage to get an agreement
4 with them by the time we withdrew our troops in July?

5 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, I think there is a tension between
6 what their military wanted and the ramifications of that
7 for perceptions of sovereignty in terms of the way these
8 agreements were going to be formulated.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Where are we now?

10 MR JON DAY: The agreements have been reached and our people
11 are fully in place. So I think that's a solid
12 relationship.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thanks.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence, do you want to ask anything?

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just a few. These may seem rather
16 disparate groups of questions prompted by what you said.

17 First, on police training, when did MoD take over
18 responsibility for police training in Iraq? Was this
19 a -- I'm not quite sure whether this is a natural thing
20 for the MoD to do.

21 MR JON DAY: No, we -- interestingly, we discussed this and
22 I don't think either of us can recall a specific point
23 at which we took formal responsibility, which is
24 a reflection, I think, of the fact that this is seen
25 very much as a pan-Whitehall issue, but I don't think --

1 and I would have to consult the files -- I don't think
2 we formally took responsibility in the way that you are
3 suggesting. You may be able to --

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is an interesting issue and
5 throughout the Inquiry this question of how you manage
6 police training has loomed very large. Looking back, it
7 clearly was not one of the areas of greatest success,
8 from the early aspirations that this was something that
9 had to be sorted out, to the police station incident
10 in December 2006 and us being sort of kept out of Basra
11 almost as a result of it. So I'm just curious as to
12 whether this is a lesson to learn, there is something
13 here that we might want to look at.

14 MR JON DAY: I think there is. I think one of the areas
15 that I think we have not yet properly bottomed out is
16 the issue of duty of care: on what criteria do you put
17 your policemen into a combat zone? That remains
18 a cross-Whitehall issue.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: A special case or a general issue about
20 duties of care.

21 MR JON DAY: Indeed, duty of care for civilians as a whole,
22 but the police in particular.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Is it perhaps just going to be
24 a general limitation of what the British can do, given
25 that we don't have a carabinieri force of our own? We

1 don't actually have a model that is necessarily very
2 relevant in that situation.

3 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Actually, I think -- I don't think
4 that's a valid point. I think we have got to be able to
5 contribute to the evolution of a police force, the
6 development of police forces in these situations.
7 I recognise that by not having a carabinieri or
8 gendarmerie type force, it is a bit more difficult, but
9 quite a lot of these are relatively basic skills that
10 are an extrapolation of basic military capabilities.

11 I don't think this should be done by the military,
12 I think we need to come up with a national model for
13 doing this on a limited basis which could be part, as
14 Jon has suggested, of a multi-national blend.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So just to park this issue there, it
16 is something that we didn't, over this period, really
17 crack?

18 MR JON DAY: Yes.

19 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Correct.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Secondly, a quite different issue.
21 I realise Operation Sinbad was sort of before the time
22 that we are talking about, but I'm curious as to whether
23 Operation Sinbad was seen as creating the conditions for
24 Operation Zenith or Operation Zenith was a reflection of
25 the fact that Operation Sinbad demonstrated the limits

1 of what we were ever going to be able to achieve in
2 Basra by ourselves.

3 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I'm trying to recollect. I think, when
4 we went into Sinbad, we recognised it was going to be
5 our last kind of detailed engagement in each of the
6 localities of Basra sequentially. A lot of it was about
7 teeing up the Iraqis to start to take more ownership of
8 security at a local level, and progressively, as Sinbad
9 went on, phases of it were Iraqi security force-led as
10 a sort of growth path to them assuming responsibility
11 for the security lead in Basra when Zenith kicked off
12 in January. So I think it is probably that way round.

13 MR JON DAY: I think I agree.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Given what we have heard -- what has
15 been said about British forces being recognised as being
16 part of the problem rather than always the solution,
17 would it have been possible to undertake something like
18 Zenith earlier? Was this the earliest we could have
19 made that move or might we have been able to --

20 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I can't recall the precise detail of
21 when the various elements of 10 Division became capable,
22 but it depended upon their competence to take over the
23 bases that we were running.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: My third question is on this
25 question of the relationship between Afghanistan and

1 Iraq, I mean the general opportunity cost of continuing
2 with Iraq.

3 Now, we were told yesterday by Admiral Style we were
4 militarily significantly stretched as a result of
5 balancing these two things. When we were trying to make
6 the best of the Better Basra plan and Operation Sinbad
7 and all the rest, they had to get money from different
8 agencies and departments to manage all of these
9 different problems.

10 So my -- I wasn't quite sure, listening to what you
11 were saying earlier, whether you were recognising the
12 extent of the overstretch or were saying it was there
13 but it was quite manageable. How serious a problem was
14 it for our forces over this 2007/2009 period?

15 GEN SIR PETER WALL: I don't recall it being a serious
16 problem.

17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If you listen to commentary on the
18 position in Afghanistan, there is a lot of concern --
19 there has been a lot of concern -- about the lack of
20 helicopters, and our resources do not seem sufficient to
21 match the scale of the operation that was taken on. It
22 just seems unrealistic to assume that somehow Iraq was
23 irrelevant to the difficulties we faced there in the
24 earlier stages of that operation.

25 MR JON DAY: I think over the period that we are talking

1 about, 2007 to the final drawdown, I agree with Peter;
2 it was not from our perspective the -- it didn't cause
3 the same degree of problem as you are suggesting.

4 GEN SIR PETER WALL: Take helicopters as an example. We had
5 to make some calls about which fleets should operate
6 where, and for technical reasons to do with temperature
7 and altitude decided that the Chinooks would go to
8 Afghanistan. The Merlins that operated in Basra were
9 not capable of going to Afghanistan. They are now.
10 They have been reworked since the end of the Iraq
11 campaign in order to allow them to do so.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you are saying that if we had
13 had -- if we had been able to draw down earlier in Iraq
14 or reduced our forces significantly, that would have
15 made no impact on what we could do in Afghanistan?

16 MR JON DAY: As I said earlier, there were enablers that we
17 wanted to shift, but I don't think it had -- it didn't
18 create the same degree of pressure that I think you are
19 suggesting.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were there other things that we
21 might have done, other operations that came up as
22 possibilities that the British forces might be engaged
23 on, whether in a peacekeeping role or --

24 MR JON DAY: The issue that ran throughout this is
25 the extent to which -- and the timeframe for recreating -

1 a contingency capability to conduct operations of that
2 kind. My recollection over this period is that there
3 was nothing, I think it is fair to say that we might
4 have been asked to do or were asked to do, where we said,
5 "I'm sorry, we can't do this".

6 GEN SIR PETER WALL: We did in fact mount an evacuation
7 operation in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 using the
8 spearhead, which we were able to do -- obviously with
9 a maritime focus.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just one final point to Jon Day. As
11 I recall, you were one of the architects of the 1998
12 strategic defence review. You are obviously aware there
13 is another one being considered at the moment, but
14 looking back to then and thinking as to what we have
15 experienced over the Iraq issue, how would you do that
16 differently? What sort of basic amendments might be
17 made?

18 MR JON DAY: This is very much a personal view.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I appreciate that.

20 MR JON DAY: I think the one critical lesson that -- and the
21 one critical area that I would personally shift, is the
22 tacit assumption that underpinned the SDR that it was
23 desirable for us to enter an operation early on and then
24 leave it early on, so that we structured our forces more
25 for one-shot operations rather than for enduring

1 operations, particularly for enduring complex
2 operations.

3 I think the circumstances in both Iraq and
4 Afghanistan have shown that the assumptions that we
5 made, which were based more on the Balkans model, where
6 you could assume that other coalition members and
7 militarily less capable coalition members would come
8 along behind you to take responsibility after you had
9 kicked the door down, if you like, I think that hasn't
10 proved to be correct.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any final comment either of you
12 would like to make that we haven't been able to get to?

13 MR JON DAY: One point of clarification, if I may and
14 I think earlier on we talked about the various sets of
15 conditions, both for Provincial Iraqi Control and then
16 for the change of mission. It may just be helpful if
17 I clarify the difference between them, because I think
18 I may have conflated them. The criteria for Provincial
19 Iraqi Control in mid-2007 were based on five criteria:
20 first of all, threat levels; secondly, the strength of
21 the Iraqi security forces; thirdly, the capacity of the
22 Iraqi local authorities to control the security
23 environment; fourthly, the capacity of the coalition to
24 re-engage; and finally, the capacity of the provincial
25 authorities for economic governance. So that was the

1 set then.

2 In mid-2008, with the change of mission, the
3 criteria were as we discussed: finalising the training
4 of 14 Division; transferring the airport to the Iraqi
5 civilian authorities; making progress on the economic
6 initiative; and providing a secure environment for the
7 elections.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: But re-engagement has gone out? Yes,
9 potentially General Wall?

10 GEN SIR PETER WALL: No, thank you.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much to our witnesses this
12 morning and to all of you who have made it here through
13 snow and ice this morning.

14 At 12 o'clock we are going to hear evidence from
15 Mark Lowcock for the Department for International
16 Development and that will be a short session of one
17 hour. Thank you all very much.

18 (11.47 am)

19 (Short break)

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