

Thursday, 10 December 2009

(9.00 am)

SIR JOHN SAWERS

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning and welcome everyone. First of all there has been a quarter of an hour's delay. Problems with both the microphones and the broadcast, I'm assured that these are now largely fixed. So we can proceed. Apologies to our witness.

The objectives of this session with Sir John Sawers are to cover two things: Number 10's perspective on the state of the United Kingdom policy on Iraq in 2001 and the evolution of that policy in the first half of that year. We will look at the policy reviews initiated by both the United Kingdom and the United States governments in 2001, and that follows from the witness sessions on policy that we held in the first few days of the Inquiry's findings. So we are going to and fro a bit. The second object for this morning's session, after a very short break somewhere in the middle, will cover the United Kingdom's objectives for Iraq and the implementation of them as seen from Baghdad between May and July 2003, when Sir John was there on the ground.

And I should perhaps say this is a multiple set of appearances, he will also appear next week in his role as Political Director of the Foreign Office but that is not

1 until later.

2 So, the morning session will last no more than three
3 hours, at max. I would like to recall, as I do, that we
4 have access to a very large volume of government paper,
5 including the most highly classified. We are developing
6 the picture of the policy debates and the
7 decision-making processes, and these evidence sessions
8 are important both in informing our thinking and
9 implementing the documentary evidence. It is therefore
10 particularly important that witnesses are and are able
11 to be open and frank in their evidence while respecting
12 national security.

13 We recognise that witnesses are giving evidence
14 based on their recollection of events and we, of course,
15 are checking what we hear against the papers to which we
16 have access from the time in question. Some of these
17 are still coming in. I remind every witness that he
18 will be asked to sign a transcript later of the evidence
19 to the effect that the evidence he has given is truthful
20 fair and accurate.

21 With that beginning, I will, if I may, turn to
22 Baroness Prashar to open the questions.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you, Chairman.

24 Sir John, can you describe briefly what was your
25 role at Number 10 in early 2001 and what were your

1 responsibilities?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, I was the Foreign Affairs Private
3 Secretary at Number 10. I had been doing that job
4 since January 1999 and I did it until the summer
5 of 2001. I was responsible for supporting and advising
6 the Prime Minister on the full range of foreign policy,
7 defence policy, European Union issues and Northern
8 Ireland. I had one or two people working for me but it
9 was a small team providing direct support to the Prime
10 Minister.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. In early 2001, when the
12 new US administration came into power, what was your
13 understanding of the view of the new US administration
14 and its thinking on the foreign policy at that time?

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, you have heard from
16 Sir Christopher Meyer on this. He was our ambassador in
17 Washington at the time, and he was reporting on the
18 emerging views of the people who would join the Bush
19 administration. From Number 10's perspective, we didn't
20 know much about the future President Bush himself.
21 There had been some messages passed, including by the
22 Prime Minister, through President Bush's father,
23 Bush 41, and the Prime Minister was, of course, very
24 keen to have a good relationship with the President of
25 the United States, as any British Prime Minister would

1 want to do. We had some information, Condoleezza Rice's
2 article in the January 2000 edition of Foreign Affairs
3 gave a framework for the Bush administration's approach
4 on policy. But there were a lot of gaps in that and so
5 there was a keen interest in developing a greater
6 understanding in Downing Street of the intentions of the
7 Bush administration. Partly with that in mind, the
8 Prime Minister asked Jonathan Powell, his
9 Chief of Staff, and myself to pay a visit to Washington
10 in January 2001, before the inauguration, in order to
11 have an informal exchange with members of the
12 administration to deliver some messages from
13 the Prime Minister and to get a sense of where the Bush
14 administration might be coming from.

15 We had a meeting with Vice-President Cheney --
16 Vice-President Elect, I suppose we should call him --
17 and Condoleezza Rice, and Jonathan saw some of the
18 political figures around the future President Bush. And
19 in terms of foreign policy, both with
20 Vice-President Cheney and with Condoleezza Rice, it was
21 clear that they were looking to take a rather more
22 realistic, as they would see it, approach to the world
23 than President Clinton had done. In American foreign
24 policy parlance, that means a harder line approach, more
25 geared to the realities of the world and US national

1 interests.

2 The main issues of concern were relating to issues
3 such as missile defence and the future of the
4 Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty, to the development of
5 European defence, which was an ongoing project which
6 Tony Blair had been closely involved with in Europe, and
7 some wider international economic issues, such as
8 climate change and the Kyoto Protocol. So we touched on
9 all those issues. We also touched on Iraq, and you may
10 want to come on to that, but those were the main issues
11 that we focused on.

12 I think it is fair to say that Jonathan and I --
13 well, Jonathan can speak for himself, but I certainly
14 came away with a sense that this was an administration
15 which would take a hard edged approach but would
16 nonetheless want to work closely with the United Kingdom
17 and its main concerns, actually as an
18 administration, were likely to focus on domestic policy
19 as much as international foreign policy. The issues
20 about tax cuts and prescription drugs and social
21 security reform were very much uppermost in the minds at
22 the top of the administration rather than any specific
23 foreign policy issue, apart from missile defence.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When you say it would be hard edged,
25 how would that compare to Clinton, because you said they

1 were more realistic?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Condoleezza Rice's article,
3 I think, sets out an intellectual framework. She talked
4 about being clear about US interests, clear about US
5 intentions, and she was critical of the Clinton
6 administration's policy of talking tough but actually
7 acting rather weakly and she included Iraq in that
8 criticism.

9 President Clinton had a particular view of the
10 world and was engaging both as a politician and his
11 administration in terms of embracing other countries.
12 A good example of that was the Middle East peace process
13 that he had been very closely and personally involved in
14 right up to the end of his administration, which frankly
15 the incoming Bush administration were rather critical
16 of, the style of his engagement, and they wanted to
17 distinguish themselves from that sort of approach.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said you and Jonathan Powell
19 went there to get the feel and how that might determine
20 our approach to a new administration. What sort of
21 advice, if any, did you give to the Prime Minister in
22 terms of what our approach might be with the
23 United States, following that visit?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I don't think Tony Blair needed advice on
25 the broad approach. He was already clear in his mind

1 that it was very important for the UK, as a nation, that
2 our Prime Minister had a close working relationship
3 with the President of the United States. So, even
4 though President Bush and he were not as politically
5 aligned as he was with President Clinton, it was still
6 very important to get off on the right footing and to
7 find a way to work closely with the US President. So
8 that was his approach.

9 I reported back that there would be policy
10 differences between us but I felt that there was a fund
11 of goodwill in the US administration and also a great
12 depth of expertise. You had Vice-President Cheney,
13 you had Colin Powell, you had Donald Rumsfeld, you had
14 Condoleezza Rice, and underneath them there was a whole
15 range of people like Richard Haass, who brought real
16 foreign policy expertise. So, many members of the Bush
17 administration were respected and seen as authoritative
18 figures in their field.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Now, can we come back to our own
20 priorities? I mean, in the context of what was going on
21 around the world, you know, how big an issue was Iraq
22 for us, from your perspective at Number 10?

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It was a significant issue and, as I say,
24 it did feature in my discussions with Condoleezza Rice,
25 and both we and the Americans were concerned that our

1 policy on Iraq was not sustainable. It was based on
2 containing the threat that Iraq posed to its neighbours
3 and the threat it posed more widely in terms of the
4 weapons of mass destruction that we were all under the
5 impression, the strong impression, based on
6 intelligence, that it was developing, and we wanted to
7 contain those threats. And we did so by a mixture of
8 broad-based sanctions and No Fly Zones over the north
9 and the south of the country and the United States had
10 a policy dating back to 1998 of regime change.

11 Now, we felt that we needed to move to an approach
12 where the sanctions were more targeted, more focused on
13 the regime, more focused on the specific threats that we
14 faced, and that we should be in a position to ease
15 the broad-based trade sanctions which were
16 having such a bad effect on the Iraqi people.

17 There was also concern that our policy in the Arab
18 world was proving increasingly unpopular. The Arab
19 neighbours of Iraq shared many of our concerns about the
20 nature of Saddam's regime, they had no affection for him
21 at all, and they were also concerned about the threat
22 that Saddam's regime posed to them. But at a popular
23 level, there was real concern with the plight of the
24 Iraqi people.

25 So we had those concerns. We also had a concern

1 about the No Fly Zones. The No Fly Zones were
2 introduced primarily for humanitarian purposes, to put
3 an end to Saddam's repression of the Kurds in the north
4 and the Shia in the south following 1991.

5 That was one important purpose. They also had
6 a second purpose, which was, for the southern
7 No Fly Zone, the defence of Kuwait. Now,
8 Saddam Hussein continuously tested the exercise of our
9 rights through UN resolutions to monitor the
10 No Fly Zones and in early February just before the
11 Prime Minister's visit to Camp David, there had been an
12 attempt to bring down one of our aircraft where we had
13 responded, forcefully, attacking the air defence sites.
14 And this response had been widely criticised in the Arab
15 world and we were also conscious that our pilots were
16 vulnerable. So there was concern about the effect of
17 sanctions and there was concern about the impact and
18 acceptability in the Arab world of the No Fly Zones
19 and also about the safety of our pilots. So there were
20 a number of aspects that were coming under scrutiny.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So it was high on our agenda because
22 containment wasn't working. There was some discomfort
23 in the Arab world and there was a popular concern about
24 the impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi population.
25 When you went in January, was this discussed with the

1 colleagues and was it high on their agenda?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Could I just make one comment,
3 Baroness Prashar? I don't think it was true to say our
4 policy of containment wasn't working. I think it was
5 working but the costs of it were quite high and there
6 were risks to the various elements of our policy, that
7 we wanted to reduce.

8 What I found was that Condi Rice was actually very
9 interested in these ideas and they tracked with some
10 thinking the Americans were doing themselves. This was
11 an initial discussion and it fed through to the
12 discussion that the Prime Minister had with
13 President Bush in Camp David a month later, which was
14 more extensive and more substantive. But certainly
15 Condoleezza Rice was concerned that we should have
16 a sustainable containment policy for the period ahead
17 and that -- there were threats to our present policy
18 because of its unpopularity in the Arab world and this
19 was a concern that Vice-President Cheney also raised
20 with us.

21 At the same time the incoming Bush administration,
22 not least because of its overarching policy framework,
23 couldn't be seen to be easing up on Saddam, and so there
24 was an interest in ways in which the regime change
25 policy that the Bush administration were inheriting from

1 the Clinton administration could be given some
2 substance. And we talked about ideas, about, for
3 example, whether there was a way for Saddam Hussein to
4 be indicted for war crimes, whether there was a vision
5 that could be created for the Iraqi people of what life
6 would be like after Saddam Hussein, whether there was
7 more that we could do in terms of the information flow
8 into Iraq.

9 A lot of these ideas were modelled on the successful
10 policy that we had been pursuing in relation to Serbia
11 and President Milosevic. All these elements, a contract
12 with the Serbian people, information flows, indictments
13 of the leader and support for the opposition had brought
14 down President Milosevic a few months earlier,
15 it was a successful regime change
16 policy. And I think Condoleezza Rice was looking for
17 ways in which that side of the policy could be sharpened
18 in order to give it some substance. So it was more than
19 just rhetoric but there was no discussion of military
20 invasion or anything like that. That was not raised or
21 suggested.

22 There was, obviously, a concern on the American side
23 that they should retain the right to use military force
24 if their planes were threatened or brought down or if
25 the weapons controls exercised through the UN proved

1 ineffective but that was reserving the right to use
2 force rather than an actual plan or threat to use force
3 any greater than President Clinton's administration had
4 used.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When we saw Sir Peter Ricketts
6 a couple of weeks ago, he said that the approach that
7 the UK was adopting over the time was similar
8 to the USA, other than that the USA were reluctant on
9 going through the UN route and about inspectors going
10 back in. Is that your understanding?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think that refers to the period after
12 the Camp David meeting, and it might be helpful if
13 I gave a flavour of the Camp David meeting because
14 I think the policy review then flowed from that
15 exchange.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Just before you do, if I could interject, one
17 element of British policy, as I understand it,
18 throughout the period up to 2001, was to defend and
19 indeed enhance the authority of the United Nations as
20 a set of institutions, and Saddam's defiance over ten
21 years was seen as weakening those. That would not have
22 been an element even in initial Bush administration
23 thinking?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think the Bush administration saw the
25 United Nations as an important framework for policy

1 because it brought wider legitimacy, and the
2 United Nations was an element to be drawn into policy
3 rather than objective of policy itself.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were going to go back to
6 Camp David.

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, the main discussion at this stage
8 took place during Prime Minister Blair's visit to
9 Camp David in mid-February 2001. It was the first
10 meeting between the two leaders and obviously it was
11 very important, I think for both of them, but perhaps
12 particularly for Prime Minister Blair, that they got off
13 on the right footing and they developed a personal
14 relationship and a political relationship whereby the
15 US/UK cooperation and relationship could be sustained
16 and built upon.

17 The issue of Iraq did feature during those
18 discussions, in fact it was the first issue that was
19 discussed, not because it was the most important but
20 because Colin Powell was there and was about to depart
21 for the region and so President Bush said he wanted to
22 deal with Iraq first so that Colin Powell who was in
23 charge of reviewing policy could be there and take part
24 in discussions.

25 President Bush kicked it off by saying that he was

1 concerned about our policy, that we had sanctions that
2 the regime were evading but which were impacting on
3 Iraqi children. He was concerned about the
4 vulnerability of US pilots monitoring the No Fly Zones
5 and he wanted to get to a more realistic policy, as he
6 described it. And Colin Powell set out some elements
7 which were very close to our own thinking, that the
8 widespread sanctions should be replaced by controls on
9 weapons, that we should tighten the border monitoring
10 around Iraq with a view to ensuring that those controls
11 we retained were effective. [continue with para]

12 But once we were confident that they were effective,
13 then the wider sanctions could be suspended and in due
14 course lifted. [new para] There was a debate about the
15 No Fly Zones that he wanted to pursue, and some of the
16 Condoleezza Rice ideas on regime change, ie political
17 elements, not military elements, also featured in the
18 discussion, but the fundamental one was to narrow down
19 sanctions to those that were most important. And Prime
20 Minister Blair welcomed these thoughts and this
21 approach, agreed that we should retain control on Iraq's
22 oil revenues, but that our broad approach should be to
23 narrow the scope of sanctions to those elements which
24 were really most important to us and at the same time
25 ensure that information about what life would be like --

1 if Saddam were to be removed by the Iraqi people, what
2 that would look like, and the removal of all sanctions
3 and the reintegration of Iraq into the international
4 community.

5 So actually that was quite close alignment of
6 thinking between President Bush and
7 Prime Minister Blair. They agreed that the foreign
8 ministers should work more closely together on this and
9 that they would stay in touch on the development of
10 policy thinking but there was broad common ground
11 established on Iraq at the meeting. There were very
12 few issues of difference at Camp David and that
13 certainly wasn't one of them.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was there more discussion about
15 regime change or disarmament? You haven't mentioned
16 disarmament and weapons of mass destruction.

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: When I say "weapons control", that was
18 weapons of mass destruction and so what the Americans
19 were thinking which was in line with our own thinking --
20 was that sanctions should be narrowed to an arms embargo
21 and dual use goods that could be used in a weapons of
22 mass destruction programme. Powell made clear that
23 he was most concerned about Iraqi activities on chemical
24 and biological weapons and that there was a range of
25 dual use goods here that should be properly controlled

1 and should be subject to sanctions but the wider range
2 of trade sanctions should be removed.

3 Also on the table was a new UN weapons inspection
4 arrangement which had been approved by the Security
5 Council but which had not been accepted by Saddam. And
6 the previous one, UNSCOM, had reached the end of its
7 road in 1998 and this newer arrangement, which was
8 called UNMOVIC, had been approved by the Security
9 Council, had been set up but the Iraqis had refused to
10 agree to it coming into Iraq. It wasn't absolutely
11 clear whether UNMOVIC's return to Iraq was desirable
12 because it could have provoked another confrontation.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We want to go back to the --

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Just before Rod takes over, UNMOVIC -- the
15 policies that developed later involved at least the
16 threat of coercive force to get entry for the UNMOVIC
17 inspection teams but at Camp David was that a gleam in
18 anybody's eye?

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Not really because there wasn't any great
20 confidence that UNMOVIC would be any more successful
21 than UNSCOM had been. There was no change in Iraqi
22 attitudes, there was no readiness, really, on the Iraqi
23 side to cooperate with the United Nations and we didn't
24 think that we could force Saddam through military action
25 to accept an inspections regime.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Or the imminent threat of military action as
2 opposed to its actual use?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That was not the tenor of the discussion;
4 the tenor was really about how to make our existing
5 containment policy more sustainable rather than how to
6 sharpen it.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir John, Camp David was followed by
9 a review of policy in Whitehall. How was this initiated
10 and who conducted it?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I reported back after the Camp David
12 discussions and the responsibility was very clearly with
13 the Foreign Office and with the Foreign Secretary to
14 take forward the discussions with Colin Powell and with
15 the US State Department, and indeed with the French and
16 other partners, to find a new approach. But the first
17 responsibility, of course, was to develop our own
18 policy, which was done under Foreign Office leadership
19 and coordinated by the Cabinet Office during the rest
20 of February and the first half of March 2001.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So a paper was drawn up?

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Exactly, there were several versions of
23 this paper. I was involved in contributing ideas to the
24 paper and putting forward what I thought were the
25 Prime Minister's concerns and perceptions on this, and

1 the Whitehall process worked really quite efficiently
2 actually and we came up with a set of proposals by the
3 middle of March that I put to the Prime Minister.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But although the Whitehall process worked
5 efficiently, we heard from Sir Suma Chakrabarti that
6 DFID were not consulted on this and that their Secretary
7 of State actually complained. Why were they excluded?

8 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I didn't exclude them. As I say,
9 responsibility was with the Foreign Office and
10 coordinated by the Cabinet Office. DFID's role in Iraq
11 at that stage was primarily related to providing funding
12 for humanitarian relief. They were not a central part
13 of the issues relating to sanctions, No Fly Zones,
14 military deployments and so on. Now, you would have to
15 ask others in the Cabinet Office exactly why they
16 were excluded, if indeed that is the
17 case.

18 I do not have it with me but I think
19 my report of the discussions will have been copied to
20 the relevant departments in Whitehall.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Sir Suma was very clear that they had
22 been excluded and that his Secretary of State had
23 complained about this. I think they didn't see the
24 paper until after it had been put together.

25 If you are writing a paper, whether you are at the

1 Cabinet Office or the Foreign Office, that is dealing
2 with humanitarian issues and sanctions and Oil For
3 Food -- and, as you said, our policy was becoming
4 unpopular because of its effect on the Iraqi people --
5 isn't that a matter on which DFID would be the lead
6 department?

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: No, not the lead department. Matters of
8 sanctions and a wider containment policy of Iraq would
9 certainly be the lead of the Foreign Office, with the
10 Ministry of Defence as the second most important
11 department. DFID would be engaged in mitigating some
12 aspects of that policy, for example, on the humanitarian
13 effects. But they weren't involved in Oil For Food or
14 sanctions or those sorts of issues.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But they were involved in humanitarian
16 matters.

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: They were, exactly.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And they were spending money on Iraq.

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I don't know exactly the extent to which
20 DFID were or were not part of the Cabinet Office
21 meetings. I didn't attend those meetings myself. I saw
22 the products of those meetings in Number 10.

23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If the Cabinet Office decided not to
24 include them in this exercise it wouldn't be because
25 they had consulted Number 10 and had been told this was

1 how it was to be conducted. That would have been their
2 own decision.

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I have no recollection of that.

4 I think Iraq policy had evolved since the late
5 1980s through the first Iraq war. There was a group of
6 Iraq policy specialists around Whitehall. Yes, there
7 were some political differences and there may have been
8 concerns in some departments that the impact of
9 sanctions was greater than was warranted by the threats
10 that we faced. But I don't recall this being an issue
11 whether or not DFID should be involved. I don't recall
12 that being a political issue at the time. It became
13 a much bigger one, of course, in the run up to the
14 conflict.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Given that Sir Suma has introduced this
16 point into evidence here, you might just want to look
17 back at some of the papers and take some advice on this
18 and if there is anything further you want to say about
19 it when we see you next week, I'm sure we would be happy
20 to hear it.

21 Can you tell us what assumptions the policy review
22 was based on? Was Iraq seen as a growing threat at this
23 time?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Iraq was seen as a continuing threat both
25 to its neighbours and in terms of the WMD programmes

1 that we all believed, including the French and
2 Russians and others, that Iraq was pursuing. I don't
3 think it was seen as an intensifying threat. The
4 concern was that the measures we had in place to contain
5 the threat were proving increasingly hard to sustain and
6 that the risks of those policies were getting greater,
7 risks to our wider interests, our standing in the
8 Middle East and the vulnerability of our pilots and
9 planes monitoring the No Fly Zones.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But on the list of countries where we
11 were really concerned about proliferation, where would
12 it have stood?

13 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Oh, high. Oh, very high.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: At the top?

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: 2001 ... probably. I mean, the countries
16 where we had concerns about proliferation, obviously
17 there was an India/Pakistan nexus of issues which had
18 come to a head in the late 90s, with the Indian and
19 Pakistani nuclear tests. There was growing concern over
20 North Korea but that wasn't the biggest issue for us.
21 There was concern about Iran's nuclear programme and
22 there was concern about the network of procurement who
23 were involved in this. And there was Libya of course.
24 So there was a range of concerns but Iraq was very much
25 up there as one of the main concerns.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Despite the verdict that the IAEA had
2 reached about Iraq's nuclear programme by 1998, the
3 evidence of which we have heard from others, but it
4 really was that that programme at this stage was not
5 going forward, it was being contained by sanctions?

6 SIR JOHN SAWERS: As I say, we didn't feel that
7 our policy was failing; we felt that
8 the policy of containment we had in place was having
9 a significant effect. That there was still Iraqi
10 activity, especially on chemical and biological
11 elements, that was hard to explain. We couldn't get our
12 UN inspectors in place. They were being obstructed by
13 Saddam Hussein. Why was he obstructing them if he had
14 nothing to hide? There were a number of questions out
15 there. But the main concern was the costs of our policy in
16 the wider Arab world and international opinion and the
17 vulnerability we faced in terms of the monitoring of the
18 No Fly Zones.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did the review look at a wide range of
20 options?

21 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It began with the Foreign Office looking
22 at a rather narrow range of options and in discussion
23 and as the paper evolved, it looked at a wider range of
24 elements rather than options which could be included in
25 this, ideas on border monitoring, on bringing to an end

1 the breach of oil sanctions through Syria and Turkey
2 were important and the political elements of what
3 you might call regime change were also more widely
4 considered, whether there was scope to indict
5 Saddam Hussein for war crimes in Kuwait in 1990, whether
6 there was more that could be done to provide free
7 information flows into Iraq. These sorts of issues. So
8 there were a number of other elements that were brought
9 into the package in order to make it a coherent policy.
10 Travel ban and assets freezes on regime leaders,
11 a clearer position on what we would do if the No Fly
12 Zones were significantly threatened.
13 I suppose the No Fly Zones was the one area where a wide
14 range of options was looked at. In the end the
15 military advised that if we were to bring an end to the
16 southern No Fly Zone this would require significant
17 military reinforcement of Kuwait to provide the defence
18 of Kuwait and that would involve up to, possibly,
19 a brigade of British forces, alongside greater numbers
20 of US forces, and the MoD advised that the most
21 efficient way of providing for the defence of Kuwait, as
22 well as protecting the humanitarian interests in
23 southern Iraq, was to maintain the southern No Fly Zone
24 as it was. So that was considered but in the end the
25 Whitehall system recommended to the Prime Minister that

1 we keep the present arrangements on the No Fly Zones.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Then, having gone through the process of

3 review, how were decisions reached on the new policy?

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The papers were put to the Foreign

5 Secretary,

6 . I haven't seen all the Foreign

7 Office papers but, as I understand it, the Foreign

8 Secretary approved it. I informed the Prime Minister of

9 the conclusions of the Whitehall process and he, of

10 course, was involved in other things at the time. So

11 Iraq was not high on his agenda at that stage. He was

12 content that the process had reached a satisfactory

13 conclusion and he thought it was in line with the

14 discussions that he had had with President Bush

15 in February. He was concerned that we should stay on

16 a common track with the Americans and that was part of

17 the work which the Foreign Office, supported by myself

18 and others, were involved in as well.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So it was approved by the Foreign

20 Secretary and the Prime Minister. Do you recall whether

21 this was discussed in a meeting with ministers, perhaps

22 a meeting of the relevant Cabinet committee, DOP or OPD,

23 whatever it was called at the time?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I don't think it was. You have to recall,

25 in March 2001 the country was seized by Foot and Mouth

1 Disease, which was the primary concern of the
2 Prime Minister at the time. We were less than two
3 months away from what we expected to be an election. So
4 the Prime Minister's focus was very much on domestic
5 affairs. He felt he had set the strategic direction
6 with President Bush and he expected officials and the
7 Foreign Secretary of the day to take that forward. And
8 that's what we did.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How did we then take it forward? Did we
10 then go into wider discussions with other governments?
11 Obviously we were already talking to the United States;
12 what about the P5, the European Union, the countries in
13 the region? How did we move that forward?

14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: As the Inquiry team know, the main
15 decisions on sanctions of this nature are taken at the
16 United Nations, so our main partners were our Security
17 Council partners, in particular the P5. The Americans
18 were a bit hesitant about getting engaged in
19 a negotiation on these matters in the Security Council
20 but I think the Robin Cook/Colin Powell link and my
21 own contacts with Condi Rice persuaded them that it
22 was right to go down this road. We talked to the
23 French, who were pleasantly surprised by the direction
24 of British and American thinking on these issues and
25 were ready to give us a fair wind in the Security

1 Council. You will need to get the details from
2 Jeremy Greenstock, our Ambassador at the United Nations
3 at the time, but in May, I think it
4 was, we put forward a draft resolution in the Security
5 Council which was based on the elements of our policy
6 that needed UN approval, in particular the
7 change to the sanctions regime. And this was discussed
8 in New York, negotiated at the UN. We had quite broad
9 sympathy and support for our approach but, at the end of
10 the day, it was blocked by the Russians.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think Baroness Prashar would like to
12 come back on that in a minute but before we do so
13 I would like to take stock of where we are at.

14 You, I know, left your job before 9/11, and after
15 9/11, as others have told us, the whole atmosphere in
16 which policy was made, the environment, changed very
17 dramatically. In the course of the evidence we have
18 heard so far, others depicted our policy on Iraq as
19 evolving over a period indeed from the late 1990s,
20 essentially from late 1998 onwards, rather than as
21 a policy which had a single point of decision that then
22 led ultimately to the United Kingdom's participation in
23 military action against Iraq.

24 In this pre-9/11 period -- and you were in this post
25 from 1999 onwards, as you said -- do you recall whether

1 at any stage ministers conducted a strategic review of
2 policy on Iraq? The review that we have been talking
3 about up to now was essentially tactical. Did they look
4 at our strategic options in a broader sense? For
5 example whether we actually had the option of unhitching
6 the United Kingdom from such a close alignment with the
7 policy of United States, which in some respects we
8 didn't agree with, for example over UN inspections,
9 perhaps they wanted to be more robust over the
10 No Fly Zones than we were comfortable with, we had some
11 legal issues there and so on.

12 To what extent was it really the case that our
13 policy of containment was not sustainable? I mean, you
14 said that there was an issue of costs. You said at one
15 point that it wasn't sustainable. At another point you
16 said it was working but the costs were very high. Did
17 we really look at this and say, "Do we have a choice of
18 containment on one hand?" of perhaps -- you also
19 referred to the Serbian model of regime change, of going
20 for regime change on another, look at the other options
21 for the United Kingdom and where all of this was leading
22 us in a strategic sense?

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I have not reviewed all the papers from
24 the beginning of 1999, partly because I was under the
25 impression that the Inquiry wanted to focus on the first

1 half of 2001, but I don't recall a major strategic
2 overhaul of our Iraq policy. I think this review in
3 2001 was more than just tactical. I think it was quite
4 fundamental as to how we pursued our containment
5 strategy. I think if you were to look at alternatives
6 to containment, should we end our containment and
7 reintegrate Iraq into the international community?
8 There was very little appetite for that. This was
9 a policy which some of our partners might have sought
10 but not even the French were arguing for that seriously.
11 And also the policy of pursuing aggressive regime change
12 was never given very serious consideration because it
13 was easily put to one side at that stage.

14 So there was consensus in the government during my
15 time at Number 10, at least my perception of it: there
16 was a broad consensus that the right approach was
17 containment of the threat that Iraq posed. So the
18 decisions were how best to achieve that containment of
19 those threats.

20 Yes, there had been a rethink of policy after 1998.
21 I was not in Number 10 at that stage. There had been
22 the bombings of Iraq when Saddam finally
23 refused to cooperate with the inspectors under
24 UNSCOM, but the discussion was really focused on the
25 question of how best to contain the threats and to

1 contain the WMD programmes which we believed were in
2 place.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So we didn't have voices within our own
4 system arguing that we should make a radical change of
5 policy, that we should really focus on regime change as
6 the only way of achieving the objectives we wanted to
7 achieve, including disarmament of Iraq?

8 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I don't recall a serious
9 and considered challenge to the existing policy of
10 containment.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: May I ask that question partly because
12 Sir Christopher Meyer described the Prime Minister as
13 a true believer from the 1990s onwards in changing the
14 regime in Iraq but obviously that is a question that we
15 will put to him.

16 SIR JOHN SAWERS: You obviously have to talk to the
17 Prime Minister of the day about that. I think there are
18 a lot of countries around the world where we would like
19 to see a change of regime. That doesn't mean that one
20 pursues, active policies in that direction,
21 although support for change, change in behaviour,
22 modernisation of systems, more open, accountable
23 democratic systems, independence of judiciary, free
24 media, freedom of association, these sorts of issues
25 that we have pursued in a whole range of places around

1 the world are designed to bring about significant
2 improvements in the governance of countries, including
3 the change of leaders. And it is not vastly different
4 from the approach that we were pursuing in Iraq. But
5 from a very difficult situation because Saddam Hussein
6 was one of the world's last remaining absolute
7 dictators.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would that that was so. Lady Prashar?

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Let's come back to -- if you can
10 recap for me what were the main outcomes of this review?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, the main outcomes were that we
12 should narrow the scope of sanctions to focus on those
13 issues that were of greatest concern: weapons and
14 and goods that could be used in weapons
15 of mass destruction programmes. These were narrowed
16 down to what was called a "goods review list", which was
17 a fairly long list of items but much, much narrower than
18 the comprehensive sanctions that were in place before.
19 So that was the first element.

20 The second element was simplification to the
21 procedures in New York for approving contracts which
22 needed approval and a much simpler notification system
23 for other general trade with Iraq. It included
24 a maintenance of the regime for oil exports, whereby
25 Iraq could export oil but the proceeds were put into

1 a UN-controlled escrow account, but the procedures for
2 getting sums of money from that account would be
3 simplified. And the rather elaborate Oil For Food
4 arrangements, I can't remember if they were
5 greatly simplified or brought to an end but they were
6 drastically changed and updated and simplified.

7 Those were the main elements that were put to the
8 United Nations because those were the elements that the
9 United Nations agreement was needed. There were other
10 elements about maintaining the No Fly Zones in place,
11 which were more national ones for us and the Americans.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But this was a focus on narrowing
13 the sanctions regime, what was smart sanctions?

14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But why did the attempt to secure the
16 smart sanction actually fail?

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It failed because ultimately the Russians
18 refused to agree to it. We put forward our
19 draft resolution, it was being negotiated in New York,
20 and we didn't get agreement by the deadline of
21 early June or the end of May, when the existing regime
22 came to an end. So we rolled that over until 3 July.
23 Negotiations continued for another four or five weeks.
24 The French were on board, most of the middle ground of the
25 Security Council was on board, even China was on board.

1 But the Russians refused to support our approach.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Why were the Russians not supporting
3 the smart sanctions?

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The ostensible reason was they thought
5 that our modified sanctions regime was still
6 too broad and the arrangements were still too
7 complicated. The real reason, and this was conveyed
8 to us by senior Russians authoritatively, was that
9 they were concerned about their commercial position in
10 Iraq and the Iraqis actually didn't want any change to
11 the sanctions regime. The Iraqi regime was comfortable
12 with the existing set of sanctions.
13 The regime was able to evade the sanctions to the
14 extent that they wanted to. They didn't really care
15 about the plight of the Iraqi people and they could see
16 that it was increasingly awkward for the Americans and
17 others to maintain the sanctions arrangements.

18 We understood that the Iraqis actually threatened
19 to cut off all Russia's contracts if they agreed to the
20 modification of sanctions, and the Russians were fairly
21 open with us about that, and in the end, and
22 Jeremy Greenstock will give you chapter and verse on
23 this, but the Russians threatened to veto the resolution
24 if we put it to a vote and Sir Jeremy advised in those
25 circumstances it was better to withdraw it and roll over

1 the existing arrangements. And that is what happened.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Am I right to recall that there could have

3 been a price, that if the Russians had been paid it,

4 might have removed their threat of veto?

5 SIR JOHN SAWERS: This was raised at very high levels.

6 We looked at issues such as addressing Russian

7 concerns on the debt that Iraq owed to Russia, which was

8 one of their concerns, but at the end of the day the

9 Russians were fairly straightforward: the Iraqis don't

10 want this and therefore we are not going to agree to it.

11 Which, from a perspective of the humanitarian concerns

12 about the plight of the Iraqi people, may be hard to

13 understand, but I think it rather shows how uncaring the

14 Saddam regime was about the plight of its own people.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What efforts were made at high

16 level? Because I understand that our Prime Minister had

17 quite a good rapport with Mr Putin at the time, so what

18 efforts were made by him and President Bush to persuade

19 the Russians?

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The Prime Minister spoke to

21 President Putin by phone at the end June. He spoke to

22 President Chirac, who was very supportive of the

23 approach that we were taking, and asked Chirac to talk

24 to President Putin, which he did. I'm not sure whether

25 President Bush spoke to Putin or not, but certainly

1 there were high level American efforts with the Russian
2 administration. And ultimately Prime Minister Blair met
3 President Putin in the margins of the G8 Summit,
4 in Genoa, I think it was, in Italy, and put these issues
5 to him straight. And Putin basically said no, he wasn't
6 going to do it, he wasn't going to agree to these
7 changes, basically because of the Iraqi position.

8 Now, Sir Roderic was Ambassador in Moscow at the
9 time and had a better understanding of the Russian
10 motivations than I had. But I had the sense that this
11 was partly Russian commercial
12 interests, and partly Russian strategic analysis of
13 their interests in the Middle East. They had few allies
14 there. Their few allies included Syria and Iraq you couldn't
15 really call them an ally, but they had a good
16 relationship with Iraq. Both regimes in Syria and Iraq were
17 regimes in those country were benefiting from the
18 existing broad-based sanctions because they were able to
19 profit from sanctions evasion and they didn't want any
20 change.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How come the French agreed?

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The French agreed because actually their
23 analysis was closer to ours, that they did care about
24 the plight of the Iraqi people, they did want to see
25 a narrowing of sanctions, and they thought the focus on

1 weapons control was the right approach.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Just reflect, what conclusions did

3 you draw from this experience? This was the first

4 attempt to review the policy (overspeaking) What

5 conclusions would you draw from this?

6 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It wasn't the first attempt. The broad

7 ranging sanctions that were put in place in 1991 were

8 moderated in the mid 1990s to allow for Iraq to export

9 its oil and to import food and medicines and other goods

10 in relation to that. So there was a major modification

11 in the mid 1990s. We thought this was the right further

12 modification to pursue. I think it exposed the cynicism

13 of both the Iraqi regime and, to some extent, the

14 Russian leadership, in terms of their respective

15 approaches on Iraq at the time.

16 And we concluded that if we couldn't modify

17 the tools of the containment policy,

18 then the best approach was to continue with the existing

19 containment policy, which we did for the subsequent two

20 years.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But there was no discussion in terms

22 of looking at other options, other alternatives?

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Such as?

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean in terms of going back to the

25 United Nations for a different set of policies?

1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: If the Russians had said they were going
2 to veto the changes we put forward, which we thought
3 were well-judged, which eased the concerns in the Arab
4 world about the impact of the policy on the Iraqi
5 people, whilst maintaining the policy of containment, if
6 the Russians were going to block that, then it was hard
7 to come up with a different set of policies which they
8 might agree to. We had made our best efforts. I then
9 left Number 10 in the summer, I think the beginning
10 of August 2001. So there may have been an intention to
11 look at this again in the autumn but between times 9/11
12 had happened and the landscape and the international
13 scene had changed.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thanks very much.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: One thing in the context of the policy review
16 in the first half 2001, Sir John, is the interaction
17 between the Arab/Israel situation and policy on Iraq.
18 Colin Powell left Camp David early to actually address
19 that whole set of regional issues. Could you say
20 something about any interaction between British policy
21 between the two, Iraq on the one hand, policy towards
22 one country, and on the other, the broad Middle East
23 regional considerations including particularly, perhaps,
24 the Arab/Israel situation?

25 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, I think most of us in London were

1 clear that a more concerted effort was needed to try to
2 achieve peace in the Middle East, ie between Israel and
3 the Palestinians. An enormous effort had been made by
4 President Clinton at the end of his term and that had
5 failed. That had led to an Israeli election that
6 brought Prime Minister Sharon into office. And the
7 analysis that was generally shared was that prospects of
8 moving forward quickly towards a Middle East peace were
9 very limited.

10 Now, one of Tony Blair's maxims in foreign policy
11 was that if you can't solve a problem, you have to
12 manage it. So he thought we needed to have active
13 measures in place to manage the Middle East even if it
14 wasn't solvable at that time. And that was certainly
15 very important to our main Arab partners, the Saudis,
16 the Egyptians, the Jordanians, the Gulf Arabs and so on.

17 So, yes, there was a link because having an
18 unpopular policy on Iraq was one thing but our wider
19 interests in the Middle East could be best addressed if
20 we had at least some active policy on the Middle East.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: But it doesn't follow from that, or does it,
22 that -- there was, if you like, some constraint on the
23 range of elements of a policy towards Iraq that we were
24 willing to consider, by reason of not affronting Arab
25 street opinion, in particular, but also friends and

1 allies in the region itself.

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Actually I don't think it

3 was, how shall I put this? People realised that there

4 were links between these policy areas, not direct links

5 but links in terms of the perception of western

6 engagement in the region, and by far the greatest

7 concern was that the injustice of the situation facing

8 the Palestinians should be addressed. This was

9 a concern that Vice-President Cheney raised when the

10 Prime Minister saw him in Washington before he went up

11 to Camp David. There were real concerns with the Saudis

12 and the Gulf Arabs generally that we needed to be seen

13 to be taking forward the work towards a Middle East

14 peace, and that this was more important to them than

15 Iraq policy.

16 The Arabs were comfortable with Iraq policy based on

17 containment. They felt threatened by Saddam Hussein.

18 Their concern on that was the method by which we pursued

19 it. And Tony Blair, like those at the top of the

20 American administration, was alive to Arab concerns

21 that we should be actively addressing the Middle East,

22 and indeed we did so, and that led, during my time as

23 Ambassador in Cairo, to the formation of the Road Map

24 and all the activity that has flowed from that.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: So, in terms of its relevance for Iraq

1 policy, it was very important context but didn't
2 actually have a direct effect in shaping or limiting
3 policy towards Iraq in the first half of 2001?
4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think that's a fair summary.
5 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Lawrence?
6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just take you back to the
7 policy of containment. The word "containment" has
8 a rather indefinite quality. There is no obvious time
9 that it should end. One of the alternative policies
10 that was around at the time was the question of a very
11 clear and explicit offer of the end of the sanctions in
12 return for the inspectors going back, and unfettered
13 access and so on. Was that option considered?
14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, it was, and that was
15 part of the basket of options. The difficulty
16 with that approach was it put the initiative back with
17 Saddam Hussein. And one of the concerns that we had and
18 that the US administration had was that Saddam could
19 trigger a confrontation at any point, as he had done
20 previously, through his cooperation or lack of
21 cooperation with the inspectors.
22 There was a discussion at the time
23 with a whole range of opinions from different
24 quarters, as to whether it was actually in our interests
25 for the UN inspectors to go back because it would make

1 confrontation more likely, and if we wanted to avoid
2 a confrontation it was better to have a stand-off than
3 it was to have an active policy where we had the
4 inspectors ferreting around in Saddam's palaces and
5 military bases and so on. So there was a discussion
6 about it.

7 But you are right about the indefinite nature of
8 a containment policy and there was some discussion,
9 including in London, as to how we can bring an end to
10 the arrangements so that Iraq wasn't condemned
11 indefinitely to living under Saddam and his brutal sons'
12 regime. Even when the grim
13 reaper took Saddam in whatever period ahead, Uday and
14 Qusay, his two sons, would still take over. So, the
15 prospect of change in the nature of the regime was
16 pretty far off. And that's where the idea, not so
17 much an offer to the regime but asort of contract
18 with the Iraqi people. And support for the Iraqi
19 opposition, which were mainly in exile, either in the
20 Arab world or Iran or in Europe or America, support for
21 them to strengthen them, to focus their efforts.

22 There were one or two ideas, on the fringe, of
23 talking about armed opposition but actually that wasn't
24 very widely considered.

25 So we did, we were conscious that containment

1 meant a sort of indefinite stand-off, indefinite
2 stalemate, but it was the least bad of a series of
3 unattractive policies.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Therefore there was no inclination
5 here to offer any incentives to the regime to comply
6 with UN Resolutions because, in a sense, there would be
7 sanctions there whatever they did, and that, as we have
8 heard, the regime itself was doing fine with sanctions.

9 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, the incentives were there in the
10 Security Council Resolutions. We had created, through
11 the UN, a new body, called UNMOVIC, which was available
12 to work with the Saddam regime. Once the Saddam regime
13 had cooperated fully and had been able to verify -- or
14 UNMOVIC had been able to verify that all its military
15 activities were actually compliant with UN Resolution,
16 then there would then be no basis for sanctions. But we
17 actually didn't go that step, which required Iraqi
18 cooperation, we actually took a step which left control
19 in our own hands and we lifted sanctions -- we were
20 offering to lift sanctions on a wide range of areas of
21 trade and economic activity, unilaterally, without Iraqi
22 cooperation.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So, in that respect, what you were
24 hoping for from the new resolution was that you would
25 control those bits of Iraqi trade relevant to military

1 activity, including WMDs, but removing the more punitive
2 element?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That's correct.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Moving on from this, in terms of the
5 Prime Minister's view of the Iraq problem, was it
6 primarily that this was a terrible regime and therefore
7 created a humanitarian issue or was it primarily that
8 this was a regime was threatening because of its weapons
9 of mass destruction? Was it a humanitarian issue or
10 a disarmament issue?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: You will have to ask the Prime Minister of
12 the day himself that question. My understanding from
13 working with him for two and a half years was that both
14 concerns were in his mind. The primary policy concern
15 was the threat posed by the weapons of mass destruction
16 programmes., He believed the intelligence - and
17 why shouldn't he believe the intelligence? - that these
18 were ongoing and that they did pose a serious problem we
19 had to deal with, but he was very mindful of the
20 humanitarian dimension of the policy as well, which was
21 why he was uncomfortable with the drift and direction of
22 the policy review.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm just intrigued by this because
24 of your references to an analogy with Milosevic and
25 Serbia, because Milosevic and Saddam were sort of the

1 terrible twins of the 1990s and, arguably, for the
2 Prime Minister, what had happened with Kosovo and
3 Milosevic was a foreign policy success.

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Indeed.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But Milosevic wasn't a threat
6 because of weapons of mass destruction, it was because
7 of what he was doing, ethnic cleansing and such like.
8 So what is a valid analogy to look at Milosevic as
9 a potential way forward for regime change in Iraq?

10 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The analogy is drawn from the starting
11 point that you would much rather deal with these
12 countries under different leaders. Now, Serbia's a
13 European country, had a more open society. Milosevic
14 was a brutal leader but he was not a tyrant in the way
15 that Saddam was. And we were able, through a series of
16 policies containing his military activities around the
17 fringes of Serbia, first in Bosnia, although at great
18 expense and with great difficulty, later in Kosovo, more
19 convincingly, under Tony Blair's leadership; and by
20 containing him militarily, by making clear to the Iraqi
21 people that there was a better world for them in Europe
22 without sanctions --

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: For the Serbian people.

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: For the Serbian people -- without
25 Milosevic. By supporting the opposition, by giving help

1 to media outlets in Serbia which were independent, then
2 we could bring about progressively some changes in
3 Serbia. And that policy succeeded.

4 I don't think anyone seriously thought that the same
5 sort of measures would, in the same timescale, undermine
6 Saddam, because it was a very different regime, but we
7 felt it was important to hold out to the Iraqi people
8 that this was not aimed at them, it was aimed at the
9 regime, that there was a much better prospect for them
10 if there was a way for them to get rid of their leader.

11 So the parallel wasn't about the underlying
12 concerns, the parallel, to the extent that there was
13 one, was about the methodology of us supporting a change
14 of leadership in a country by political means.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The way you have described it
16 illuminates just how different the two situations were.
17 I'm sure the Serbian people believe in the end that they
18 were the ones who removed Milosevic --

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: And they did.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- with whatever help given from
21 outside, but that reflected a more pluralistic society
22 all round. So, in a way, it indicated just how
23 difficult it was going to be with Iraq rather than
24 necessarily a model to follow?

25 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I agree entirely, that it didn't eliminate

1 the difficulties, but Iraq, like Yugoslavia, was
2 ethnically diverse, religiously diverse, a divided
3 country. The regime at the centre did not have control
4 over all the parts of the country, certainly didn't have
5 support from great swathes of the country's population.
6 So some of the parallels were there but the nature of the
7 regime was much more violent, much more brutal in Iraq,
8 and it would take much more to displace them, which was
9 why there was more of a focus on the external opposition
10 in Iraq because anybody remotely speaking out against
11 Saddam would find themselves locked up in Abu Ghraib or
12 have their head chopped off very quickly indeed. So the
13 only opposition groups you could work with were either
14 those in the north of Iraq, outside the reach of
15 Saddam's regime, or outside the country.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just another parallel which you did
17 mention in your conclusions was war crimes, because
18 Milosevic famously was arraigned and there was
19 a mechanism again to enable that to be done. When you
20 discussed this with Condi Rice, was there any real
21 prospect of taking forward a war crimes indictment?

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: They were interested in the possibility.
23 International policy on justice
24 and war crimes had developed a lot during the 1990s,
25 first with Rwanda and then with the former Yugoslavia.

1 There had been created, by agreement, the International
2 Criminal Court, which the Americans, of course, had very
3 profound reservations about, so they were not in favour
4 of using the ICC as a way of indicting Saddam. But there
5 were a number of organizations, there was a group
6 called "Indict" which was involved in developing an
7 international campaign to provide the basis for an
8 indictment against Saddam and his cronies for the war
9 crimes committed during the invasion of Kuwait during
10 the 1990s and the subsequent suppression of his own
11 people, the Shia and the Kurds, when, amongst other
12 things, he used chemical weapons. So there was a lot of
13 activity around this area. The Americans were
14 interested. It didn't form the basis of an element in
15 the Security Council Resolution because it wasn't
16 relevant to the Security Council at that stage but it
17 was part of our discourse and part of our thinking, and
18 we did give some practical help to the Indict campaign
19 in order to support their activities.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: For the reasons you have given,
21 there would be an ambiguity, at least, or equivocation
22 on the American side because of their views on the
23 International Criminal Court.

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: There would have been had we sought to the
25 use the International Criminal Court as the vehicle.

1 There was no ambiguity about American support for
2 indicting Milosevic.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Because the Hague Tribunal was
4 there?

5 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Exactly.

6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The final question on the
7 No Fly Zones. In February 2001 there was quite a major
8 operation which went -- outside of the areas covered by
9 the No Fly Zones. How involved was Number 10 in the
10 discussion of that operation?

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Perhaps not as involved as we might have
12 been. The management of the No Fly Zones was something
13 in the hands of the military, and you would expect the
14 military to have a degree of authority, delegated
15 authority, to respond to threats against planes, and
16 that was quite right.

17 There had been a build-up of Iraqi attempts to bring
18 down a coalition plane, increased anti-aircraft activity
19 in the south, movement of
20 military capabilities in the south,
21 and radar tracking and so on.

22 There was concern in military circles, and this
23 was discussed extensively between the MoD and the
24 Pentagon and what we should do about it, and
25 a plan was developed for a firmer response along the

1 lines that you have described.

2 This was briefed to the Prime Minister but both we
3 and the White House were a bit surprised at the timing
4 of it because we weren't fully involved in the
5 discussion of the timing and it happened at short
6 notice on a Friday night, I recall, a week or so before
7 the Prime Minister went off to Camp David.

8 The timing was coincidental. It was not designed in
9 any way, to my knowledge, to relate to the upcoming
10 meeting. It did in many ways serve to underline the
11 difficulty of maintaining the policy on
12 No Fly Zones. As I said earlier, the military were
13 clear that, of all the difficult policy
14 options, this was the least bad.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But one of the consequences from
16 what you have just said was that there was quite a lot
17 of uproar in the Middle East about the intensity of the
18 attacks and their location.

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That's correct. And I think this was one
20 of the issues that was very much on
21 Vice-President Cheney and President Bush's minds, that
22 there had been a sharp reaction. And in a sense it gave
23 force to the argument that we needed to move to a better
24 targeted policy.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But when the Prime Minister received

1 a briefing, first, was Number 10 aware of the debates
2 going back and forth with the Attorney General on the
3 legality of this?

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, that was another dimension of it.
5 The Attorney General had raised question mark about
6 the legality of the No Fly Zones. This had been
7 a debate which had been running for a number of months
8 and in the end the Attorney General concluded that as
9 long as a number of tests were met, then the No Fly Zone
10 was legitimate, but he
11 had had concerns which he had demanded should be
12 addressed and they were addressed.

13 I think in reality the fundamental reason behind the
14 No Fly Zones after the first Gulf War was humanitarian,
15 was to bring an end to the suppression of the Iraqi
16 people, but the purpose had evolved and the secondary
17 purpose, of a forward means of defending Kuwait, became
18 at least as important in the minds of western policy
19 makers.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And general suppression of Iraqi air
21 defences?

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The air
23 defences had been suppressed and the No Fly Zone was
24 a way of keeping them suppressed.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally then, when this issue

1 came up, were the foreign policy implications of the
2 proposed attacks part of the briefing? Was the scale of
3 the proposed attacks part of the briefing?
4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Which briefing?
5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That you said the Prime Minister had
6 before the February 2001 attacks.
7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: As I say, I'm trying to recall
8 now exactly the sequence of events but we were aware of
9 the discussions that were going on on military channels
10 about the best way to respond to this, but the exact
11 timing of the action did come as a surprise. The
12 Prime Minister was aware, I believe, I was aware
13 certainly, that there were plans afoot for a wider
14 response, given the scale of Iraqi efforts to bring down
15 an allied plane. And I believe the Prime Minister was
16 informed of this but he wasn't actively involved in the
17 decision-making.
18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.
19 THE CHAIRMAN: Sir Martin?
20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Sir John, can I just seek clarification
21 on some of your earlier answers. The March 2001 Iraqi
22 policy review spoke of practical steps to restore Iraq
23 to its proper place in the region. I was wondering
24 whether these practical steps, as understood in the
25 minds of British policy makers, were strictly limited to

1 the things that you discussed, the smart sanctions,
2 maintaining the No Fly Zones, encouraging the Iraqi
3 people, the Iraqi opposition?

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, there may have been some other
5 elements, for example the plan to support the indictment
6 campaign against the Saddam leadership, the
7 closer monitoring by the United Nations
8 and agencies of the borders of Iraq, bringing an end to
9 the smuggling of illegal export of oil through
10 Syria and Turkey. These were all elements of the same
11 package.

12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But essentially to restore Iraq to its
13 proper place meant regime change?

14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: As I said earlier, the fundamental
15 approach of the policy was containment of Saddam. The
16 goal was, ultimately, to have all our concerns about the
17 regime addressed so that Iraq could be restored to the
18 international community but I don't think there were
19 many people engaged in foreign policy or politics
20 generally that thought that Saddam was ever going to
21 take the steps. So the prospect of him being restored
22 to the international community was pretty remote. And
23 that view was probably held most strongly in the Arab
24 world.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That rather follows Sir Lawrence's

1 been out of Cairo for a few days. I got back late on
2 a Thursday evening to receive a message from my
3 deputy saying that the Foreign Office and Number 10 were
4 keen to talk to me, so please could I phone them first
5 thing on the Friday morning, which of course is
6 a holiday in Egypt. So I went into the embassy on
7 Friday morning and called the director for the
8 Middle East, Edward Chaplin, and asked him what it was
9 about. And he said, the Foreign Office felt they needed
10 someone of more weight and seniority in Baghdad than
11 they had at the moment and would I be
12 interested and available to go there? And I said,
13 "Well, it sounds quite interesting, I need to think
14 about it. When do you want me to go there?" They said,
15 "Well, it would be nice if you could be there by
16 Sunday". I said that I needed to reflect on this for
17 a bit. So I thought about it for ten minutes and
18 decided that, actually, it was a very interesting job.
19 The coalition presence on the civilian
20 side was clearly struggling. It was clearly having
21 difficulties and, if I could contribute to improving that,
22 I thought it would be an important contribution to make.
23 I thought it would be useful to go back to London
24 first in order to see the Prime Minister, the Foreign
25 Secretary and others, and that's what I eventually did,

1 in part because the leadership of ORHA, the organisation
2 on the ground in Baghdad had taken a retreat for a day
3 or two outside the country.

4 So, eventually I flew back to London on the Monday,
5 saw people on the Tuesday and Wednesday, and flew out to
6 Baghdad via Kuwait on the Wednesday night and arrived in
7 Baghdad on Thursday.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So while you had been watching the
9 process rather closely from Cairo, it wasn't a very long
10 period briefing and preparation that you had. What were
11 the marching orders that you were given in London?

12 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The initiative originated from the
13 Foreign Office. Mike O'Brien had come back and was
14 concerned about the disarray on the ground. Jack Straw
15 was very keen to have somebody senior there and thought
16 I was a suitable person and this appointment had the
17 backing of Number 10 and the Prime Minister personally.

18 The emphasis that Jack Straw and others in the
19 Foreign Office put on it was mainly on the political
20 side, the need to get an Iraqi political process going
21 so that we could hand over authority progressively to
22 a representative Iraqi body.

23 I found the concerns in other departments more
24 wide-ranging. The Prime Minister in particular was
25 concerned that we needed to get services going, we

1 needed to restore normal life, we needed to show that
2 there were benefits to ordinary Iraqi people. And this
3 was echoed by Clare Short, who I saw at the time, and by
4 Geoff Hoon, who was also concerned that consent for the
5 presence of our military also depended on the Iraqi
6 people seeing real benefits to their day-to-day life.

7 Jack Straw said he wanted me to try to impose some
8 common sense on the system on the ground, try to make it
9 work, and the Prime Minister's emphasis was working
10 closely with the Americans. He said he wanted a clear
11 appraisal, from the ground, from someone he trusted,
12 that he could raise specific issues with President Bush
13 to try to unblock them because he could see that there
14 were real difficulties on the ground.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How, in formal terms, was your role
16 defined? What authority did you have? How did you
17 integrate into what was there? Did you have power?

18 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The position evolved. It was a new
19 position. The Foreign Office had already sent out
20 someone described as the Ambassador to Iraq, a chap
21 called Chris Segar but he was not really actively
22 engaged with the civilian coalition presence. There was
23 some debate as to what my position would be. In the
24 end it was agreed in London that I should be the UK
25 Government's Special Representative for Iraq and that

1 I should work alongside those senior Americans that were
2 on the ground. It was known in London at this time that
3 the Americans planned to replace Jay Garner with
4 Jerry Bremer and they wanted someone to work closely
5 with Bremer, and in the event I got to Iraq four or five
6 days before Bremer got there and I needed to build
7 a close relationship with him.

8 Now, I was the senior Brit on the ground but I was
9 not Bremer's deputy, and I was not in the line
10 management of ORHA or what became the CPA; I was
11 a representative of the British Government on the ground
12 and so my role was one of exerting influence rather than
13 exercising power.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Though we were the occupying power along with
15 the United States?

16 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That's correct.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Although at this stage you arrived before
18 Security Council Resolution 1483 had been adopted, you
19 were just before that, weren't you, so we weren't
20 formally designated as the occupying power?

21 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I am not sure that's quite the case
22 because I think, in fact, we were the occupying power
23 from the fall of the regime on 7 April, and
24 we and the Americans had notified the
25 Security Council on 8 May that we would exercise the

1 responsibilities and obligations of an occupying power,
2 and then that was recognised in 1483 that was adopted
3 later that month.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: 22 May, I think, a couple of weeks after
5 you arrived.

6 Now, as others have said, the United Kingdom had
7 invested equity in this operation, particularly by the
8 decision to send divisional strength ground forces into
9 south Iraq. The object of this, as many have said, was
10 so that we should have influence over the way the
11 operation was conducted by the United States. And yet
12 you were not in the line management, you were not
13 a deputy; you, as you say, were working alongside Bremer
14 and his team, trying to influence them. Were you
15 actually in a position really to do this? I mean,
16 normally if you have equity in a company, you have
17 a seat on the board, but you didn't really have a seat
18 on the board. You weren't the Deputy Chairman.

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I had a seat at the table. The authority
20 in Iraq after Bremer arrived was clearly Bremer.
21 I shared an office suite with him. We saw each other
22 many times a day. We worked together. And he was clear
23 about the importance of him representing the coalition
24 and not just the United States. At least in those
25 early months when I was working alongside him.

1 The Americans had the military control of central
2 Iraq. We had military control in the south and we
3 weren't contributing very much to ORHA, as it then was,
4 in May. We had a handful of advisers. We weren't
5 providing funds, they were all coming from the
6 Americans, and so our capacity to exercise power on the
7 use of American funds was inevitably limited.

8 I felt I was in a reasonably strong position to
9 exercise influence. There were a range of areas where
10 I was able to exercise influence in those months, but
11 I didn't seek and I wasn't given a veto or
12 decision-making power on CPA issues; those decisions
13 rested with Bremer, he was the one who had the authority
14 from the President of the United States, which was the
15 leader of the coalition.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, you were sent out because people in
17 London had got alarmed about what was going on, what was
18 obviously going wrong in Iraq, and we have numerous
19 people describe ORHA to us as a shambles. That seems to
20 be the favourite term for it. What was the situation on
21 the ground when you arrived, which was immediately, as
22 you say, before Bremer arrived? What did you find?

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I found serious disorder. The ORHA was
24 not well led by Jay Garner. I was very disappointed by
25 the quality of senior figures, who were mainly retired

1 Vietnam-era US generals. One exception to that was our
2 own Tim Cross, who I thought was doing sterling work but
3 was very heavily loaded.

4 But ORHA, as an organisation, did not have a clear
5 strategy and was not well managed or coordinated and
6 didn't have very many resources. Living conditions were
7 pretty appalling. I had certainly not experienced the
8 sorts of conditions that we had to live under. The heat.
9 For the first time in high life I was sleeping in
10 a dormitory with a lot of other people. There were no
11 doors to the bathrooms. There was intermittent water
12 and electricity. It was pretty grim. So the US
13 civilians were unable to get their own act together, let
14 alone the act for the rest of Iraq.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That was a reflection of the way in which
16 the Phase 4 planning, as we have heard from many people,
17 really hadn't worked. And yet, as we were told by our
18 commanders, Phase 4 effectively started at the time the
19 British forces crossed the start line, because by the
20 time they got to Baghdad, which was a very rapid
21 campaign, we were already having to deal with a lot of
22 aftermath issues in running Iraq. Did you sense that by
23 the time you arrived in early May, that London and
24 Washington were beginning to get their act together, at
25 least in appreciating what needed to be done over

1 Phase 4, albeit belatedly? Was that what led to Bremer
2 and you appearing there?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think what led to Bremer and I being
4 appointed was a sense that a much more concerted and
5 well-organised effort was required on the ground.
6 Part of the problem was there was very limited
7 information flow from Baghdad back to London. There
8 were media outlets on the ground but they weren't giving
9 an authoritative assessment of the sort that you would
10 get from an embassy or whatever of the situation --

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we had an embassy, we had
12 an Ambassador.

13 SIR JOHN SAWERS: But it was a pretty modest affair, and it
14 was disconnected from the decision-making of
15 ORHA.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did it have communications or was it
17 sending messages by Yahoo like Sir Hilary Synnott did
18 later in the year?

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The famous flat pack embassy arrived in
20 the first half of May and was assembled. And once that
21 was assembled they then had access to Foreign Office
22 communications. But it didn't last very long because
23 the place where the embassy was located, which was
24 outside the Green Zone, was very soon determined to be
25 unsafe for us to occupy. The first time we were able to

1 to have a person in the right place with a means of
2 communication was when I arrived, on 8 May, and I was
3 then able to initiate a flow of reports back to
4 Whitehall and to diplomatic posts around the world on
5 what I saw were the problems in the capital. I had
6 a rather clunky communication system but it was able to
7 send and receive and I was also lent a Pentagon, US-army
8 email system, which was unclassified, with which I could be
9 in regular email touch both with Whitehall and family.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: And this period where -- as I say, we
11 have already got into the aftermath, it turns out that
12 the UK is responsible for the southern zone. Now, we
13 obviously knew that our military were going to go into
14 that area but again, as others have told us, it was
15 almost an accidental realisation on our part, an
16 unintended consequence, that we became responsible for
17 civilian affairs in what has been called the southern
18 box. By the time you arrived, was it clear that we were
19 in charge of this? At the time there was a Danish
20 diplomat who was nominally in charge or about to be in
21 charge of CPA South, or was it still this rather
22 confused situation where we weren't sure who was in
23 charge?

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think de facto it felt to us because it
25 was the British division that was occupying Basra and

1 the other coalition partners in the neighbouring
2 provinces of Amarah and Nasiriyah and Muthanna, all came
3 under the command of the British general. So de facto
4 it fell to us. My job was not to manage the south on
5 the civilian side. There was a civilian component to
6 the military presence. There was also an office of ORHA
7 that had been set up in the south and, as you say,
8 I can't remember exactly when Ambassador Olsen arrived,
9 the Danish Ambassador, I think it was around the same
10 time as me, but he wasn't able to provide the leadership
11 or secure the resources necessary to make an impact.
12 And so, in the end, even though the Prime Minister
13 famously directed that we should set an
14 exemplary approach in the south, actually the south fell
15 behind the rest of Iraq in terms of investment and
16 reconstruction.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you, of course, were mainly focused
18 on the centre, on Baghdad. As you said, part of your
19 function was to provide a stream of reporting, which you
20 were doing. Can we now turn to the policy side of your
21 job, working with essentially Bremer. ORHA was on its
22 way out, it was about to be renamed the CPA under
23 Bremer.

24 You arrived on 8 May, Bremer on the 12th, and within
25 Bremer's first two weeks he had promulgated two

1 extremely important decisions on de-Ba'athification and
2 on dissolving the former Iraqi army.

3 Can we look at those two decisions? To what extent
4 were they Bremer's decisions or -- how had they been
5 pre-cooked in Washington? I see you have got the Rand
6 Report there, and the Rand Report suggests there had
7 been a certain interagency process in Washington leading
8 to these decisions, albeit Rand is quite critical of
9 that process. And, very importantly for us, was the
10 United Kingdom consulted about these crucial decisions?
11 Was the Prime Minister consulted? Were you consulted?
12 It is pretty late in the day by then for you to have
13 changed them. Can you take us through that story.

14 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I separate them and deal with
15 de-Ba'athification first?

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: When I arrived in Baghdad on 8 May, one of
18 the problems that ORHA were facing was that they had
19 been indiscriminating in their Iraqi partners. They had
20 taken, as their partners, the most senior figures in the
21 military, not in the military, sorry, in the
22 ministries, in the police, in institutions like Baghdad
23 University, who happened to be there. And in several of
24 these instances, Baghdad University was one, the trade
25 ministry was another, the health ministry, the foreign

1 ministry, the Baghdad police the working level were
2 in uproar because they were being obliged to work for
3 the same Ba'athist masters who had tyrannised them under
4 the Saddam regime, and they were refusing to cooperate
5 on that basis. So I said, in my first significant
6 report back to London, which I sent on the Sunday night,
7 the day before Bremer arrived, that there were
8 a number of big issues that needed to be addressed.
9 I listed five and one of those five was we needed
10 a policy on which Ba'athists should be allowed to stay
11 in their jobs and which should not. And there was
12 already a debate going on among Iraqi political leaders
13 about where the line should be drawn.

14 So I flagged it up on the Sunday evening in my first
15 report, which arrived on desks on Monday morning, on
16 11 May. When Bremer arrived late that evening, he and
17 I had a first discussion, and one of the first things he
18 said to me was that he needed to give clarity on
19 de-Ba'athification. And he had some clear ideas on this
20 and he would want to discuss it. So I reported again
21 early the following morning that this was high on
22 Bremer's mind and I needed a steer as to what our policy
23 was. I felt that there was, indeed, an important need
24 for a policy on de-Ba'athification and that, of the
25 various options that were being considered, some,

1 I felt, were more far-reaching than was necessary but
2 I wasn't an expert on the Iraqi Ba'ath Party and
3 I needed some guidance on this.

4 I received some guidance the following day, which
5 was helpful, and I used that as the basis for my
6 discussion with Bremer -- I can't remember if it was the
7 Wednesday or the Thursday that week but we had a meeting
8 of -- Bremer and myself and our political teams, where
9 this was discussed, and there was very strong support
10 among the Iraqi political parties for quite
11 a far-reaching de-Ba'athification policy.

12 Before the meeting itself I had concerted
13 with Ryan Crocker, who was the senior American political
14 adviser, and I said to him that my guidance was that we
15 should limit the scope of de-Ba'athification to the top
16 three levels of the Ba'ath Party, which included about
17 5,000 people, and that we thought going to the fourth
18 level was a step too far, and it would involve another
19 25,000 or so Iraqis, which wasn't necessary.

20 And I thought Crocker was broadly sympathetic to
21 that approach but at the meeting itself Bremer set out
22 a strong case for including all four levels, ie the top
23 30,000 Ba'athists should be removed from their jobs, but
24 there should be a policy in place for exemptions.

25 I argued the alternative. Actually, unhelpfully,

1 from my point of view, Ryan Crocker came in in strong
2 support of the Bremer proposal, and I think he probably
3 smelled the coffee and realised that this was a policy
4 that had actually already been decided in Washington and
5 there was no point getting on the wrong side of it.

6 I was not aware of that at that stage and, in fact, it
7 was only when I subsequently read the very thorough
8 account by the Rand Corporation of these issues that
9 I realised there had been an extensive exchange
10 between agencies in Washington.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just to pause on that, this crucial
12 decision, not just to take the top 5,000, which probably
13 was not a matter of argument, but to add 25,000,
14 sweeping up a lot of professionals, teachers, doctors
15 people like that, who had been obliged to become members
16 of the Ba'ath parties, had been stitched up between
17 agencies in Washington but without any consultation with
18 the number 1 coalition partner, Britain, who were going
19 to be vitally affected by that?

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I cannot vouch for that because I wasn't
21 in London, I wasn't involved in those exchanges.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you would have been aware of if we'd
23 been (inaudible), somebody would have told you.

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: When I was doing my calls in London on the
25 previous week, this was not an issue that had been

1 raised with me. So I don't know if the embassy in
2 Washington or people in Whitehall were plugged into the
3 debate. I would just say, though, Sir Roderic, that we
4 do need to keep this in context. A lot of parallels
5 are drawn about Iraq in 2003 with Germany in 1945, and
6 I have to say that was the intellectual mindset that
7 Bremer brought with him, there was a parallel with the
8 reconstruction of Germany in 1945.

9 In 1945 the Allies excluded 2.5 per cent of the
10 German population from jobs because of their links with
11 the Nazi party. What Bremer was proposing was excluding
12 0.1 per cent of the Iraqi population, ie 25 times fewer,
13 proportionately, than was the case in Germany. And in
14 that context he was looking for scope
15 for giving exemptions.

16 Now, I think myself that too much weight is placed
17 on this decision. A position on de-Ba'athification was
18 essential and the reconstruction of the Iraqi Government
19 would have been impossible without it. So there needed
20 to be clarity. It was also a vital point for the Iraqi
21 political parties, who, left to their own devices, would
22 have initiated a much more stringent and wider ranging
23 policy on de-Ba'athification than the one that we
24 settled on. The fact was, none of us really knew the
25 internal workings of the Ba'ath Party and where real

1 privileges began. You describe teachers and doctors who
2 were obliged to be members of the Ba'ath Party. There
3 was a wide-ranging phenomenon of that and the
4 Ba'ath Party had 2 million members as a result, and I am
5 sure many of those members were unwilling or
6 unenthusiastic members of the Ba'ath Party.

7 What we are talking about though, is the leadership.
8 We are talking about the top 25 to 30,000 of an
9 organisation of 2 million, so that's 1 in 100 of the
10 membership that we are talking about. One of the
11 arguments that was made is that it was at the fourth
12 level that real privileges were introduced for
13 Ba'athist members and where they were able to exercise
14 unaccountable power, unaccountable except within the
15 structures of the Ba'ath Party, within the country.

16 And, as I say, there was real anger amongst ordinary
17 Iraqis that some of these people were returning to
18 positions of authority even after the coalition had
19 liberated them from Saddam. So, I think it is true to
20 say that the coalition went a step further than was
21 necessary on de-Ba'athification, but it would be
22 a mistake to think that de-Ba'athification as a policy
23 was not necessary, because it was, and it would also be
24 a mistake to think that de-Ba'athification seriously
25 contributed to the insurgency, because I don't believe

1 it did.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, though we have been told by military
3 witnesses, within the army, this -- which of course was
4 going to be disbanded, that this took the level right
5 down the level of major, and that they couldn't really
6 interact with people meaningfully if you didn't have
7 officers more senior than major, or people at that
8 level, to interact with --

9 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Who are they interacting with, because the
10 Iraqi army didn't exist?

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, but when we were seeking to interact
12 with people in the security apparatus, their argument
13 was, you needed to have someone to talk to with
14 authority. And if you took the authority right down to
15 that level, you really didn't have authoritative people.

16 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just come back on that because one
17 of the problems we faced exactly was in the south where
18 our army had chosen as their favourite partner
19 a chap called Sheikh Muzahim, who actually was one of
20 the top three levels of the Ba'ath Party, and they chose
21 him because he was effective, because they thought they
22 could do business with him, but actually he was bitterly
23 resented in the area was he was an important part of the
24 tool of repression that Saddam had used. So they had
25 to take a step back and push him to one side.

1 We have to be clear that there was a traumatic
2 political environment in which Iraq was operating, and
3 it wasn't just a question of who was effective, who
4 sounded good, who seemed to be well-organised, because
5 most of those people in Iraq were in senior positions
6 within the Ba'ath Party. And for us to be credible in
7 rebuilding Iraq, we had to show that the Ba'athist era
8 was over and that Iraqis were not going to be suppressed
9 again by Saddam and his henchmen.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So, what you are saying is there is room
11 for argument both ways? This was a popular decision
12 with the political parties but it was one that we
13 weren't really consulted on, that when you heard about
14 it you, on instructions, took a different view, which
15 was ignored, and it was a rather complicated matter that
16 had been have benefited from being studied and thought
17 through in a much more thorough way, if we had really
18 prepared for the aftermath, than we did.

19 The German analogy is not really an accurate one any
20 more than Serbia is, but we had started preparing for
21 post-war Germany four years before the end of the Second
22 World War, as the Rand Study points out, having looked
23 at all these post-conflict situations. So it was
24 a pretty unsatisfactory process from a British point of
25 view.

1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, I don't think my views
2 were entirely ignored. I argued very strongly for
3 a clear exemptions policy, that was agreed. I also
4 argued, and this was agreed too, that we should make
5 an effort to clarify to the Iraqi people what the extent
6 of the policy was, and that 99 per cent of the member of
7 the Ba'ath Party were not included in this. Efforts
8 were made on that but they were less successful because
9 of the lack of good communications and mass media within
10 the country.

11 Now, I think it was an important decision. It was
12 important to get it right and it was also urgent.
13 I don't think you should conclude that this was
14 something that could have allowed sort of reflective
15 study for the following month because it was --

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It could have been thought about this
17 advance, because it was obviously going to --

18 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Certainly it could have been thought about in advance,
19 and it had been thought about in advance in Washington.
20 Why London wasn't involved in it you will have to ask
21 others because I wasn't in London at the time. But it
22 had clearly been thought through in Washington and they
23 were, to some extent, under the influence of people like
24 Ahmed Chalabi, who took a very hard line on this issue.

25 I think two things on this, that the coalition

1 needed to take a decision on de-Ba'athification and one
2 was urgently needed and this had been prepared in
3 Washington, and whether or not it had been consulted
4 with London I was not clear. It didn't look like it
5 had.

6 Secondly, that the extent of the policy was
7 debatable and may have been, probably was, taken a step
8 further than necessary but it was much less than the
9 measures that would have been taken by a representative
10 Iraqi Government who would have wanted to go much
11 further in removing Ba'athists from all positions in
12 public authority. Indeed, one of the mistakes that
13 Bremer made on de-Ba'athification was handing over
14 implementation to a purely Iraqi-led body and
15 appointing, actually, the Governing Council elected
16 Ahmed Chalabi to lead this process, because they knew he
17 would take a very hard line on it.

18 There has been some suggestion that this was only
19 done for reasons of popularity but the public mood in
20 Iraq was vehemently and vitriolically anti-Saddam, and
21 the Rand Report, that we have referred to several times,
22 quotes a pretty authoritative opinion poll by the Zogby
23 Organisation that said that over 94 per cent of Iraqis
24 expected some or all Ba'athists to be removed from their
25 jobs. Now, you can't, as a coalition, go against those

1 sort of odds when you are trying to rebuild a country.

2 You have to respect the views of the people --

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I don't think anybody is arguing the
4 opposite. Do you recall if, after the decision had been
5 promulgated by Bremer, Number 10 took it up with the
6 White House? Did they express a degree of discontent or
7 concern about it?

8 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think David Manning, who visited me
9 later that month, told me he had raised this with
10 Condi Rice. I don't know how timely the
11 intervention was, and whether it was made in advance of
12 decisions actually being made in Washington. As I say,
13 I flagged it up as early as I reasonably could in my
14 reports from Baghdad. I think there were some
15 reservations but, when the detail of the policy was
16 understood, I think that it was applying to only
17 1 per cent of party members, which equated to 0.1
18 per cent of the Iraqi population, that an exemptions
19 process was in place, and indeed scores of exemptions
20 were provided. It was not a draconian measure, and
21 it was an essential element where clarity was needed.
22 I think concerns in London were assuaged by that.

23 I think in many ways the biggest concern was
24 a perception concern on the part of Iraqis, who
25 interpreted de-Ba'athification in the way that some

1 Iraqi political parties wanted it interpreted, which was
2 that all Ba'athists were out of all jobs. So there was
3 a sort of self-censorship by Ba'ath party members of not
4 resuming their public service jobs. And Bremer, in the
5 second half of 2003, took a number of measures to
6 clarify that that was not the case.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Obviously if you go beyond this period
8 towards the Sunni insurgency, this could be seen,
9 I suppose, as one of the roots of it, and I think that
10 same report that you and I have both been reading
11 suggests that President Bush felt that perhaps Bremer
12 had gone a bit too far in this. And clearly Bremer at
13 some point did begin to ease the problem, perhaps under
14 the influence of some of the sort of arguments that you
15 were putting forward, particularly with regard to
16 teachers.

17 Can we turn to the demilitarisation of the army?
18 According to Rand, we were, to a degree, told about this
19 in advance. To what extent that is really consultation,
20 I don't know, but when Walt Slocombe, Bremer's deputy,
21 went through London, just before again this was actually
22 announced, he told us. I don't know if that's
23 a slightly way casual way of consulting us or what you
24 feel about that. Can you take us through that story?

25 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The disbandment of the army was another

1 measure that Bremer mentioned to me at our first meeting
2 late in the evening of 12 May, which I reported the
3 following day to London. He said that he was intending
4 and had agreement from Washington to issue a decree
5 disbanding the Iraqi army. This, again, was a new issue
6 for me. You have to remember I had only been on the
7 ground for a few days.

8 The reality was that the Iraqi army had disbanded
9 itself, that the many conscripts had gone back home and
10 the units had all dispersed. So the Iraqi army didn't
11 exist, in many ways, except on paper, when I arrived in
12 early May. So the issue facing the coalition was
13 whether it should be recalled and reconstituted or
14 whether a fresh start should be made.

15 Now, Bremer was pretty clear, the fact that he
16 raised it with me in his first evening in Baghdad and he
17 said he had agreement from Washington on this, that it
18 was a pre-agreed Washington policy that this should be
19 the approach.

20 I reported it to London. Walt Slocombe, as you say,
21 the much respected American defence figure, well-known
22 in British circles, he was the Undersecretary for
23 Defence for much of the Clinton years, was visiting
24 London, transiting London later that week and had
25 extensive talks in the MoD and elsewhere in Whitehall,

1 and he reported to Washington that he had informed and
2 consulted British officials. I do not have the record
3 of any British exchanges on this but he clearly
4 reported that there had been no UK opposition to US plans
5 to disband the army based on his consultations.

6 Now, the following week I went back to London.
7 I had to be back there for two days and I attended the
8 Chiefs of Staff meeting, the regular weekly Chiefs of
9 Staff meeting, and this was not an issue then. This was
10 after Walt Slocombe had come through.

11 The main issue on the Chiefs of Staffs' mind was
12 whether with we should send a battalion of the parachute
13 regiment up to Baghdad to support the US efforts to
14 maintain control of capital. So this issue was not
15 prominent in the minds of people in London in the week
16 after Walt Slocombe's visit. I think people recognised
17 that a step needed to be taken and we had to either
18 recall the existing Iraqi army or start afresh. And
19 again, this Rand study. Rand is probably the premier
20 security think tank in the world and has done the most
21 thorough study that I have seen of the work of the
22 Coalition Provisional Authority. What they concluded,
23 if you forgive me, I would just like to read it. They
24 said:

25 "Five years after the issuance of CPA General

1 Order 2, which disbanded the Iraqi army, the new Iraqi
2 army is among the country's most effective institutions,
3 and the police, which were not disbanded, are still
4 among the worst. This does not mean that Bremer's
5 decision to disband the army was necessarily right but
6 it does illustrate the advantages of making a clean
7 start."

8 And I think that argument is a balanced one. Again,
9 I don't think it is credible to lay the insurgency, the
10 roots of the insurgency, in the decision to disband the
11 army. The army was primarily existing in Shia and
12 Kurdish recruits, conscripts. The officer class was
13 ageing, bloated; there were 11,000 generals in the Iraqi
14 army and only 300 generals in the US army. It gives
15 you a flavour of how the army was used as a system of
16 privilege. Many of those 11,000 generals were ageing
17 Sunnis, who were sort of paid to help prop up the
18 regime. There was a credible argument for starting
19 again.

20 Now, there was a touch of ideology in this as well.
21 Where the balance lies can be debated but I think it is
22 important for the Inquiry to understand that the Iraqi
23 army didn't exist in early May and the choice was
24 whether to attempt to recall it warts and all or whether
25 to start afresh. The mistake that was made, I think

[from here on to be amended - 11 Dec 09]

1 there were two mistakes made - first of all was an
2 unnecessary one to deny army officers and NCOs their
3 pension right, which produced a widespread demonstration
4 and had to be reversed a month later, and was
5 an unnecessary addition to the decision; and the second
6 one was that efforts to build a new Iraqi army were too
7 slow and not sufficiently ambitious, and it wasn't until
8 about four or five years later that we really as
9 a coalition got that right.

10 So there were errors, in my view.
The

13 decision to formally disband the army was not something
14 that inspired or triggered the insurgency. It may, in
15 some areas, have compounded it, but it wasn't the
16 fundamental reason behind it.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just on that theme, Sir John, arms
18 and Iraq, I suppose that there were three principal
19 sources of arms for the population at large, and that is
20 clearly, in part, behind the insurgency, or at least its
21 capability. One was the massive arms dumps all around
22 Iraq which our pre-military planning didn't actually
23 allow for. That just went into circulation, insofar as
24 the portable arms. The second is the indigenous gun
25 ownership which I think we know from the beginning of

1 the century was very widespread anyway. But the third
2 were the self-disbanded reluctant conscripts, who had
3 disbanded themselves with their weapons and ammunition.
4 Did the disbanded soldiery represent a principal source
5 of army insurgencies in the next phase or is it just
6 part of Iraq life?

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I find it hard to answer that particular
8 question. It was very difficult to tell to what extent
9 those conscripts that went back home with their weapons
10 then became insurgents. What I would say is that the
11 military campaign to defeat Iraq and its armed forces
12 was only ever half consummated. The coalition forces
13 fought very bravely and skilfully but, at the end, the
14 Iraqi army and other military units didn't fight a last
15 ditch stand, were defeated and then surrendered, they
16 didn't do that at all, they melted away. And what we
17 were faced with increasingly through 2003 were a series
18 of challenges to the coalition's position that
19 collectively represented an onslaught on us. There were
20 the remnants of the Ba'athist regime, the elements of
21 the presidential guard, the Fedayeen Saddam, all these
22 specialist intelligence and security units that Saddam
23 set up, who had dissolved into the mainly Sunni areas
24 and were reconstituting and posing a terrorist threat to
25 the coalition. There was Al-Qaeda linked

1 groups, who saw Iraq as an opportunity for them to
2 continue their global terrorist campaign. There were
3 sundry Jihadists and Salafists and other extremists who
4 were attracted to Iraq as a vehicle for having a pot
5 shot at the Americans and the Brits.

6 There were two neighbouring countries, Iran and
7 Syria, who gave succour and support and, in some cases,
8 arms to enable these various groups to enter Iraq. Iraq
9 itself was a pretty broken country in its infrastructure
10 and we didn't have enough military units to guard all
11 the arms dumps, to patrol the borders. So the borders
12 were effectively open. We faced a whole series of
13 security threats which, arguably, were underestimated in
14 the planning, and for the scale of which the coalition
15 and the coalition forces were not properly prepared.

16 Now, the decisions on de-Ba'athification and the
17 disbandment of the Iraqi army were elements which
18 clarified some of the issues, may have tipped a few more
19 individuals into supporting or engaging with the
20 insurgency, but the fundamental problems were not caused
21 by those two decisions. The fundamental problems were
22 that the Ba'athist regime had never been properly
23 defeated and had never surrendered. That the remnants
24 were regrouping, and Iraq was proving a honeypot for
25 anybody who wanted to have a crack at the Americans, in

1 particular, and they had the active support of two
2 neighbouring countries, the borders with which were not
3 properly controlled.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So that was a component of the security
5 problem, that you had an army that had been 2 million
6 people, that had gone away with their arms, had access,
7 if they wanted, to unguarded arms dumps and it became
8 part of this big security problem. Security was the
9 number 1 issue for you and Bremer. But let's now turn
10 to the other end --

11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just clarify that. Security was
12 a very important issue but security was the
13 responsibility of the military forces, who were working
14 closely with Bremer. Bremer did not have the power of
15 command and control over US forces or over British
16 forces. He was the head of the civilian authority and
17 he was dealing primarily with reconstruction and
18 governance and civilian security rather than military
19 security. I think it is just important to clarify that.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think that's an important point but
21 I would like to pick up a couple of points you have made
22 on this. The question of why were there not enough
23 forces in the country -- and also you said that when you
24 were back in London and you were at the Chiefs of Staff
25 meeting, there was a discussion there about the

1 possibility of bringing some British forces up from the
2 south to assist in Baghdad. What happened to that?
3 Were we being asked to do this by the Americans and why
4 didn't we do it?

5 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It wasn't a terribly happy chapter in our
6 engagement. We felt that we were doing pretty well in
7 the south, militarily. Actually, the situation was
8 quite benign in the south compared to Baghdad. Baghdad
9 is a multi-ethnic, diverse city and the tensions between
10 the communities became apparent pretty soon. Basra was
11 overwhelmingly Shia and was easier to operate in
12 militarily. I have lost my thread slightly.
13 Just remind me again what your theme was.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Really two issues, but the question of
15 the British coming up from the south I think is what we
16 are discussing.

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, that's right, sorry, the British
18 coming up from the south. Yes, General Mike Jackson,
19 who was then the newly appointed chief of general staff,
20 visited Baghdad in my first few days there and he and
21 I talked with a small company of paras who were there to
22 help protect, I think they were a platoon actually,
23 our embassy, which was outside the
24 Green Zone, and in discussion it became clear that part
25 of the problem was the posture of the US army. They

1 were in their tanks, in their Darth Vader kit, with
2 wraparound sunglasses and helmets and flak jackets and
3 everything else, and there was no real rapport between
4 the US army and the ordinary citizens of the capital.
5 Mike Jackson, and I have to say I have some
6 sympathy with this, thought there was a case of
7 bringing a larger contingent of paras, not just the 20
8 or so in the platoon, but a battalion of paras up to work
9 with the Americans to demonstrate a different way of the
10 army deploying in urban areas, and this was all part of
11 what we had learnt in other places, in Northern Ireland
12 and so on.

13 I reported this as one option back to London, after
14 I discussed it with Mike, but it was clearly a military
15 matter. There were differences of view
16 between the Chiefs of Staff on this. I think the
17 officials in Number 10 were quite attracted by the idea
18 but in the end the military advice that came to the
19 Prime Minister was against doing this.

20 Unfortunately, in some ways the idea had gained some
21 traction with the Americans, both in Washington and in
22 Baghdad, who were quite attracted to the idea as well.
23 So in a sense we marched them to the top of the hill and
24 then we marched them back down by raising the idea and
25 then turning it down, and when the Prime Minister

1 visited Basra towards the end of May, at the end this
2 little saga, Bremer said to him how sorry he was that
3 Britain had decided against making available a battalion
4 of paras to go to Baghdad.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But that was a decision taken within the
6 Chiefs of Staff?

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We would need to ask them about why they
9 took that. It would not be fair to ask you that.

10 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It would not.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay, we will do that.

12 On the overall question -- I know this is going into
13 military matters again -- of the number of troops that
14 the Americans, the coalition and the British had put
15 into the country, what was your view when you arrived
16 there, and indeed what was Bremer's view, because you
17 must have been discussing were we drawing this down too
18 quickly, were the plans for drawdown too quick, had we
19 not simply allowed enough force to come into the country
20 to secure law and order in the aftermath of the toppling
21 of Saddam.

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, I preface this by saying I'm not
23 a military person. I'm not an expert in military
24 deployments, I don't like military people taking
25 political decisions and I'm sure military people don't

1 like civilians opining on military matters. But it did
2 seem to me on my arrival in Baghdad that the posture of
3 the American forces was wrong, that they had not been
4 able to transition from war fighting to peacekeeping,
5 that they had a heavy armoured division in place,
6 whereas the much lighter 101 Airborne Division up in
7 Mosul were much lighter on their feet, much more engaged
8 with the local population. The then unknown
9 Major General David Petraeus was in charge and he showed
10 what could be done in a city like Mosul, which was as
11 divided and as difficult to manage as Baghdad, but the
12 3 Infantry Division was not doing the task in what
13 I thought was the best way. So it was partly style and
14 that was my main concern.

15 Bremer saw this as a serious problem as well, which
16 was why he welcomed the idea of a parachute battalion
17 from the UK coming up to the capital. He was also
18 concerned about overall troop numbers and he raised this
19 with President Bush on a number of occasions because the
20 US plan was for a rapid drawdown of forces. Indeed the
21 British plan was also for a rapid drawdown of forces. I
22 do not have the exact numbers but I think the Americans
23 were aiming by the summer to be down to 60 per cent of
24 their force levels at the height of the conflict and the
25 British forces were planning to be down to 40 per cent

1 of their maximum forces. So both Washington and London
2 were planning for very far-reaching reductions in force
3 levels.

4 It seemed to me, partly because the Iraqi regime had
5 never been properly defeated and that the insurgency was
6 growing, that the apres guerre, the period after the
7 war, was going to be more demanding than the war itself
8 and that this needed to be taken fully into account.
9 Bremer was very much of that mind and he raised it
10 a number of times with Secretary Rumsfeld and,
11 I believe, with President Bush and achieved a slowing
12 down of the US force levels but, as we know from
13 history, that later had to be reversed, not the decision
14 to slow down, it was slowed down, but actually the force
15 levels had to be increased again.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. I know that Lady Prashar
17 would like to discuss the political situation there in
18 this very important period and that was an important
19 dimension too.

20 Just a final question from me really: how did the
21 CPA work? How did you work with it? Were you able to
22 actually have an impact on decision-making? Was Bremer
23 receptive to your advice and from whom was he taking his
24 instructions?

25 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Bremer was reporting to the Secretary for

1 Defence, Rumsfeld, that was clear, and I was able to
2 work closely with Bremer on a personal level and I was
3 also able to facilitate the cooperation between the CPA
4 and the United Nations once the late and much lamented
5 Sergio Vieira de Mello arrived in June of that year,
6 June 2003.

7 The British contingent built up during my
8 three months there in the CPA. When I arrived, there
9 was just a handful of us, by early June there was about
10 60 and by mid-July there were about 90 Brits in the CPA.

11 Now, they didn't operate as a single entity, so it
12 wasn't as if I could call British meetings to develop
13 a British policy. We were there as part of an American
14 set-up and I think actually we probably had more
15 influence acting as individuals than we would have done
16 had we acted as a concerted national contingent. It was
17 hard enough for the Americans to share things with us on
18 policy matters on an individual basis; it would have
19 been even harder had we split firmly into national camps
20 in the CPA.

21 But I do think there are a number of areas where we
22 exerted, influenced and changed the decisions or
23 influenced the decisions that Bremer took. One was the
24 whole handling of the United Nations, where I think he
25 was persuaded by us that he needed to have

1 United Nations support and understanding and backing for
2 what we were doing, both on reconstruction and on
3 politics. It wasn't his instinct to include the UN but
4 we persuaded him it was the right thing to do in the
5 longer term interests of the coalition.

6 We were able to influence Bremer on the legal basis
7 for the CPA. In fact we wrote and promulgated
8 Regulation Number 1, which set out the CPA's legal
9 authority in Iraq.

10 We were very influential on managing the political
11 process, which we may come on to shortly, and on the
12 structure and membership of the governing council. We
13 persuaded Jerry Bremer to keep the planning ministry in
14 place against his better judgment because we saw the
15 planning ministry as playing the role that finance
16 ministries play in many countries here of coordinating
17 government policy; managing the debts of Iraqi
18 state-owned enterprises; paying pensions to the ex-
19 military and getting the CPA to reverse its earlier
20 position; organising women's conferences to raise the
21 profile of women in the transition in Iraq; managing the
22 Iraqi media and helping establish and set the framework
23 for a new Iraqi media.

24 These were all areas where we had direct influence
25 and some leadership role within the CPA. You may say

1 this is not comprehensive and I'm not saying that we did
2 have a comprehensive leadership role. When we provide
3 a modest proportion of the personnel and a rather slim
4 proportion of the funding, you don't expect to be able
5 to exert more than some influence, but I do think that
6 we probably had more influence than our numbers would
7 have suggested, and Bremer was very keen to take into
8 account British concerns. For example, on the death
9 penalty, the advice he was getting from American
10 quarters was to follow the Iraqi wish to reconstitute
11 the death penalty during the course of the coalition.
12 I persuaded him that that was an issue that would cause
13 a real problem for the UK and that we weren't prepared
14 to go along with it, and he accepted that and the death
15 penalty was never implemented during the period of
16 coalition control within Iraq.

17 So there are a whole series of areas where we did
18 exert influence but we did so not as a British Embassy
19 or a British grouping. I did that informally. The only
20 times we had British-only meetings were either to
21 discuss security arrangements for our staff or social
22 occasions; all the other coordination was done
23 informally. And I would make a point of going around
24 and talking to Brits in the CPA most days, so that I had
25 a picture of what they were doing and where they might

1 need support from me, with Bremer and with other senior
2 figures in the CPA or indeed back with London.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you satisfied with the quality and
4 quantity of secondees that Whitehall got out to you and
5 the speed with which we were able to do so. Was that an
6 effective machine at the London end?

7 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I was a bit shocked when I arrived that
8 our contribution to running a country of 26 million was
9 just a handful of civilians but that did speed up quite
10 quickly. I think Whitehall became much more responsive
11 after the Prime Minister's visit to Basra at the end
12 of May. I flew Bremer down to meet Tony Blair in Basra
13 and we were able to brief the Prime Minister on the
14 problems that we were facing. I think it brought home
15 to the Prime Minister that Whitehall had taken its foot
16 off the gas pedal during April and May and he returned
17 to London clear that Whitehall needed to get back on
18 what he described as a war footing, and I think that was
19 because he realised the level of support from London for
20 those of us on the ground was not as focused or as
21 energised as it might have been.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can we now move on to the question
24 of political developments. Can you tell me: how did the
25 political process develop and what part did you play in

1 that?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: As I said, when I had my first meetings
3 back in London, the political process was a high
4 priority for Jack Straw and others in the Foreign Office
5 for us to take forward. Resolution 1483, adopted in the
6 middle of May, made clear that one of the
7 responsibilities of the coalition authorities was to
8 facilitate an Iraqi political process that would lead to
9 an Iraqi-created interim administration.

10 Now, we went through various ideas about this. One
11 of the strategic mistakes that ORHA was poised to make
12 was simply to hand over political authority to a group
13 of exiled politicians who had come back to Baghdad.
14 This was premature and would have been unrepresentative
15 and Bremer saw that very, very quickly. So we needed to
16 play this a bit longer and we needed to act in
17 accordance with the UN Resolution and carry the support
18 of the UN special representative.

19 Sergio de Mello and his adviser Ghassan Salameh
20 were both very helpful on the process of forming what
21 became the Governing Council. De Mello, drawing on his
22 experience in other situations, including East Timor,
23 which, of course, was much smaller and very different --
24 but he had that direct experience -- also identified
25 that we might need another stage in the process, that,

1 as well as an interim administration, we might need some
2 form of transitional government, because the issue of the
3 constitution couldn't be settled quickly and indeed
4 Iraqis themselves were concerned that the constitution
5 should not be something that emanated from the
6 United States and Britain; it should be something that
7 they created themselves, and Ayatollah Al-Sistani, the
8 leading religious figure in Iraq, made it clear in
9 a fatwa to say that the constitution could not be
10 adopted by a body that was not elected by Iraqis.

11 So in the end we agreed, around early June, that
12 what we should work for is a political Council of some
13 form, as an advisory body but with real powers, that
14 could work alongside the coalition up until the time
15 when we could see a representative Iraq government
16 taking over the reins of power.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And the "we" in the situation was
18 you, Bremer and de Mello?

19 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, we worked very closely. There were
20 some nuances between us but this was an issue which
21 I personally took a very close interest in because we
22 needed to get the right people on the Council. It
23 needed to have the right powers and it did have powers
24 and we needed to get the process right so that it was
25 something that was genuinely accepted by the Iraqis as

1 representative, and in the end, after another six weeks
2 or so of consultation, we were able to see launched the
3 Iraqi Governing Council.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Who did you consult with?

5 SIR JOHN SAWERS: We consulted with all the Iraqi political
6 parties. We consulted with groups in different parts of
7 the country: in Mosul and Basra, in Najaf, in Kirkuk and
8 in the Kurdish areas. We consulted very closely
9 with the United Nations and their representatives. We
10 considered over 100 individuals for membership of the
11 Council. We insisted to the political parties that the
12 leaders of the parties had to be on this Council. It
13 was not something that they could delegate to their
14 subordinates; they had to take personal responsibility
15 on this.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about some of the alienated
17 groups, the Sunnis?

18 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I don't think it is right to say that the
19 Sunnis were an alienated group. We had consulted quite
20 widely with tribal leaders, including in the Sunni
21 areas, and with business leaders, indeed anybody who
22 wasn't covered by the de-Ba'athification decree. None
23 of the Iraqi parties we were working with wanted to see
24 a reconstituted Ba'ath Party included in this process
25 and in the end we were able to facilitate a position

1 whereby 25 leading Iraqis all agreed that together they
2 represented a body representative of the country of
3 Iraq, which had a slim Shia majority, representing the
4 ethnic composition of the country, which had the correct
5 ethnic balance between Arab and Kurds, which had
6 representatives of all the major cities and provinces of
7 the country, which had a balance between Islamists and
8 non-Islamists, with a preponderance of non-Islamists,
9 that had a majority of internal figures so that exiles
10 were not in the majority on the Council, I think 14 of
11 the 25 were internal figures and had lived in Iraq
12 during Saddam's period in office, and had some
13 representation of women, not as much as we had hoped but
14 more than was the case in representative bodies
15 elsewhere in the Middle East.

16 The Governing Council, which was formed, I think, on
17 13 July, also had very clear powers. It had powers to
18 adopt the Iraqi budget, it had powers to nominate
19 ministers, and the CPA denied itself the authority of
20 appointing any ministers which were not nominated by the
21 Governing Council. The Governing Council had to be
22 consulted on all major issues of policy.

23 This was still during a period of occupation. That
24 continued until June 2004. But the Governing Council
25 was a very important step forward in creating

1 a representative Iraqi body, and I think we chose
2 broadly well because many of the figures that were on
3 that Council are still very prominent in Iraqi politics
4 and still represent the leadership of Iraq. Some have
5 fallen by the wayside and been replaced, one or two have
6 died or been killed, but it was a representative Iraqi
7 body, which paved the way for consultations on the
8 constitution of Iraq, led to the interim government that
9 was set up under Ayad Allawi in June 2004 and then the
10 referendum on the constitution at the end of that year
11 and elections in January 2005.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were talking in terms of "we",
13 but where did you focus your particular efforts and how
14 much influence do you think the UK had in this --

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I think we had quite a lot of influence.
16 I was more engaged in this than Jerry Bremer and he was
17 happy for me to take a leading role on this.

18 I consulted extensively with Sergio de Mello because
19 I saw his support as essential. I consulted very widely
20 with all the political parties. The structure and size
21 of the Governing Council was essentially the one that
22 I had concluded was the right one and which others
23 agreed with, and the powers of the Council were ones
24 that we drew up in a sort of US/UK group in the civil
25 affairs team in Baghdad in the CPA, and consulted that

1 widely as well. Americans were very closely involved.
2 There was Meghan O'Sullivan, who was
3 a leading adviser on the US side, Ryan Crocker,
4 Scott Carpenter. On the British side there was
5 Julie Chappell and Irfan Siddiq and various others of
6 us who were closely involved in this process and as
7 a team we worked this forward and where we agreed, which
8 was most the time, we consulted the United Nations,
9 incorporated their views, not least on the powers and
10 the title of the body and on its membership, and by and
11 large Jerry Bremer accepted our advice.

12 So we had a close role in the Governing Council's
13 formation.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did the relationship work
15 between you, de Mello and Bremer? What was it like on
16 the ground, working with them?

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Bremer was careful to preserve his
18 authority and didn't want his authority to be ceded to
19 the United Nations. Sergio de Mello didn't really want
20 too much in the way of direct power because he didn't
21 want to have powers which he would then find it
22 difficult to exercise. So his role, as set out in 1483,
23 was to facilitate and to promote and to advise and to
24 support, rather than to have a direct role. But the
25 British were clear that de Mello's support for the

1 political process was essential for it to be credible.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So we were essentially facilitating

3 that?

4 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, that was one reason why I took such

5 a close interest in this myself. I thought it was an

6 area where I personally and the British political team

7 could add value, and we did add value. There were times

8 of disagreement between Bremer and de Mello on other

9 issues, and de Mello would use me as a sounding board.

10 If he could persuade me of something, then he had

11 a chance of persuading Bremer. If he couldn't persuade

12 me, then it wasn't worth his while raising it with

13 Bremer.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you acted like a bridge?

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I acted as a bit of a sounding board, and

16 I was able to work with both Bremer and de Mello in

17 a way which was probably closer at a personal level than

18 they were able to work with one another. But there was

19 very good practical support on the political process.

20 The differences between Bremer and de Mello came in

21 other areas, where de Mello --

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What were they?

23 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Things like the degree of force that US

24 forces were deploying in the security patrols and

25 security operations.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: These were some of the human rights
2 issues, were they?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, and the detainee conditions at
4 Baghdad Airport were a concern, and they were a concern
5 to Bremer and to the US military, as well as to the UN,
6 and these were discussed from time to time in small
7 group meetings, and Bremer was very clear to the US
8 military that they needed to improve these facilities
9 and to engage the ICRC to ensure that they met minimum
10 ICRC standards.

11 You have to remember that conditions were pretty
12 poor, that many of these detainees were in tents and it
13 was very hot at that time of the year, they didn't have,
14 initially, adequate access to ablution facilities.
15 Bremer was keen to get this right but was uncomfortable
16 having the UN telling him to do so. It was an area
17 of attention that de Mello paid, which was right, but
18 not comfortable for the Americans, as we saw from
19 later revelations. In fact one of de Mello's concerns
20 was that we should be able to reconstitute the
21 Abu Ghraib facility because it was a lot better than the
22 facilities that were available at Baghdad Airport. And
23 that led to Abu Ghraib coming back on stream at the end
24 of the year but then it all went sour later, as we know.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you try to influence Bremer on

1 these issues?

2 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I was sympathetic to de Mello's

3 concerns --

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were sympathetic, but did you

5 try to influence him?

6 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, I did try to influence him. And

7 I was supportive and encouraged Bremer to take the

8 actions, to involve the ICRC. I wasn't an expert in

9 detainee facilities, but the ICRC were, and he was

10 responsive to that. And Ann Clwyd, who was the

11 Prime Minister's representative on human rights in

12 Iraq, came out and paid several visits to Iraq,

13 spent a week early on, and Jerry Bremer was very

14 receptive to her concerns, and quite responsive to those

15 concerns, and I facilitated the access and made sure

16 that Ann Clwyd was able to play her role as the

17 Prime Minister's special representative on human rights

18 issues.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was any action taken?

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Indeed.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What action?

22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Action to move the detainees from tents

23 into proper buildings, to ensure washing facilities, to

24 ensure that the basic requirements of the ICRC were met.

25 Now, I wasn't there long enough to involve myself in

1 this personally. I didn't monitor it myself. But it
2 was important that the structures were in place and that
3 groups like the ICRC were involved. I do not have an
4 authoritative picture as to how it evolved but it was an
5 issue that de Mello and I and Bremer considered and
6 Bremer took action on.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In the time you were there, which
8 was just under four months, did you feel you had enough
9 flexibility to adapt your approach according to what was
10 needed on the ground? Because you said you came in on
11 a very short notice, not much preparation. Were you
12 given a clear mandate of what you had to do? Were you
13 able to adapt your approach according to what you found
14 on the ground? Did you have enough flexibility?

15 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Yes, I did. I was there
16 for three months, May, June and July. I felt that
17 once we got into the middle of June, I had quite an
18 effective team who were helping to implement British
19 policy, not least on the economic side, launch of a new
20 currency, reconstituting the bank, bringing down
21 inflation, providing a proper economic policy for Iraq.

22 I found that London was responsive, I think
23 I sent over 100 reports in the three months that I was
24 there, one a day basically, on various aspects of the
25 problem. And it was good to see the British effort

1 building up during those three months, both governmental
2 and, just as important, non-governmental. We had some
3 very good people who were out investigating the
4 mass graves that were now being investigated, 5 where all
the victims of Saddam's tyranny
6 had been casually buried. We were setting up quite an
7 effective operation on the ground over those three
8 months and I think many achievements of the British
9 people who were part of CPA are to be highly commended.
10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.
11 THE CHAIRMAN: We only have about five minutes left, I am
12 afraid, but I know there are some questions my
13 colleagues would like to ask.
14 Sir Martin?
15 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to ask something about
16 British influence and, indeed, about your influence.
17 With regard to de-Ba'athification, you told us you had
18 argued for clear exemptions and this had been agreed.
19 I just wanted you to tell us briefly the process whereby
20 you argued and got agreed, and what effect did it have
21 on the ground?
22 SIR JOHN SAWERS: The main decisions were taken, it seemed
23 to me, in a meeting we
24 had in the middle of that first week after Bremer's
25 arrival. In retrospect, it seems that principal

1 decisions were taken in advance in Washington but, in
2 Baghdad, Jerry Bremer convened a meeting of his main
3 political advisers, myself, Ryan Crocker,
4 Meghan O'Sullivan and one or two others, and we
5 considered and argued what the right approach should be
6 and Jerry Bremer was keen to hear people's views.

7 A clear majority at that meeting favoured the outcome
8 that we arrived at. I put down a reservation about the
9 extent of the proposed de-Ba'athifications, taking it to
10 the fourth tier, and Bremer effectively concluded: well,
11 he heard what I had to say but on balance he felt that
12 the authority he had received from Washington was the
13 right approach, so he intended to go ahead on that
14 basis. And I reported that accordingly.

15 To be frank, Sir Martin, I didn't feel any of us
16 really had the expertise in the Iraqi Ba'ath Party on
17 the ground to decide what was the crucial level, and
18 there was very strong pressure indeed from the Iraqi
19 political parties for this to go even further. So
20 holding it to a line where we did, limiting the extent
21 of it to 1 per cent of the Ba'ath Party, and providing
22 a clear system of exemptions seemed to me not a bad
23 outcome.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: The exemptions, this was your input
25 with regard --

1 SIR JOHN SAWERS: It was one of the inputs that we made and
2 Jerry Bremer was keen that that should be in place and,
3 as I say, he used that power of exemption frequently.
4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you.
5 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?
6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Two quick questions. What you have
7 given us is very much a sense of Baghdad, your role in
8 Baghdad, policies for Iraq as a whole. There is still
9 the British effort developing in the box in the south.
10 How engaged were you in that?
11 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I visited Basra four or five times during
12 my three months in Baghdad. And I was engaged in
13 Baghdad in trying to free up funds from the centre to go
14 to the south.
15 I could see, when I met the Prime Minister in Basra
16 in late May, and I had been there once before in
17 mid May, that the coalition civilian structures were
18 not working in the south. They were deprived of
19 funds, and the Brits were looking to the Americans to
20 provide it and I think the Americans were assuming that
21 the Brits would provide it. So there was a bit of
22 a hold-up there. And there was a serious leadership
23 problem. When I met Ambassador Olsen, it did not
24 take long to divine that this was not the right man to
25 lead a coalition reconstruction effort in the south.

1 So, I urged the Prime Minister to include on his "to do"
2 list when he got back to London, finding a better way of
3 dealing with this. It was quite delicate vis a vis the
4 Danes, who were making a very considerable contribution
5 militarily to the coalition effort. This was their one
6 prominent civilian figure. But to have a senior
7 diplomat who had converted to Sunni Islam and a rather
8 individual way of running his own personal life and
9 leading his group, it was not the right person.

10 So there was a delicate negotiation with Copenhagen
11 on this and an effort was made to set up a more
12 substantial civilian effort, British-led, in the south,
13 which ultimately led to Hilary Synnott arriving some
14 time in July of that year but we basically lost three or
15 four months.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there a sense that, because the
17 conditions in Basra were benign, in some ways it could
18 be taken for granted and, as we have heard, even
19 deprived, to some extent, when it came the questions of
20 power distribution?

21 SIR JOHN SAWERS: No, I don't think -- you mean electric
22 power?

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes.

24 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Certainly during the Saddam era, the
25 regions of Iraq, and especially the south, were denied

1 electric power in order to ensure that Baghdad had as
2 much power as possible, because Saddam rightly
3 identified Baghdad as the most important part of the
4 country to keep under his control.

5 The security situation was more benign in the south.
6 In May and June you could still walk around the souk in
7 Basra, whereas you couldn't do that in Baghdad. The
8 soldiers were still patrolling with soft hats rather
9 than hard hats. But a major effort was needed in the
10 south to get the oil industry going again, get oil
11 exports going again, get the port working again, and to
12 rebuild basic services which were already at an
13 extremely low level because of Saddam's complete
14 indifference to the living standards of the Iraqi people
15 generally and the Shia in particular.

16 So there was a series of problems in the south and
17 I think it is fair to say that, for a series of reasons,
18 they came together and had the collective effect of
19 meaning we didn't get a grip in the south, really, until
20 Hilary Synnott's arrival, three or four months after the
21 conflict.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just a second question: you spoke
23 about the concerns about the drawdown of American troops
24 and you mentioned British forces were being drawn down
25 as well. Did you express concern to London about the

1 speed of drawdown of British forces or warn that this
2 may at some point have to be reversed?

3 SIR JOHN SAWERS: I may have said this informally but
4 I don't think I ever went on paper giving advice from
5 Baghdad about our force levels in the south. I think
6 that we all have to handle our positions careful in
7 these situations. This was very much a military matter
8 and the Ministry of Defence were actively covering it.
9 My main concern was security across Baghdad, across
10 Iraq as a whole. Actually the security situation
11 in Basra during the months I was there was not too bad.
12 Of course it took a turn for the worse, with the
13 killings in Majar al-Kabir in June, the anarchy, really,
14 in the province of Maysan, and the difficulties that the
15 Italians and Danes were having in other parts of the
16 southern sector.

17 But I didn't see it as my business to get involved
18 formally in --

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How did you get involved informally?

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Well, various visitors came through
21 Baghdad, Mike Jackson, John Reith, the commanders in the
22 south, Peter Wall, Graeme Lamb, and I was able to
23 discuss with them in a fairly clear way the direction of
24 British deployments and in the aftermath
25 of the Majar al-Kabir killings, where six British

1 military police were killed, it became apparent that we
2 didn't have enough force levels in Amarah. So, having
3 run down to a single battalion there, the decision was
4 made, rightly so in my view, to reinforce back-up to
5 a brigade headquarters and a second battalion in Amarah.
6 I think the American and British militaries both hoped
7 to be able to draw down more quickly than in practice
8 proved viable. We were all learning the same lessons at
9 the same time. I wouldn't like to say there was any
10 rift between the political advisers and the military on
11 this. But the plans for rapid drawdown proved, in the
12 event, to be unsustainable.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I think that brings us to the end of this
15 session. Our thanks to Sir John for your evidence this
16 morning and to all those who have attended throughout
17 the morning --

18 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Can I just say one last thing?

19 THE CHAIRMAN: If you wish.

20 SIR JOHN SAWERS: Thank you. I just wanted to say, this
21 study by the Rand Corporation is indeed a very thorough
22 one. I would just like to draw the Inquiry's attention
23 to its conclusion, which is that the CPA had done really
24 quite a constructive job in its 14 months, and the Rand
25 study concluded:

1 "... measured against progress over a similar
2 period in more than 20 other UN, NATO and US-led
3 post-conflict reconstruction missions of the past
4 60 years, the CPA's accomplishments in most of these
5 fields bear respectable and, in some cases, quite
6 favourable comparison."

7 I just think it is important that, amid all the
8 difficulties, we are aware that the civilian component
9 on the ground, in which British officials played quite
10 a significant part, according to the most authoritative
11 study that has been done so far, did actually perform
12 quite commendably on all the civilian reconstruction
13 tasks within the constraints of the situation. The main
14 problem was security.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: You have successfully got that written into
16 the record.

17 SIR JOHN SAWERS: That was my purpose.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the evidence and also for the
19 quotation and to everybody who has been here this
20 morning.

21 The next hearing will start at 2 o'clock on Monday
22 afternoon. There is no hearing tomorrow and on Monday
23 afternoon we are looking at the situation Iraq in 2004
24 and 2005. We will be hearing from senior UK military
25 officers who had command in Iraq at the time. The

1 opening session on Monday afternoon we are seeing
2 Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely and then
3 Lt Gen Robin Brims, who both held the post of senior
4 British military representative in Iraq, based in
5 Baghdad, between October 2004 and October 2005
6 respectively.

7 So with that, and with thanks to everyone,
8 I conclude today's session.

9 Thank you.

10 (12.08 pm)

11 (The Inquiry adjourned until Monday, 14 December 2009 at
12 2.00 pm)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

I N D E X

SIR JOHN SAWERS 1

FINAL