

Tuesday, 12 January 2010

(10.00 am)

MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning everyone. When we announced the first round of public hearings, we said that the first five weeks would be dedicated to establishing a chronology of the UK's involvement in Iraq between 2001 and 2009, and we have almost completed that phase. Today, we are moving on to hear from Ministers and the most senior decision-makers over the next four weeks.

We will then take a break over the period of the general election, before resuming public hearings in the summer. We have yet to decide which witnesses we will be calling back at that point, and these forthcoming sessions will not be the only opportunity to hear from them.

Our approach in this phase is going to be to build on what we have already heard, to seek further information, clarify points and explore different perspectives. The Committee has yet to conclude what its formal lines of enquiry will be.

Today, our witness is Alastair Campbell. You were director of communications and strategy to the Prime Minister, including from the start of our period 2001, although it goes back long before,

1 until August 2003.

2 The objectives of today's session will be to cover
3 some of the key meetings on UK policy development that
4 Mr Campbell was involved in, as a close adviser to the
5 Prime Minister. The presentation of the case for
6 military action, including the drafting of the two
7 dossiers of September 2002 and February 2003, and the
8 presentational concerns surrounding the preparations for
9 military action and its aftermath.

10 Now, much of this is familiar ground that has
11 already been examined by the work of Lord Hutton and the
12 Butler Committee as well as various Parliamentary
13 committees. Many of the relevant documents are already
14 in the public domain. So we shall not be declassifying
15 further documents today.

16 We hope to be finished by lunchtime, but there is
17 a lot of ground to cover.

18 I say this at every hearing, we recognise that
19 witnesses are giving evidence based on their
20 recollection of events, and we, of course, check what we
21 hear against the papers to which we have access.

22 I remind every witness that they will later be asked to
23 sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that the
24 evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

25 With that, we will begin the questioning.

1 Sir Roderic?

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Mr Campbell, good morning. You worked
3 for Mr Blair from 1994 until you announced your
4 resignation on 29 August 2003. Did that make you, by
5 2003, the longest serving of his close advisers?

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No. I'm trying to remember when
7 Jonathan Powell arrived. I think he was just after me.
8 There were certainly people in Downing Street who had
9 been around before I joined Tony Blair's team.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But effectively, on the team, you and
11 Jonathan Powell were two very long-serving advisers.

12 Now, in the period from 2001 to 2003, which we are
13 looking at this morning, you, as the Chairman has said,
14 were the Prime Minister's director of communications and
15 strategy. That's a very broad job description. What
16 was your actual role?

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What I -- how I would define it was
18 that my job was to work with the Prime Minister in
19 particular, but also other Ministers and officials, to
20 help devise and implement communication strategies for
21 the government and the Prime Minister, both in relation
22 to overall direction and objectives and also in relation
23 to specific issues as they arose. That's how I would
24 define my job.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just communication strategies?

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Political strategies. I would say
2 that in relation to the communications and strategy bit,
3 it is the communications that I understood, but I think
4 the longer that I was with him, the more I think he
5 developed a deeper understanding, and so did I, of the
6 importance of strategic communications in terms of -- as
7 really being the only way of dealing with the media as
8 it was changing, at a pace that, frankly, was faster
9 than any of us could have predicted. So I would say
10 that was the essence of my job.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you weren't just dealing with
12 communications and the media. I mean, the word
13 "strategy" can embrace anything.

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I accept that.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You said in your diary that you weren't
16 a traditional communications director. You have said
17 that you, basically, were there to do whatever the
18 Prime Minister asked you to do. Would that be accurate?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, if he asked me to jump off
20 a building, I wouldn't have done it.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Being serious.

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: If he asked me to do anything which
23 I thought to be silly or improper, I wouldn't do it, but
24 he never did. What's more -- I think it is really
25 important to set a context for this in terms of, when

1 I talked earlier about the changing nature of the media,
2 it has had a significant impact upon policy,
3 policy-making, upon government institutions, and I guess
4 my job was to try to advise him, and also other
5 Ministers and colleagues in government, through some of
6 the tricky currents that that threw up.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In your diary of 7 April 2002 you wrote
8 of yourself and Jonathan Powell:

9 "What we did was largely driven by what TB wanted us
10 to do and what our personalities best allowed us to do."

11 So that's pretty broad. How close would you say
12 your relations were with the Prime Minister?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Very. And -- but I think that the --
14 you know the Prime Minister, and he is somebody who
15 understood that the job of leadership that he had, he
16 could not do it alone. He was dependent upon political
17 colleagues, some of whom he would be personally very
18 close to, others that he wouldn't, but all of whom would
19 be giving him something by way of the nature of the job
20 that he was trying to do.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's go into that in a bit more detail.
22 You have talked of yourself, you have talked of
23 Jonathan Powell, who, apart from the two of you, would
24 you have said constituted the circle of the
25 Prime Minister's closest policy advisers in the period

1 that we are talking about?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: In terms of policy advice, I would

3 put ahead of Jonathan and me David Manning, by a long

4 way.

5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did he spend more time with the

6 Prime Minister than you and Jonathan?

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't know. I didn't have a clock

8 watch on it, but I would certainly say that in terms

9 of -- you will be able to ask Tony Blair this when he

10 comes to the Inquiry, but David Manning, I could not

11 speak highly enough of the support that he gave to the

12 Prime Minister.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So David Manning.

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Certainly myself and Jonathan. We

15 would probably see the Prime Minister first thing every

16 morning, we would probably see him last thing at night

17 and we would see him plenty of times in between.

18 I would say then David Manning's team were important.

19 In the context of the structure of meetings as they

20 developed over time, I would say that John Scarlett was

21 important, I would say that Richard Dearlove was

22 important. I would say, in this particular context,

23 Jack Straw and Geoff Hoon, he probably would have been

24 seeing as often as any other Ministers, possibly with

25 the exception of John Prescott and at different times

1 Gordon Brown, and then the team beyond that,
2 Sally Morgan was very, very important in relation to the
3 Prime Minister's relations with the political system and
4 the Parliamentary Labour Party and so forth.

5 But he is somebody who would -- and I sometimes talk
6 about his decision-making style. He had this what
7 I used to call the circular conversation, where he is
8 just talking to different people over a timeframe and
9 absorbing different thoughts and influences, and in
10 terms of policy-making, I have never been a policy
11 person and never claimed to be a policy person, but
12 I would be his person who was always thinking --

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just on that last point, you told the
14 Foreign Affairs Committee:

15 "I was involved in a lot of the discussions about
16 policy and strategy on Iraq ..."

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, I was.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: "... and I am there as an adviser to the
19 Prime Minister."

20 So surely you were a policy person?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but I'm there as part of that --
22 if you like, the part of that discussion and that
23 operation that is thinking the whole time about
24 communications issues, and what -- I will be absolutely
25 frank, when we first won the 1997 general election, the

1 communications systems that we inherited in Whitehall,
2 in my view, were not fit for purpose. They had to be
3 brought into the modern media age.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's a bit before our period.

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But it explains why I was doing the
6 job that I did at the time that I did it and why -- how
7 he understood that on something -- not just on issues to
8 do with foreign affairs and security, but on any of the
9 major issues and high profile issues, you have to have
10 a communications element, if you like, embedded in those
11 policy discussions.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. So in the circle of people you
13 have described, you have talked of yourself,
14 Jonathan Powell, Sally Morgan, Sir David Manning,
15 John Scarlett, Sir Richard Dearlove, the head of SIS.
16 Did the Prime Minister seek advice also frequently in
17 the period we are talking about from Peter Mandelson?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Not so far as I'm aware.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: He wasn't one of the people he would ring
20 up to throw questions at?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He may from time to time have spoken
22 to Peter Mandelson, but I certainly wouldn't have said
23 he was in that, as you call it, inner circle.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Would he have discussed questions about
25 Iraq privately or informally with the then

1 Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Absolutely, yes.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Quite a lot?

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would have thought so, yes. At the

5 time -- obviously, this went over a long period of time

6 and there were periods during this whole -- that you are

7 looking into, where actually domestic policy was far

8 more dominant within the public debate, but I would say

9 certainly that Gordon Brown would have been one of the

10 key ministers that he would have spoken to regularly,

11 yes.

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So, as the policy developed, 2001 to

13 2003, Gordon Brown would have been very much part of the

14 private circle of consultations?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would have said so, yes, and so

16 would John Prescott.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Coming back to the Prime Minister's

18 working methods, would he, from time to time, assemble

19 you, the close advisers we have talked about, as

20 a group, when he was wrestling with issues on Iraq?

21 Would he get you all together or would he talk to you

22 individually? Would it happen almost ad hoc? How did

23 it work?

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think in terms of -- if I can take

25 you through a week, as it were, the Prime Minister used

1 to work phenomenally hard at weekends in terms of
2 reading; reading not just official papers, but reading
3 history and all sorts of things. He would use the
4 weekend to give himself time for -- I suppose you would
5 call it a bit deeper reflection, and I think he would
6 also then be phoning people.

7 Certainly I used to -- would be phoned at the
8 weekend and I would know he would be phoning other
9 people as well. He would be having lots of
10 conversations. He would be phoning John Prescott,
11 Gordon Brown, Jonathan Powell, Charlie Falconer, whoever
12 it might be, lots of different people.

13 He would phone people outside the circle. He would
14 often -- not necessarily about making decisions. His
15 constituency agent, John Burton, was somebody who
16 would -- he would want to know, "What are they saying in
17 Sedgefield?", he'd speak to MPs about what was happening
18 in their patch.

19 He would then, in terms of a specific discussion --
20 he used to -- most Mondays, he used to start with the
21 Prime Minister having sent a note out to what you would
22 call his inner circle, and that would be the basis for
23 a meeting on Monday morning. When you got on to
24 meetings specifically to do with Iraq, from memory, the
25 people who would almost certainly be at those would be

1 Jack Straw, Geoff Hoon, Admiral Boyce, John Scarlett,
2 sometimes Richard Dearlove and myself probably --

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But that's a formal meeting on Iraq.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that's where most of the
5 discussions would be. In terms of the discussions
6 I would have with the Prime Minister outwith that, they
7 would probably -- usually in the morning, first thing,
8 but that's just about getting the day in shape and
9 working out whether we need to change the diary to this
10 or that and which phone calls he would be making then
11 and sorting out the day.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: That wouldn't be a single topic discussion,
13 would it?

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Not at all. Through the day, it
15 would be dealing with situations and issues as they
16 arose.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: These informal discussions, phone
18 callings and so on, other than the minute you say the
19 Prime Minister might well have delivered over the
20 weekend that you'd discuss on a Monday morning, were
21 they recorded or minuted in any other way?

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Not routinely, I wouldn't say, no.
23 My approach of this continued to be if I felt there were
24 things arising from those conversations that had then to
25 be communicated to others, who might be -- because often

1 it would be the Prime Minister phoning me to ask me to
2 do something. It could be anything: talking to the
3 media, talking to other politicians, talking to people
4 he just wanted me to talk to, to get his view across to
5 me, whatever it might be.

6 If, on the other hand, it was something where I was
7 required to start work on a speech or start to work on
8 an argument that we were developing, it might require me
9 then to write around to other people to say, "The
10 Prime Minister wants A, B, C".

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You would do that by email, would you?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would usually dictate that to the
13 garden room, if it was the weekend, or, if it was during
14 the week, I would dictate it to my PA.

15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Speaking of the outside advisers, can you
16 recall anybody that the Prime Minister found
17 particularly helpful as a sounding board or a source of
18 information on Iraq and the Middle East?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I can't. I would have to think about
20 that. There is nobody comes immediately to mind. You
21 would probably be better asking Jonathan.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We will pursue that further. Just to
23 summarise this discussion about your role before we get
24 into more detailed areas of policy, to recapitulate, you
25 were involved in a lot of the discussions about policy

1 and strategy on Iraq as an adviser to the
2 Prime Minister, as you told the Foreign Affairs
3 Committee. That's correct?

4 You, as you also told the Foreign Affairs Committee,
5 and as you have just said, attended a huge number of
6 meetings with the Prime Minister on this subject, and
7 then you played an interdepartmental co-ordinating role
8 on policy communication. That's something you have
9 described to Lord Hutton's Inquiry.

10 What you did -- your title was strategy as well as
11 communications. Your role was not restricted to
12 communications. It effectively allowed you to range
13 right across the board of government policy insofar as
14 the Prime Minister wanted you to do so?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that's fair.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: All of that would be a fair summary?

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just make a point about the
18 cross-departmental communications? I think this is
19 important.

20 When I talked about the systems that we inherited,
21 it was very much silo-driven. It was department by
22 department, it was very difficult to get -- I found, to
23 get departments on the communications side of things to
24 work together and my approach to this, by the time we
25 get to Iraq, was very much driven by our experience in

1 relation to Kosovo, where we did ultimately, I think,
2 quite successfully, put together -- we internationalised
3 our communications, but also we managed to get a sense
4 of departments working together.

5 So there was an understanding that Number 10, if you
6 like, was leading on the strategy, but there was maximum
7 openness with all the various departments, and then
8 sharing of personnel and trying to bring people, if you
9 like, on to the same page, literally in the same room,
10 where you take an approach to communications that is
11 not: here is this department, here is that department,
12 they are all doing their own thing.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to talk now -- and we will
14 come back, later on, to questions of how the government
15 worked and the Cabinet worked -- but just to one element
16 that is very relevant, I think, to today's discussion,
17 which is: how closely did you work with the intelligence
18 and security agencies?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: How closely did I work?

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, you personally.

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would say at times very closely.

22 Most of my time working for the Prime Minister, I did
23 not have that much to do with intelligence agencies.

24 I would say, in terms of an intense period of contact
25 and consultation with the intelligence services, I would

1 say probably post-September 11th and during Iraq, they
2 were -- during the Iraq crisis, they were the two high
3 points, I suppose.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You told Lord Hutton:

5 "I, over several years now, have worked very closely
6 with the intelligence agencies, particularly during
7 these conflict situations."

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You had access to highly classified
10 intelligence papers, including JIC papers?

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I did. I was able to see them.
12 I didn't routinely see intelligence reports and I didn't
13 go out looking for them either, but what I found was
14 that the intelligence agencies, I suppose, somewhat to
15 my surprise, I felt kind of got this point that I made
16 earlier about how communications was changing better
17 than other parts of government.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you were able to see JIC assessments
19 if you wanted to see them, the work that they produced
20 on a weekly basis?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: If I wanted to, but I didn't go
22 around looking for them. When I talked about close
23 consultation with them, it was, I suppose, during those
24 periods when they were routinely coming to the
25 Prime Minister's meetings, and, also -- I know we will

1 come on to the September 2002 dossier, but obviously
2 that was a period of intense cooperation and
3 consultation.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, I mean, if we take that period -- we
5 will come back to this in more detail -- you told
6 Lord Hutton that on 12 September 2002 you attended
7 a meeting, you said this was:

8 "The meeting was with the Prime Minister,
9 Jonathan Powell, David Manning, myself, the head of the
10 SIS and the senior SIS officer. The last of these
11 explained that there had been a new source in recent
12 weeks who had given them new information. We were being
13 told this because the information was important, but
14 also it was being emphasised that this was information
15 that could not go into the dossier."

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, why should the director of
18 communications and strategy have been included in such
19 a sensitive meeting with two senior officers of the SIS
20 when it did not concern information that was publicly
21 usable?

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Probably because -- the short answer
23 is probably because the Prime Minister wanted me to be,
24 and I suspect that Richard Dearlove may have done as
25 well. I don't know. I happened to be at a lot of the

1 Prime Minister's meetings, but at that time the heads of
2 the intelligence agencies, I suppose, were spending more
3 time in Downing Street than they normally might and
4 I happened to be there.

5 I was also, at that time, as that entry makes clear,
6 involved in the process of the production of
7 the September dossier. I don't think there was anything
8 inappropriate about that at all.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There used to be something called the
10 "need to know principle" to protect very highly
11 classified information. Was this information that you,
12 in your job, needed to know?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It wasn't. Wouldn't it have been --

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It was nonetheless helpful. Where
16 I was at that time, with the work that was going on with
17 the dossier that was being published, it was actually
18 quite helpful to know. Did I need to know it in terms
19 of my job preparing the dossier? No.

20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Wouldn't it have been more normal for SIS
21 to have conveyed this very sensitive information through
22 the Chairman of the JIC to Number 10 Downing Street?

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That may already have happened.

24 I don't know.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why would they have needed to see the

1 Prime Minister, if it had happened already?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, the Prime Minister may have

3 been wanting to take his own judgment, or it may be that

4 Richard Dearlove -- I mean, Richard Dearlove is a very,

5 very senior figure within the intelligence services.

6 Clearly, if he wanted access to the Prime Minister, he

7 could have it.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: He saw him quite frequently?

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would say he saw him fairly

10 frequently, yes.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why was Sir John Scarlett not at the

12 meeting, the JIC chairman?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't know that he wasn't.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You didn't list him.

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, that is true, but that is

16 a diary scribbled together. I'm not saying that he was,

17 I'm not saying that he wasn't. I'm simply saying that,

18 as far as my recollection goes, I do remember the

19 meeting, I remember that Richard Dearlove was

20 accompanied by this other person who explained what did

21 appear to be quite significant intelligence to the

22 Prime Minister, but, equally, it was to inform him

23 rather than to, as it were, tell him anything that was

24 then going to be divulged in public.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Are you aware of any precedent for

1 somebody who had been the Prime Minister's press
2 secretary and was now the director of communications to
3 have the level of access of which you had, and this is
4 just one example, to -- and the direct relationship with
5 the intelligence agencies?

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It is not for me -- you would have to
7 ask the people -- my predecessors in the job, what
8 Bernard Ingham's relations were with the intelligence
9 agencies or Joe Haines, or anybody else, I don't
10 know. It is not for me to know, it is for them to know.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you are not aware of any precedent?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I'm not aware and I'm not unaware of
13 any precedent. I would be very surprised if the people
14 in my job at some point did not meet people from the
15 intelligence services.

16 I go back to the point I made earlier, that I felt
17 the intelligence services did understand that in these
18 really complicated international situations,
19 communications and an assessment of communications was
20 an important part of what they were doing as well as
21 what we were doing in Downing Street.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But essentially, the role that you were
23 playing, as director of communications and strategy, was
24 not really one that had existed in that form before; it
25 was new, perhaps for the reasons you have already given,

1 and so you, as one of the two or three closest advisers
2 to the Prime Minister, were playing a much wider and
3 more sensitive role at the heart of government.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that's probably true. Look,
5 I have no experience of another government other than
6 covering it as a journalist and --

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, you watched it fairly closely,
8 presumably, as political editor.

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, and I watched it fairly closely
10 as well when we were in opposition, but I have no direct
11 experience of how -- other than reading books, of how
12 other people operated.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But your role was very central. Anything
14 important that was happening at the centre of
15 government, you would basically have known about and
16 probably would have been involved in.

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would certainly have been involved
18 in discussions about it, not least because anything at
19 that level is likely, at some point, to have contact
20 with the public domain. That was part of my job: to
21 make sure that the government's position on any given
22 issue at any given time was being put across properly to
23 the public.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you that's very helpful. I think
25 that makes it easier for us now to go into some of the

1 specific areas of policy that you would have been having
2 these discussions about. Perhaps I could at this point
3 hand over to my colleagues.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Just before Baroness Prashar takes up the
5 questioning, do other colleagues want to raise anything
6 on what's been said so far?

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Could I raise a question? You
8 haven't mentioned the involvement of the
9 Cabinet Secretary at any of these meetings. What was
10 his involvement, if any, at any of these crucial
11 meetings?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think he was involved in all sorts
13 of meetings, and certainly once they got on to -- what
14 tended to happen was a group that comprised Jack Straw,
15 Geoff Hoon, CDS, John Scarlett, would see the
16 Prime Minister prior then to a broader ministerial
17 group, of which the Cabinet Secretary almost certainly
18 would be present. Don't forget, as Sir Roderic knows,
19 the Cabinet Secretary is in and out of Downing Street
20 the whole time.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Now, I want to move on to the period
22 as to build-up to the dossier. As we have heard from
23 other witnesses, after 9/11 and the Axis of Evil speech,
24 the prospect of US-led military action to effect regime
25 change in Iraq loomed larger than ever.

1 Sir Christopher Meyer told us that he received new
2 instructions from Downing Street in March 2002 and that,
3 when the PM and the President met at Crawford in April,
4 they weren't there to talk about containment or
5 sharpening sanctions, he said. Did you agree with the
6 Prime Minister's views on regime change?

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Sorry, what were you saying that
8 Christopher Meyer said? I read his evidence, but
9 I was --

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: He said they weren't there to talk
11 about containment or sharpening sanctions.

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I thought in several respects
13 Christopher Meyer's evidence didn't actually portray an
14 accurate picture of Crawford at all, nor, indeed, of the
15 speech that followed.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That aside, do you agree with the
17 Prime Minister's views on regime change?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: If you are saying to me, do I agree
19 with Christopher Meyer's analysis that, at Crawford, the
20 Prime Minister shifted his position from one of
21 containment and disarmament through the United Nations
22 to one of regime change, then I don't accept that
23 analysis at all.

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I'm talking about the meeting in
25 Crawford.

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I know.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I'm really asking you again: did you
3 agree with the Prime Minister's views on regime change?

4 It is your views, not Mr Meyer's.

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I agreed with the Prime Minister's
6 views, which were -- the Prime Minister was not saying
7 at Crawford, "We now have a policy of regime change".
8 The Prime Minister was absolutely clear, both before
9 Crawford, at Crawford and subsequent to Crawford, that
10 the policy of the British Government was to pursue
11 disarmament of Saddam Hussein through the
12 United Nations, and I think that was very, very clear in
13 his public policy at the time.

14 It is -- and the reason why I think it is important
15 to point out that I think Christopher Meyer's rather
16 overstated things there. For example, he made a point
17 about the speech that the Prime Minister made the next
18 day at the George Bush Senior Presidential Library.
19 This was first time he had ever talked about regime
20 change and so forth. If you actually read the speech,
21 he talks about the three previous occasions on which he
22 had been involved in regime change: the Taliban,
23 Sierra Leone and Kosovo.

24 So I don't really accept this analysis that at
25 Crawford there was this fundamental shift of approach

1 and policy by the Prime Minister.

2 On your point about, did I support the

3 Prime Minister in relation to his pursuit of disarmament

4 of Saddam Hussein in the way that he did, yes, I did.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You did support him?

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I did.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about the others in the close

8 circle, like Jonathan Powell, were they of the same

9 view?

10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think you'd have to ask them. The

11 short answer is yes, but I think it is unfair to expect

12 me to put their position when I know that they are

13 coming to the Inquiry as well.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In your diary, I think at the

15 meeting on 7 March 2002, you say that the Cabinet was

16 mainly about Iraq, not exactly division but a lot of

17 concern where it is going. What were the concerns?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: March 7th? So that was pre-Crawford,

19 yes. Look, I can't remember the discussion in any

20 detail, but I do remember there was a sense of people

21 just raising concerns, concerns in relation to, "Is this

22 happening? Is there some sort of you know, precipitate

23 rush to war?", which there never was, but I think just

24 there came periods where the issue of Iraq just kept

25 bubbling up and bubbling up, and Ministers were quite

1 rightly raising concerns which the Prime Minister would
2 have no doubt sought to address.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I move to the Crawford meeting?
4 Because you accompanied the Prime Minister to Crawford.
5 Can you just tell me, what exactly did Tony Blair
6 commit the UK to in this meeting with President Bush at
7 Crawford?

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I was -- I was not at the meeting --
9 they had dinner together, didn't they?

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes, but you were briefed about it.

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but just -- so that was
12 obviously where considerable discussion took place.
13 That evening, as I recall, myself, Jonathan Powell,
14 David Manning, I think Christopher Meyer, had a separate
15 dinner with Condi Rice, Karl Rove and -- I can't
16 I think, I can't remember the exact -- and I do remember
17 an awful lot of the discussion -- and I can remember at
18 the dinner Condi Rice and David Manning, an awful lot of
19 discussion was about the Middle East, because at the
20 time that was a really pressing issue, and I think that
21 took up an awful lot of the President's and the
22 Prime Minister's discussions as well.

23 In relation to Iraq, I went up to where the
24 President and the Prime Minister were the following
25 morning. I think there had been separate discussions

1 that David Manning had been at, which I think he will
2 have talked to you about, and then there was a kind of
3 broader meeting where things were recapped, and, insofar
4 as they were recapped, it was to say that -- I mean,
5 I think the Prime Minister -- he shared the American
6 analysis of Iraq in terms of the threat that
7 Saddam Hussein posed. Also in terms of the continued
8 defiance of the United Nations. But -- so he was saying
9 we share the analysis and we share the objectives --

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The analysis was about the extent of
11 the threat?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The analysis was about the threat
13 that Saddam Hussein posed, both to stability in that
14 region, the security in that region and also to the
15 authority of the United Nations, and the Prime Minister
16 emphasised that the whole way through.

17 So what came out of -- I'm trying to remember what
18 he actually said at the press conference afterwards. He
19 talked about, "Leaving Iraq to develop WMD in flagrant
20 breaching of United Nations Resolutions, is not an
21 option". He goes on to say, "The response to Iraq will
22 be calm, measured and sensible. All the options
23 available will be considered."

24 Now, at the same press conference, George Bush
25 restated, "The policy of my government is the removal of

1 Saddam". That was, since Bill Clinton's time, the
2 policy of the American administration.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did the Prime Minister make clear to
4 him that that wasn't the UK policy?

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. They knew that anyway. The
6 Prime Minister made clear throughout this that our
7 objective was disarmament of Saddam Hussein through the
8 United Nations, forcing him to comply with a stream of
9 United Nations Resolutions.

10 Now, what I think then followed -- and the reason
11 again -- sorry to go back to --

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I just interrupt here? When the
13 President talked about military action, how did the
14 Prime Minister respond to him?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The President wasn't talking about
16 military action. He was simply saying that their policy
17 is regime change. Bill Clinton's policy was regime
18 change.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's true.

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: George Bush wasn't sitting there
21 saying, "We are about to go to war".

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you can't have regime change
23 without taking some kind action. It would either be
24 through a coup or possibly military action.

25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: My point is about the discussion, the

1 discussion that they had was about -- there was
2 a discussion clearly about Iraq, and again, when -- you
3 have no doubt seen the records of the -- of that visit,
4 but also you will have the opportunity to speak to
5 Tony Blair himself -- but in terms of the context that
6 I'm trying to give you, it is not that George Bush is
7 saying, "Come on, Tony, we have got to go to war", it
8 wasn't like that at all. He was saying, "We have got
9 this real problem with Saddam Hussein.
10 Post-September 11th, both of us share that analysis",
11 and Tony Blair -- he mentioned this in his very, very
12 first statement after September 11, his genuine fear of
13 WMD, failed states, terrorism, coming together with
14 absolutely lethal devastating consequences. They shared
15 that analysis. They clearly shared the analysis that
16 Saddam was an awful, brutal, dictatorial, barbarous
17 regime, they shared the fear about his WMD programme,
18 and George Bush is simply saying, as he said publicly at
19 the press conference, "Our policy is regime change".
20 Tony Blair was making clear that the British policy
21 was to pursue disarmament to force him to face up to his
22 obligations in successive United Nations resolutions.
23 As I recall it -- again, I wasn't at that meeting, but
24 I recall some of the discussion afterwards -- the -- as
25 I understand it, what President Bush had said to the

1 Prime Minister was that there was a very small team over
2 there looking at military options and --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: "Over there", being --

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Over there as in not many people
5 involved, CentCom, yes. That was going on, and indeed,
6 I suspect, because one assumed, because there had been
7 a fairly public debate -- you mentioned -- I mean,
8 I know that previous witnesses have talked about in the
9 immediate aftermath of September 11th, quite a lot of
10 people on the American side of things going on about
11 Iraq and Saddam then, and the British Government, from
12 the Prime Minister down, just saying, you know, "Hold on
13 a minute. This is about the Taliban. This is about
14 Afghanistan".

15 So the point is that, when it got to that
16 discussion, there is George Bush, I think, saying to
17 Tony Blair, "There is some planning going on", but it
18 was not -- we had had a meeting -- I remember -- I read
19 the --

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When --

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Sorry, can I just make this point?
22 Before we went to Crawford, the Prime Minister had
23 a meeting with the British military here to talk about
24 where they thought the Americans were, what were the
25 sort of options that they might be looking at now, and

1 I can remember that was a meeting at Chequers and I can
2 remember Mike Boyce, at that, setting out his analysis
3 of what he believed the American thinking to be at the
4 time, and that was -- that then informed the discussion
5 the Prime Minister had with President Bush.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Is it your understanding that when
7 President Bush talk about the planning going on in the
8 states about military planning going on, did the
9 Prime Minister give any commitment of the British troops
10 to that planning?

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I think that really goes
12 way beyond the nature of the discussion at the time.
13 But, look, you can ask the Prime Minister about this.
14 I think this is -- anyway.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Can we then move on
16 to September, because in your diary, the meeting of
17 23 July 2002, you say the US had pretty much made up
18 their minds and Jack Straw said of the four powers
19 posing a threat with WMD Iran, Korea, Libya and Iraq,
20 and Iraq would be fourth. He does not have nukes, he
21 has some offensive WMD capability, and the tough
22 question is whether this is just regime change or is it
23 the issue of WMD and you say:

24 "TB was pretty clear that we had to be with the
25 Americans."

1 But had the Prime Minister, by that time, made up
2 his mind and had he already committed himself to
3 President Bush about joining?

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that within the -- if you
5 look at the transatlantic relationship, would the
6 Prime Minister have said to you that that was
7 fundamentally important to his analysis of the British
8 national interests and strategic interests? Yes,
9 without a doubt.

10 Therefore, he would -- and actually, I was going
11 back to the Operation Desert Fox, there were similar
12 discussions going on then about whether we should or
13 should not be with the Americans at that time. The
14 Prime Minister, I think, on these fundamental strategic
15 interest points, his instinct and his leadership would
16 say we should be with the Americans. Does that mean
17 that you tailor your policy to suit theirs? No. As
18 I said to you earlier, he shared the analysis, he shared
19 the concern, he shared the objectives of disarmament of
20 Saddam Hussein.

21 Now -- so I don't know if that answers --

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did he share the means to that end?

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Ultimately, when it came to the
24 invasion, clearly he did, but the whole way through, he
25 was trying, if you like, to -- he really believed, and

1 still does believe, that in these situations you have to
2 try exhaustively to go down the diplomatic route, but
3 when you are dealing with somebody like Saddam Hussein,
4 you have to have the genuine threat of force there
5 alongside it. I think that sums up his approach the
6 whole way through.

7 Again, Christopher Meyer read to you an extract from
8 the speech that the Prime Minister made
9 in 1998, and I think it sums up his position then and it
10 summed up his position the whole way through.
11 Saddam Hussein was a genuine threat. He was in defiance
12 year, after year, after year of the United Nations.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We know that. What I'm trying to
14 establish is: at what point did Tony Blair commit to
15 Bush about regime change?

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He committed to -- and again, bear in
17 mind this is the Prime Minister. It is -- he is not
18 doing this because George Bush wants to do it. This was
19 his genuine belief, that Iraq had to be confronted over
20 its continued defiance of the United Nations and over
21 its continued attempts to develop its WMD programme in
22 defiance of the UN. Now, that is his position, and that
23 is a policy that he pursued the whole way through right
24 to the point of the House of Commons vote, when you had,
25 as you had from Mike Boyce -- you heard Mike Boyce on

1 the end of a telephone to America. Right to that point,
2 the Prime Minister was hopeful that, actually, this
3 thing could be resolved peacefully, right up to that
4 point.

5 The whole way through understanding that, if it did
6 come to military action, if that became the only
7 feasible route to go down to make this disarmament
8 happen, then he would want to persuade the Cabinet and
9 Parliament and the country to commit forces to that.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Then I move on to
11 the September 2002, when you accompanied the
12 Prime Minister to Camp David for a further meeting with
13 President Bush and I think you participated in
14 a discussion, which was to build a kind of international
15 support for action against Iraq.

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What were the rationales discussed
18 for the regime change and for taking action against Iraq
19 at this meeting?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that was one of the key
21 moments in this whole -- this whole history, because
22 the -- as I think David Manning told you, the
23 Prime Minister really was being asked by the President
24 to persuade his Vice-President that it really was the
25 sensible thing to take this down the United Nations

1 route, and, again, I thought Chris Meyer was remarkably
2 churlish about the Prime Minister's contribution to
3 that. I think the Prime Minister really did make
4 a difference in persuading both the President and the
5 Vice-President --

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That is one thing, but I think --

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That is the key -- to my mind, that's
8 what the key point was. That was the key point.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: No, I said: what were the rationales
10 discussed for regime change? You know, what were the
11 rationales for regime change?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The history -- I don't think this had
13 changed. Why was Iraq such an issue at that time? It
14 is the history and the nature of the regime and the
15 threat and the context of the threat post-September 11,
16 and I think it was the Butler Report that quoted a JIC
17 paper that I hadn't seen at the time, but it had this
18 phrase about the calculus of threat, and I think that is
19 a very good way of putting how the analysis, the context
20 of the analysis had changed.

21 So in a sense they were discussing the best way to
22 take forward and try to work towards this objective of
23 disarmament of Saddam Hussein and force him to face up
24 to his obligations under the UN.

25 Obviously, you have heard from lots of different

1 witnesses about the sense of tension within the American
2 system and there is no point denying they were there.
3 There are tensions in any government and political
4 system. But I think the significance of that meeting
5 was that George Bush came out of it and said we are
6 going to the United Nations and we are not going there
7 to look for a pretext for military action. That was
8 a significant moment.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I want to come back to the question
10 of rationale. There was a discussion about the
11 breakdown of sanctions I understand, threat to the
12 region, WMD, and Saddam's human rights record.

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: All of those things will have been on
14 the agenda, yes.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Those things were there, but was it
16 not the UK and the US gave sort of different emphasis to
17 these rationales?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Possibly. There was a sense that --
19 on the communication side, I had very, very -- I had
20 regular contact with my opposite numbers, and so,
21 therefore, we were able to get a sense of where their
22 public opinion, our public opinion was. They didn't
23 feel the same sorts of pressures, I don't think, that we
24 did. The -- they sort of -- we were very, very, very
25 keen all the time to emphasise the importance of the UN.

1 The American attitude, as you all will know, is somewhat
2 lukewarm towards the United Nations, to put it mildly.

3 Likewise, in relation to -- given that they had had
4 a Democrat President and then a Republican President
5 whose policy was regime change, they kind of thought, if
6 that's the policy, you know, we have got to get on and
7 do it. I'm talking about their assessment to me of
8 a strand of their public opinion.

9 So, was the emphasis different? Yes, it probably
10 was, but what I wouldn't like to say to you is that the
11 Prime Minister didn't ultimately fundamentally share the
12 view that Saddam Hussein had to be confronted and forced
13 to face up to his obligations.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what you are saying to me is
15 there was a fundamental agreement on the fact that
16 Saddam had to be dealt with. That's fine. But there
17 were differences in terms of emphasis, because they were
18 saying regime change --

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, I have given you one at the
20 press conference, where George Bush stands up and says
21 "Regime change", Tony Blair says, "United Nations".

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you and your colleagues explore
23 with your American counterparts what the differences
24 were and what the implications of these would be
25 downstream?

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. In fact, that was a very
2 important part of that discussion, both in the margins
3 and within the discussion. I can remember, when there
4 was the broader discussion, initially I think it was the
5 Prime Minister, the President, the Vice-President,
6 David Manning, Condi Rice and that was where the
7 Prime Minister persuaded, or at least got a tacit
8 approval for the President, from the Vice-President to
9 go down that route.

10 In the broader discussion, for example, George Bush
11 was picking our brains about this whole anti-Americanism
12 and what our analysis was as to where it came from, how
13 much it mattered, how real it was. So they were
14 conscious, I think, of different strands of public
15 opinion, and I think it is -- to go back to the point
16 about there being this kind of three different bits of
17 the government -- that probably overstates it -- the
18 White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, all
19 different places, but certainly the people that I was
20 dealing with and watching the Prime Minister's
21 discussion with President Bush, they got some of the
22 broader political and -- issues attached to this.

23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So I'm getting a picture that there
24 was a lot of common ground and you did not explore in
25 some depth where the differences of emphasis lay and

1 what that would mean in the longer term.

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: In a sense, this was an issue that

3 was being played out in the public domain all the time,

4 so there was -- the difference in emphasis was evident

5 for all to see. For example, later on in the process,

6 I can remember when we got on to the whole business of

7 getting 1441, and then, later, the pursuit of the second

8 resolution, that George Bush was pretty clear, that --

9 in terms of the pursuit of the second resolution, it was

10 very much for the UK interests. So I think the

11 difference of emphasis was pretty clear.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Can I just also ask you about

13 at the Camp David meeting, did you understand that the

14 Prime Minister and the President, having discussed what

15 would happen after military action, if there would be

16 one?

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, in fact, I saw, going through my

18 notes, before Crawford, at that meeting I mentioned

19 I think was at Chequers with Mike Boyce and some of the

20 other military, at that discussion as well they were

21 already talking about aftermath --

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: "They" being?

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: They being us, the British, and

24 certainly in the discussions that I saw the

25 Prime Minister have with President Bush, it was always

1 on the agenda.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Mentioning it, but was there proper

3 planning in terms of --

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: As to when actually -- don't forget,

5 at that time, you were a long way off military action

6 and the genuine, genuine attempt that the Prime Minister

7 is leading on behalf of the British Government is to

8 make sure that this thing a resolved peacefully.

9 I don't know when. You would have to ask people who

10 were more directly involved in the planning than I was,

11 when, as it were, specific detailed aftermath planning

12 began, I don't know, but certainly everybody was

13 conscious the whole way through this that there would

14 come a point -- if it came to military action, there

15 would come a point where you were into post-conflict

16 Iraq and big questions arose from that, and I think

17 people were starting to think about those questions --

18 I couldn't say when the planning started, but people

19 were always conscious that it was something they had to

20 think about.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But my understanding was the

22 American view was it would be all right on the day.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I read David Manning's transcript to

24 the Inquiry and I think there was a feeling on what he

25 described as the neo-con wing, if you like. That there

1 was that sense. That's correct. But I think there were
2 others who didn't necessarily share that. So I think we
3 did have a sense that there was an awful lot of planning
4 going on.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: By whom?

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Within the American administration.

7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: On the aftermath?

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, yes.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. Can I come back to the
10 question of the multiple reasons for wanting to take
11 action against Saddam? Why did the UK focus its case on
12 WMD?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: There is never -- in all of these
14 questions there is no -- there is never just one single
15 thing. If you read the Prime Minister's -- I mean,
16 I went back in the last few weeks, when I knew -- when
17 I was going to be at the Inquiry and we read all the
18 Prime Minister -- Tony Blair's speeches on Iraq going
19 way back and there is a whole panoply of arguments that
20 are put there.

21 Why did the issue of WMD become so central? Because
22 that was what gave rise to the fear and the sense of
23 a serious and credible threat to regional stability,
24 and, also, as I mentioned in relation to September 11th,
25 the Prime Minister was absolutely seized, and I think

1 still is, seized of the view that, unless the world is
2 absolutely totally vigilant on this issue of WMD, it is
3 only a matter of time before something really terrible
4 happens in relation to them linking in with the
5 terrorist groups. That's his mindset, and people can
6 disagree with it or not, but that is where he was coming
7 from.

8 So WMD -- was the regime part of it? Of course.
9 Would somebody like Tony Blair, from the day he went
10 into politics, think that somebody like Saddam Hussein
11 should be got rid of? Yes, he would. Was that the
12 policy he was pursuing the whole way through? No. He
13 was trying to, through the UN, lead the
14 British Government in the direction of pursuing a policy
15 that would lead ultimately to the disarmament of
16 Saddam Hussein.

17 When it came to it, when the diplomatic process
18 clearly was not going to resolve the issue, post 1441
19 and when the French pulled the plug, then military
20 action became the only means of response.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You said earlier that there was
22 common ground -- and of course this was something that
23 Blair and Bush shared, but we put emphasis on WMD.

24 Was it because the Attorney General believed that
25 the grounds for military action for regime change,

1 self-defence, military intervention could not form
2 a legal basis for military action?

3 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I don't think so. Again, I know
4 that the Attorney General will be here as well, so he
5 can answer about the legal questions, but that was not
6 the argument, no.

7 Look, people can disagree with it or not, but
8 Tony Blair held a fundamental view about this, about
9 this being a real threat, the context for which was
10 completely changed by September 11th. Interestingly,
11 again, when I was preparing for this, I was reminded
12 of -- on September 10th 2001, we went to a lunch at
13 The Guardian and Mike White, the then political editor,
14 reminded me, post-September 11, at that lunch on
15 September 10, Tony Blair had said the really big issue
16 coming down the track is WMD/rogue states/terrorist
17 organisations.

18 The next day he had that view pretty firmly
19 cemented, and from that moment, as he said, I think,
20 when he gave evidence to the Butler Report, it was the
21 context that changed then, that containment, which in
22 any event was becoming less successful, people were
23 feeling was more difficult to pursue, not necessarily
24 having the effects that people wanted for it, that the
25 tolerance level, if you like, of allowing Saddam to

1 carry on defying the United Nations Resolutions in which
2 he was in defiance, that that is what changed and the
3 context changed.

4 Now, that is a real security issue and his judgment,
5 as the Prime Minister, ultimately, that is why he is
6 there and I'm not and other people aren't. He has got
7 to make those big strategic judgments based upon what he
8 knows, and it was a genuinely held strategic judgment
9 about British security interests.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I understand that. So privately, he
11 seems to me to have had a strong conviction about regime
12 change, but publicly there was a policy to actually
13 focus on WMD?

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, he had an absolutely fundamental
15 view about disarmament. As David Manning reminded you,
16 even George Bush and I can remember in a separate
17 discussion Condoleezza Rice accepted that if
18 Saddam Hussein did comply with United Nations
19 obligations, if Hans Blix had been able to say, "Yes,
20 I have been there. I have seen the lot. I have seen
21 where all the leftovers are. I have been right through
22 the clusters document. We've got all the paper. We
23 have seen all the evidence. He has got rid of the lot
24 of it", that would have been regime change in that it
25 would have been a different sort of regime.

1 So I don't accept -- you seem to be wanting me to
2 say that Tony Blair signed up to say, "Regardless of the
3 facts, regardless of WMD, we are just going to get rid
4 of the guy". It was not like that.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic, do you want to ask one or two before
7 we break?

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, I just wonder if I can follow up on
9 one or two points. You, I think, talking about the
10 Crawford press conference or quoting from the
11 Prime Minister's press conference at Crawford, said or
12 had him say:

13 "All the options available will be considered."

14 Now, can you recall from all of these meetings that
15 were held on Iraq in 2001/2002 what meetings the
16 Prime Minister did hold to consider all of the strategic
17 options with regard to Iraq and the likely consequences
18 of each?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: How many meetings did the
20 Prime Minister hold on Iraq? Dozens and dozens and
21 dozens. If you were talking about sitting down, as it
22 were, for a fundamental review of all policy, I would
23 say that was a -- that was happening on an ongoing
24 basis. There were a number of really pretty big
25 meetings with all the relevant ministers there and all

1 the obvious people who would feed advice into a process.
2 So I think he and his colleagues were thinking about all
3 the different strategic options all the time.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But what were those strategic options?

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: When he talked there, post the
6 Crawford meeting, about all the options being
7 available -- I go back to what I said in my previous
8 answers about the running together, if you like, of
9 a diplomatic and a military track and strategies aimed
10 at ultimately leading to the disarmament of
11 Saddam Hussein, which hopefully can be resolved
12 diplomatically, but, if they can't, then they are going
13 to have to be resolved militarily.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Those are tactical options within
15 a strategy, but were you not in a situation in which,
16 since 1991, containment had prevented Iraq effectively
17 from threatening its neighbours and from developing
18 a nuclear weapon? Was that not an alternative strategic
19 option? Was that looked at?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, it was, and I think there were
21 discussions about that. I think -- again, you would
22 have to check against the record, but I think there was
23 a specific discussion of that at that Crawford meeting
24 as well and there certainly was a discussion of it at
25 the first meeting the Prime Minister had with

1 President Bush, shortly after President Bush's election.

2 That discussion was happening with other leaders as
3 well, including with the French, about the extent to
4 which the containment policy was or was not working.

5 I think there was a sense that it wasn't sustainable
6 for the long-term, and I go back again to the point
7 about what the JIC reported quoted, and the Butler
8 called this calculus of threat, I think that had changed
9 the nature of that argument, but all of these different
10 options, he would have been aware of them, he would be
11 getting advice on them, and he would be thinking about
12 them all the time.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So there were times, even in, perhaps,
14 a slightly formal way, with Cabinet Ministers and
15 others, experts on the region, the Prime Minister would
16 have sat down and said, "Here is the problem with Iraq.
17 What are the possible ways, the possible strategies for
18 dealing with it, and what is the downside of this, that
19 and the other as well as the upside?"

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He would.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Those sorts of discussions did take
22 place?

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: They did.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Prime Minister, therefore, was pretty
25 fully aware of the risks of going for a policy that

1 might eventually lead to military action?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, he was and I would say -- look,

3 he is somebody who I think always will weigh up very

4 candidly upsides and downsides of a particular course of

5 action, and none of these decisions were

6 straightforward. None of them were ever black and

7 white, 100 per cent, absolutely obvious, every step, you

8 couldn't see any other way of handling it. There is

9 always another way of handling these issues, but,

10 ultimately, he has to take decisions.

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, you said, talking about regime

12 change, that the Prime Minister was not saying at

13 Crawford that we now have a policy of regime change, but

14 in his speech at the George Bush Presidential Library on

15 7 April, immediately after the Crawford meeting, to

16 which he referred, he said, talking in general terms

17 about terrorism and WMD, not just about Iraq:

18 "If necessary the action should be military, and

19 again, if necessary and justified, it should involve

20 regime change."

21 He then went on, as you have said, to refer to three

22 conflicts involving regime change, Milosevic, the

23 Taliban, Sierra Leone, and a bit later on he talked

24 about Iraq. He said:

25 "I know some fear precipitate action. The moment

1 for decision on how to act is not yet with us."

2 Now, that language on regime change, which

3 Sir Christopher Meyer certainly regarded as a change of

4 tack, you, as a communications expert, would you not

5 feel that that was a clear indication that the

6 Prime Minister was giving to the American people -- he

7 was speaking in the United States -- of his support for

8 regime change and his readiness to apply it to Iraq?

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I mean, I can't remember how the

10 American media and public took that speech, but I don't

11 see that as a significant shift. The speech that

12 Christopher Meyer also referred to, in 1998:

13 "We have a clear responsibility in the interests of

14 long-term peace in the world to stop Saddam Hussein

15 from" --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Could you slow that down because of the

17 stenographer?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Sorry:

19 "We have a clear responsibility in the interests of

20 long-term peace ..."

21 Anyway, it is in the record already. You have that.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It is in the record.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The point about the speech to the

24 George Bush Presidential Library, I don't think he is

25 saying anything there that wasn't evident --

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Well, if you --

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: -- prior to Crawford.

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If you stand up in America in April 2002,

4 when there is all this speculation about what is going

5 to be done to Iraq and you say:

6 "If necessary, the action should be military, and

7 again, if necessary and justified, it should involve

8 regime change ..."

9 How is the American audience going to interpret

10 that?

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Probably in the same way as they

12 might have interpreted a speech in Chicago at a prior

13 visit to the United States.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is a different period. Iraq is top

15 of the agenda with the Middle East peace process and the

16 Israel conflict. The Prime Minister says that. Is he

17 signalling to the American people, by saying that, that

18 he supports regime change?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What he is signalling, and I think

20 what he says, is that, "We are going -- we are

21 absolutely determined to disarm Saddam Hussein and we

22 are going to force him to confront his obligations to

23 the United Nations and these resolutions that he has

24 defied year in and year out, and we are going to try to

25 do that diplomatically. If that cannot be done and the

1 only way left is through regime change, through military
2 action, then the British Government will support the
3 American Government". If they took that message --
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The British government will support the
5 American Government?
6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That is the message that he will have
7 been putting over.
8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That is the message. Okay.
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: In my view, that was not
10 a significant shift in his position. I accept the
11 context is clearly different because of where we were in
12 the Iraq debate, the fact that he is in America, the
13 fact that he has just seen George Bush, I accept all
14 that.
15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Whether or not it is a significant shift,
16 is this a line that he then repeated back in the
17 United Kingdom? Is it a line that he used in Parliament
18 at that time?
19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, if you are the Prime Minister
20 on an issue like this, and with modern communications as
21 they are, anybody who is following this story will not
22 have been unaware of what he said at the George Bush
23 Presidential Library --
24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's not my question. My question is:
25 did this continue to be his line when he was addressing

1 audiences in the United Kingdom, including Parliament?

2 You were his director of communications.

3 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I thought that speech -- and again,

4 if you look at my diaries, I think I point out that the

5 bulk of that speech was written before we got there.

6 There was a bit of fine-tuning. He knew what he was

7 going to say --

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's not the question I asked.

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, but it's part of the same -- what

10 I'm saying to you, the message -- the overall approach

11 was the same throughout. There were obviously moments

12 at which emphasis might change. There were key points

13 at which there was a greater focus than at other points,

14 and this may have been one of them, but I think it is

15 entirely consistent with what the Prime Minister had

16 been saying throughout.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You told us that you read all of his

18 speeches while preparing for this Inquiry. Did you find

19 that he used that line again, after he used it at

20 Crawford, when talking in the United Kingdom, that he

21 used it in Parliament or in other speeches here?

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think he made clear -- when he

23 talked about -- he kept saying:

24 "Conflict is not inevitable, disarmament is."

25 But he was clear throughout that if the diplomatic

1 route did not lead to disarmament through Saddam facing
2 up to his obligations under successive UN Resolutions,
3 then the military option was evident.

4 So I really don't think that speech was -- I mean,
5 I know that you asked Jeremy Greenstock did he receive
6 specific instructions of a change, and he said, no, he
7 didn't. I don't think there was any reason for him so
8 to have done.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I wanted to ask you about that point,
10 too, not so much with regard to Sir Jeremy Greenstock.
11 You said that you didn't accept Christopher Meyer's
12 analysis that there was a fundamental shift of emphasis
13 at Crawford. You disagreed with his evidence on that
14 point. But was there not also documentary evidence,
15 some of which indeed leaked into the newspapers, that,
16 in March 2002, as part of the preparations for Crawford,
17 Sir David Manning went to Washington with changed
18 instructions, what Sir Christopher described as a change
19 in the instructions given to him, with regard to this
20 very question of regime change?

21 So there was an evolution at that time, wasn't
22 there, or do you disagree with Sir Christopher on that?

23 He said:

24 "I got a chunky set of instructions in March 2002."

25 He referred to Sir David's visit. He said:

1 "One of the main things he was seeking to do, and
2 this was new and I, if you like, borrowed his
3 instructions to do my side of things, was to say to the
4 Americans, 'Look, if you want to do regime change and if
5 this is going to require military action, you guys are
6 powerful enough to do it all on your own. You can do it
7 on our own. You have got the power to do it. But if
8 you are going to do this and you want your friends and
9 partners to join you, far better then that you should do
10 it inside an alliance, preferably taking the UN route'."

11 Would you regard that as a change or an evolution or
12 what?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think it is obviously at
14 a different part of the timeframe, but I think that is
15 consistent with the overall approach that I have been
16 trying to set out. The Prime Minister's overall
17 approach of saying, ultimately, there is going to be
18 disarmament. We are going to do our level best to get
19 that done through the diplomatic route without a single
20 shot being fired, but if push comes to shove and the
21 diplomatic route fails, Britain would see it as its
22 responsibility and its duty to take part in military
23 action. I think that's consistent.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I have just got two more points and then
25 we are going to take a break, but arising from

1 conversation thus far. On Camp David and more
2 generally, you said that:
3 "We were very keen all along to emphasise the
4 importance of the UN."
5 You also said that the Prime Minister fundamentally
6 shared the view that Saddam Hussein had to be
7 confronted. That's a fair representation of what you
8 have said this morning?
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, confront him as in face up to
10 his obligations.
11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did the Prime Minister believe that
12 Saddam had to be confronted, even if this was not
13 supported by the United Nations?
14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: If -- look, if the United Nations
15 through the inspections route had discovered that the --
16 this -- there were -- weapons weren't there and he
17 wasn't a threat and what was all this about, I'm
18 absolutely sure the Prime Minister --
19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That wasn't my question. My question
20 was: if the United Nations did not support confronting
21 Saddam Hussein, was the Prime Minister still, as you
22 say, fundamentally of the view that he had to be
23 confronted with or without the United Nations' support?
24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I thought it was interesting in
25 Jeremy Greenstock's evidence where I thought he made

1 a really telling point at the end of his evidence about
2 the -- it is almost a philosophical discussion about
3 "What is the United Nations?" It is not a kind of
4 arbiting body, the United Nations is a collection of the
5 nations, and what you ended up with was a fundamental
6 disagreement within the Security Council and the whole of
7 the United Nations.

8 If the United Nations en masse had said, "Hold on
9 a minute, Prime Minister Blair, this whole Iraq thing is
10 overblown", and all the rest of it, but nobody was
11 saying that. Even the French were saying there --

12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You still haven't answered my question.

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But your question depends on there
14 being a single view that is defined as the
15 United Nations' view.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There is a single view if the UN
17 Security Council adopts a position.

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Right. But if the British -- you are
19 saying they adopted a position that the
20 British Government and the American Government didn't
21 agree with.

22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: If the British Government and the
23 American Government were not able to get the support of
24 United Nations Security Council, the Prime Minister was
25 prepared to go ahead without the United Nations?

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Ultimately, when it came to military
2 action, he believed that that route, having persuaded
3 George Bush to take the issue to the United Nations,
4 having made clear that, in his view, the United Nations
5 had to resolve the issue and not avoid the issue,
6 through some extraordinary diplomatic work, not least by
7 Jeremy Greenstock, Resolution 1441 is unanimously
8 agreed, but then, when it came to the next step,
9 elements of the United Nations, and in particular the
10 French, walked away from anything that might lead to, in
11 their view, the United Nations authorising military
12 action.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We will come back to that later on.
14 I think you have effectively given an answer to my
15 question.

16 My final question is that in these interactions with
17 the White House, presumably the Prime Minister wrote to
18 President Bush from time to time. Did you see that
19 correspondence?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did he tell President Bush in writing
22 during 2002 that he would support the President if he
23 took military action?

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would certainly say the tenor of
25 the -- the Prime Minister wrote quite a lot of notes to

1 the President and I would say that the tenor of them was
2 that, as I have said earlier, we share the analysis, we
3 share the concern, we are absolutely with you in making
4 sure that Saddam Hussein is faced up to his obligations
5 and that Iraq is disarmed. If that can't be done
6 diplomatically and it has to be done militarily, Britain
7 will be there. That would definitely be the tenor of
8 his communications to the President.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So without conditions?

10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It is not a question of being without
11 conditions, because if you are saying that along that
12 route -- and bear in mind, when it --

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's not go all the way along the route.

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: You have just asked me the question.
15 If I can answer it: 12 years after the first resolution,
16 six months after George Bush takes it to the
17 United Nations, four months after 1441, I think it was
18 pretty measured and I think the Prime Minister was, all
19 the way through, trying to get it resolved without
20 a single shot being fired.

21 In the end, he is the guy at the top who has to make
22 the judgments with all the advice that he gets about how
23 best to do that, but that was his motivation right the
24 way through.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin, I think we need to take a break at

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He may have discussed -- I think they
2 were pretty private, certainly he would have discussed
3 it with David Manning. I suppose his thinking may have
4 emerged from meetings that he had others. As to whether
5 drafts went round the system, I would very much doubt
6 it.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did the Prime Minister write them
8 himself?

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He did.

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Who would have seen them after they were
11 sent. You saw them? Who else would have seen them?

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't know is the short answer to
13 that. Certainly Jonathan Powell definitely,
14 David Manning would have seen them, obviously, before
15 they went. Others, as in when -- I couldn't answer
16 that.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Foreign Secretary?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would have thought so, yes.¹

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Defence Secretary?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think it would depend. I don't
21 know if you have seen them. I assume that they are part
22 of the documentation that you obviously have access to,
23 but they were -- I mean, I sometimes felt -- we talked
24 earlier about strategy. I sometimes felt that they were
25 quite advisory in strategic terms. They were very

¹ The witness subsequently advised the Inquiry that this answer refers directly to Sir Roderic Lyne's question asking who saw the notes after they were sent to President Bush. He pointed out that drafts were not routinely sent to the Foreign Office, but that the Foreign Secretary, and a small number of very senior officials in the FCO, saw them after they were sent.

1 frank.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Very frank and advisory? Thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

4 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You were speaking before the break
5 about the importance to the Prime Minister of the UN
6 route and, indeed, its primacy with regard to our
7 relations with the United States.

8 Can you tell us what discussions there were in the
9 Prime Minister's circle, after Camp David, about what
10 the UK would do if the UN route failed?

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Hold on, we are now in September?

12 From my perspective, post-Camp David, that was when the
13 real kind of -- the work on the September dossier really
14 stepped up. So I was very much engaged in that.

15 I think -- and I think, again, if you look at the
16 statement that the Prime Minister made in the House on
17 the day of publication, I think again the message was
18 very, very clear: this is about informing the public
19 about why we are concerned, why that concern has grown
20 in relation to what the JIC called a step change in
21 Iraq's attitudes and activities in 2001, obviously in
22 the context of September 11th, but also making clear
23 that he, as an absolute believer in internationalism
24 and in the United Nations as a force for good in the
25 world, that there was a very, very tough message in

1 there for Iraq and Saddam Hussein as well.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was it not curious, to answer my

3 question, that there wasn't a discussion of what would

4 happen if Britain, having pursued this UN route, as the

5 means for --

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Sorry, are you saying were there

7 discussions? Of course there were. I couldn't tell you

8 how many days, on how many successive days the

9 Prime Minister would have been holding meetings on Iraq

10 but it would have been a very, very large number.

11 I mean, these questions were being raised and discussed

12 all the time.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What was the consensus or the view or

14 the views as to what the UK would do if the UN route

15 failed?

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think the position at that time was

17 very much, as he said publicly on a number of occasions,

18 and as he said right up to the point of the invasion,

19 that, in his view, this was the best route to resolve

20 this issue peacefully. He still believed, right to the

21 end, I think, that that could have been done, if Saddam

22 had responded in a different way and, in particular, if

23 some of the bigger powers in the United Nations had

24 responded in a different way, as it were, during the

25 denouement just prior to -- in March.

1 As to -- I think he had a genuine fear as well that,
2 if the United Nations did not resolve this issue, and
3 was not seen to stand up for what it had been calling
4 for over such a long period of time, that there was the
5 potential of damage to the United Nations as well.

6 I think this may seem counter to what was the kind
7 of conventional wisdom on this, although I thought it
8 was interesting, I think Jeremy Greenstock seemed to be
9 making a similar point that, actually -- there was
10 a challenge the whole time in what he was saying to the
11 United Nations, in saying you have gone on for so long,
12 we the United Nations have gone on for so long, in
13 stating publicly again and again and again what he has
14 to do and he doesn't do it and we all know that he
15 doesn't do it, and occasionally there is a little
16 skirmish and there is a diplomatic kerfuffle, and very
17 occasionally there is the kind of military operation
18 there was in 1998, but actually Saddam Hussein is
19 effectively getting away with it the whole way through.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Damage to the United Nations doesn't
21 resolve the issue as to what Britain is then going to
22 do.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What Britain does then -- again,
24 I think it is to the Prime Minister's credit that this
25 happened in the way that it did, that despite the

1 terrible divisions that there were, and they really were
2 pretty profound at the time, but actually in part
3 because he had been so aggressively and so volubly
4 pursuing the United Nations route and emphasising the
5 importance of the United Nations that actually the
6 United Nations were able to get involved in the
7 aftermath more quickly than otherwise they might have
8 done, had it been down just to the United States.

9 So there was certainly in his mind that part of the
10 argument here was: how is the United Nations going to
11 rebuild these relationships in the immediate aftermath
12 of an invasion, should that be necessary?

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But the subtext or the square bracket
14 is that if the United Nations route failed, Britain and
15 the United States would have to take military action.

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think, once 1441 was agreed and
17 once the French had failed to get 1441 to say what they
18 wanted it to say, then I think that is the obvious
19 logical conclusion.

20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: But not before? That was not discussed
21 before?

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think before, no.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence?

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm going to take you through the
25 dossier, September --

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just make one point of
2 clarification to something I said earlier?
3 I talked about, when Lady Prashar was asking me
4 about discussion on sanctions and I said it was
5 Camp David, it was Camp David, but it wasn't Camp David [2002]
6 that we were talking about at the time, it
7 was September 2001, and that was -- they were discussing
8 Iraq because Colin Powell was about to go to the region
9 and they were discussing possible changes to
10 No Fly Zones policy, sanctions weapons -- so that
11 specific discussion was much earlier.
12 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you. Why was a dossier
14 perceived to be necessary in September 2002?
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The dossier was seen to be necessary
16 because the Prime Minister had been growing more and
17 more concerned, in part because of the intelligence that
18 he was seeing over a period of time. I mentioned
19 a moment ago what the JIC called this step change, and
20 I think, post-September 11th, he was becoming more
21 concerned, and in a sense, even with senior politicians,
22 he was kind of having to have the argument, "Look, you
23 know, if you saw what I saw, you wouldn't be kind of
24 asking me all these questions".
25 Of course, what he saw was material that really only

1 he and a number of other senior Ministers were able to
2 see. I think this partly relates, I suppose, to the
3 discussion we had earlier about the way that the media
4 and the political culture has changed. There was
5 a time -- when I was journalist, if my predecessor in
6 Downing Street, said, you know, "There is some story
7 going around about intelligence. We never comment on
8 intelligence matters", that was the line and people more
9 or less accepted that and that was it. But I think that
10 just no longer -- is no longer tenable.

11 So what he wanted to do -- and I think -- I really
12 think it is -- it is a shame in a way that the
13 controversy that subsequently followed about the dossier
14 was as intense as it was, because I think actually in an
15 exercise in openness and much more open government and
16 trying to share with the public information that is
17 really quite sensitive, but which he is trying to share
18 with the public so that they can be informed about all
19 the factors going into his decision-making process. So
20 that was the thinking behind it.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But there was a political context as
22 well. In your diary for 3 September you say:

23 "We went through some of the hard questions on Iraq.
24 The hardest was: why now? Why was it that what we knew
25 now, that we didn't before, that made us believe what we

1 had to do now?"

2 So it was about selling the policy as well, not just
3 revealing a helpful intelligence.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It was also at the time -- and this
5 is again how odd -- how things looked so differently in
6 the sense of the benefit of hindsight. At the time,
7 I don't know if you remember, but over the summer
8 holiday, over the August period -- I mean, up until
9 then, things had been relatively calm, and then I think
10 it was Jim Baker and Brent Scowcroft made a couple of
11 pretty high profile interventions in the American debate
12 on, if you like, the State Department side of the
13 argument. The neo-cons really cranked it up and Cheney
14 and Rumsfeld were out making -- and their people were
15 out making some pretty neo-con-type statements and
16 one -- part of the thinking, when the Prime Minister
17 came back from his summer break, and then we went to --
18 I think it was Mozambique and then to a sustainable
19 development conference in South Africa, and then we
20 decided to have a press conference in Sedgefield, and
21 that was when he said we are going to bring forward the
22 process on the dossier, part of that was actually trying
23 to calm the situation.

24 He made the point, I think, in the September 3 press
25 conference in Sedgefield, again, no decisions had been

1 taken, conflict is not inevitable, people are getting
2 ahead of themselves, but what he did want to do was to
3 set out for the public, in as accessible a way as
4 possible, the reasons why he had become more concerned.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So this very much then depended on
6 the newness of the information, the revelatory nature of
7 the document?

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Partly, yes. Not wholly, but partly.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just again another bit of context
10 was the meeting that you then had a few days later in
11 Camp David, which we have already been discussing, where
12 the question of presentation became a big issue
13 between -- you discussed it with Dan Bartlett, your
14 opposite number in the White House as well. So was
15 there a sense of needing to influence each other's --
16 the American debate as well as the British debate?

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think -- as I said earlier, I think
18 American opinion was in a different position, but on
19 these big global issues --

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You have mentioned the neo-con --

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But also -- I was interested in
22 Chris Meyer's evidence when he talked about his
23 assessment of opinion, as he went round the States, not
24 being terribly supportive of the Administration. I did
25 not have that impression, I must admit, but I thought

1 that was quite interesting. But I think that -- we
2 certainly -- it wasn't a question of trying to influence
3 them, them influence us, but we were aware that our
4 communications had an impact on their positions, and,
5 even more so, I suppose, their communications had an
6 impact on us.

7 To be fair to Dan Bartlett and Karen Hughes and all
8 these people they were always very up for being told
9 very, very frankly where sometimes their communications
10 didn't help ours at all. So we did have those sorts of
11 discussions.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If we move now to the actual
13 production of the dossier, this wasn't the first time
14 the issue of a dossier had come up?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So there had been two papers
17 prepared beforehand. There had been one prepared by the
18 JIC in March 2002.

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Is that correct?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: March or February.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, it was passed to Number 10 on
23 21 March.

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Right.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Why was it decided not to use that

1 paper there?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that the paper -- I mean that

3 kind of work, I suppose, is being done all the time in

4 terms of them making assessments. I suppose the Axis of

5 Evil speech put in mind all the countries that people

6 might be -- might be focusing upon --

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that's a different paper.

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Is this the four country --

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, there was a four country one

10 in February 2002 which did look at -- so --

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Then --

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm happy to talk about that,

13 because that is important, for the reasons you have just

14 given, so do carry on.

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: As I recall it, there was a paper

16 prepared within the JIC process, as it were, across the

17 four countries, decided -- and just really put to one

18 side, not for any great reason other than the fact that

19 it just didn't -- it wasn't the sort of thing that was

20 going to be in any way put into the public domain at

21 that time. No rhyme or reason for it to have been done

22 so at that time, and then work began on an Iraq-specific

23 paper.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There would have been one reason

25 perhaps for caution on the February 2002 one, that, by

1 looking at Iran, Libya, North Korea as well as Iraq, it
2 would have brought home the fact, as we have heard in
3 evidence from Tim Dowse and Willie Ehrman, that a those
4 other countries were actually further advanced and of
5 greater concern in terms of nuclear weapons, in
6 particular, than Iraq.

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, and I think that's why --

8 I think when you talked about those questions that you
9 read from my diaries in September, when we were up in
10 Sedgfield, why Iraq was a very, very important question
11 as well.

12 I think, were Tony Blair here, what he would say to
13 that was the reason why he was more concerned about Iraq
14 was partly because they had used chemical weapons,
15 partly because of the nature of the regime -- that is
16 why I think the history of the regime is important in
17 this -- and also because there was no -- even
18 a semblance of being able to get any sort of dialogue
19 going with them at all.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But for the moment, there wasn't
21 a particularly good political reason why to produce
22 something -- that highlighted the significance of those
23 other powers in February. Then, in March, there was
24 a paper on Iraq that was confirmed by the JIC and passed
25 on to Number 10 on 31 March, which I think covered some

1 of the same ground, but I think it was decided not to go
2 ahead with that.

3 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Why not in March --

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Again, this is just me -- I can't
6 claim to remember every part of the thought process or
7 decision-making process, but I think at the time,
8 because we -- it was the sense that actually when -- it
9 was just ramp up an issue that at the time we did not
10 particularly want ramped up.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you were happy to ramp it up
12 in September, and then, in April -- I'm not sure if this
13 was before or after Crawford, the Counter Proliferation
14 Department at the Foreign Office was asked to prepare
15 a paper on the history of inspections and that led,
16 in June, to a document that was entitled "The
17 British Government Briefing Papers on Iraq".

18 Do you recall that?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't recall being involved in that
20 process.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You weren't involved in that?

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The point is that, by September,
24 there were two potential departments or agencies that
25 might produce a dossier. One would be the

1 Foreign Office and one would be the JIC?

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Were both making bids?

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think the JIC were, as it

5 were, making bids, making a bid. I think there was

6 a feeling in the Foreign Office that this, as it were,

7 should be their product.

8 Now, the Prime Minister was absolutely clear -- and

9 I think he was right about it as well -- and

10 John Scarlett was very, very strongly of the view --

11 that -- John used the word "ownership". If we were

12 saying this was a document that was, as it were -- the

13 main interest of which was the intelligence base of it,

14 then he wanted to be 100 per cent in charge of that

15 process. That's something that I think it is fair to

16 say there were people within the Foreign Office who

17 wanted to have similar ownership and we just had to make

18 it very, very clear that that was not going to happen.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In one of your answers to

20 Sir Roderic Lyne, you said it was your opinion that the

21 intelligence agencies got the new communications better

22 than others. Could you expand a bit on what you meant

23 by that?

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That wasn't a criticism of the

25 Foreign Office. What I meant by that was that -- when

1 I talked earlier about the sort of rather silo-driven,
2 department by department, communications really has to
3 go at the back the queue. You have the Ministers, you
4 have the policy officials, and they do all the really
5 important stuff and then bring in the communications guy
6 at the end and they will write a press release and
7 that's kind of it. That was the basic approach.

8 I exaggerate to make the point, but not that much.

9 What I was talking about, in relation to, in
10 particular, some of these big international crisis
11 moments, is that there is an understanding -- I think
12 the intelligence community, if you like, to use that
13 phrase, and certainly the people in positions of
14 leadership that I got to know, I think understood that
15 some of these conflict situations, actually, the way
16 that the media will follow them, report them, present
17 them to the public, can actually have an impact upon
18 what they have to do on the ground, militarily and the
19 intelligence community as well.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you had a degree of confidence
21 that the JIC understood the media context in which they
22 would be operating. So you wouldn't be taking them
23 wholly into unknown territory?

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I would step back a little bit from
25 that, first of all, and say -- I mean, forget my view,

1 I think the reason why the Prime Minister was so
2 supportive of the idea of them being in the driving seat
3 on this is because he felt that the -- I mean, I go back
4 to the point I made earlier. There is him saying,
5 "Look, if you could see what the intelligence people are
6 showing to me, you might actually have a different take
7 on this and you would see why I was becoming more
8 concerned". So what he wanted to do, in a sense, was
9 put into the public domain: there is what they are
10 presenting to me.

11 So actually, the whole strength, if you like, of
12 that document in its public communications and
13 presentation and Parliamentary terms was in it being
14 a JIC document.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On 5 and 9 September you chaired two
16 meetings in the Cabinet Office with senior officials,
17 including John Scarlett, to discuss the dossier. Why
18 were you chairing these meetings?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Because John Scarlett, having done
20 what he considered to be a pretty advanced draft of the
21 dossier, then said to me, I think quite rightly, "It is
22 going to be a document the Prime Minister presents to
23 Parliament. There are massive global expectations
24 around it and I need a bit of presentational support,"
25 and that's what I gave him.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just clarify something you
2 said there? You said Scarlett had already done a draft.
3 I didn't think a draft had been done.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: There came a point where he said,
5 "I have now reached a point where I need presentational
6 advice on this". So we met on the 5th and the 9th. As
7 a result of those meetings, a process was set out by me,
8 in writing, around the system, which made clear what the
9 dossier, in terms of its overall structure and contents,
10 was going to be, but also emphasising to everybody
11 within the system that this was now John Scarlett's work
12 and anything that had gone before was redundant and
13 irrelevant. Then, when he came back to me, it was to
14 say, "I have now reached a position where I need
15 presentational advice".

16 I was chairing those meetings because the
17 Prime Minister was going to be presenting the paper that
18 John was working on to Parliament, massive media
19 interest right around the world, and I think it was
20 entirely, not just appropriate, it was absolutely
21 necessary that I should have done that.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But in most organisations chairing
23 a meeting confers authority and accountability. So
24 basically you are saying you are a customer of this
25 process as well as giving help with the presentation.

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I mean, look, in terms of the -- just
2 as a point of accuracy by the way, the meetings were in
3 Downing Street, not the Cabinet Office.

4 Look, within the context of that meeting, I was the
5 person who was charged by the Prime Minister to advise
6 him on all the presentational aspects to do with the
7 dossier, and indeed its production, which was going to
8 be enormous. I think on the day that the dossier was
9 published, the website sort of crashed and the interest
10 was absolutely huge.

11 So John's role within that, which was clearly
12 understood by everybody -- and I think also in a way it
13 hopefully was of assistance to John Scarlett and the
14 JIC, that, in a sense, we were so clearly having that
15 relationship, because to the rest of government it was
16 sending very, very clearly the message: this is now the
17 document that the Prime Minister is going to present to
18 Parliament and that guy over there, John Scarlett, is
19 the man in charge of it.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it was still an unusual thing.

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I accept that.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There wasn't precedent,
23 particularly, for you chairing a meeting of intelligence
24 professionals, with intelligence professionals present?

25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: There had been meetings that I had

1 had before where intelligence people would have been
2 there because they had legitimate and appropriate advice
3 to give to me about presentational and communications
4 issues.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You sent around a memo afterwards
6 which indicated the main headings to be covered, the
7 importance of this being a JIC product and John Scarlett
8 being happy with it. There were two additional points.

9 You drew attention to the fact that the media
10 political judgment will inevitably focus on what's new,
11 and you expressed pleasure that the intelligence
12 community was going to take a helpful approach in going
13 through their material.

14 What did you have in mind there?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What I had in mind there was the fact
16 that there were these reportings, reports in parts of
17 the media of rumblings within the intelligence
18 community, and throughout the process, John Scarlett,
19 Richard Dearlove and others made absolutely clear that
20 in the senior positions within the agencies and the JIC,
21 that was not the attitude at all and that they
22 understood why the Prime Minister wanted to present this
23 in the way that he intended to.

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Does a helpful approach in going
25 through material mean looking for material that perhaps

1 hadn't seen the light of day before, but might help to
2 make an impact?

3 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think it was making sure that all
4 of the -- that the material that the Prime Minister
5 might be referring to when he is saying, "I'm seeing
6 more and more intelligence, which makes me more and more
7 concerned about Iraq as a threat", that that was
8 considered for inclusion in the dossier.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then the second, you said that
10 a team was being established to review the document from
11 an presentational point of view, including John Williams
12 from the Foreign Office, which was to make
13 recommendations. How did this team work during the
14 production of the dossier?

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think the -- look, that -- when
16 I said at the Hutton Inquiry that there were all sorts
17 of people putting in comments and putting in
18 suggestions, they were perfectly entitled to do that,
19 and I was, in a sense, involving all the people within
20 my own -- within the Number 10 operation, but also
21 people in the Foreign Office and elsewhere, who, when it
22 came to the presentation of the dossier, which, as
23 I said several times, was going to be a pretty major
24 communications event, that they were fully brought into
25 the process as well.

1 So they were able to make comments and then it was
2 entirely up to -- in terms of any redrafting, it was
3 entirely up to John Scarlett and his team as to whether
4 they took any notice or not.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But they were sitting in on some of
6 the drafting meetings?

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think I ever went to a --

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Nothing --

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: -- drafting meeting as such. Again,
10 I wouldn't necessarily be aware of all the different
11 meetings that John Scarlett and Julian Miller and his
12 team might have been having, but certainly this was
13 a very, very significant piece of communications. As
14 you have said, it was -- although we had done the
15 Al-Qaeda document using some intelligence material
16 before, on this scale nothing like it had ever been done
17 before.

18 So certainly within some of my colleagues at
19 Number 10 and those in the Foreign Office, they had
20 a legitimate interest in understanding the preparation
21 of this, but the whole way through it could not have
22 been made clearer to everybody that nothing would
23 override the intelligence judgments and that
24 John Scarlett was the person who, if you like, had the
25 single pen.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But people -- I mean, quoting from
2 a memo to the Prime Minister from John Scarlett of
3 4 June 2003, he said that:

4 "With the agreement of the agencies, representatives
5 from Number 10 (Danny Pruce) and FCO press officers,
6 John Williams, Paul Hamill and James Paver were
7 involved."

8 So this was -- they were quite actively engaged in
9 the discussions.

10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I expect that's John's way of just
11 making clear to the Prime Minister that this has gone
12 through all the people that he would probably expect it
13 to take a look at a document that he is going to present
14 to Parliament.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can we just clarify the role of
16 Mr Williams? Since the Hutton Report, a document has
17 been released of a draft prepared by him, his press
18 secretary in the Foreign Office. Some people have
19 described this as a first draft of the dossier, but
20 would you say that was fair?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No. Well, as I understand it -- and
22 I don't recall ever seeing it. It doesn't mean
23 I didn't, but I don't recall ever seeing it, and I think
24 that was John -- you would have to ask John Williams
25 this, and I can't recall whether he was asked about it

1 at the Hutton Inquiry, but that was John Williams, in
2 a sense, putting what was described as a frontispiece to
3 one of the papers that you had referred to that had been
4 produced within the JIC earlier.

5 Once we got to September 5 and September 9, it was
6 anything that anybody had written before, frankly, was
7 to be used by John Scarlett as he saw fit. But I did
8 not see that as a draft dossier.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When Sir John Scarlett passed you
10 the first draft on 10 September I think you have referred
11 to considerable help from John Williams --

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just emphasise for the sake
13 of -- I'm not remotely critical of John Williams in
14 this. He was totally legitimately wanting to help in
15 terms of the building the arguments, in terms of making
16 sure that all the presentational aspects were right, but
17 there came a point within the process -- and I remember
18 at one point Jack Straw phoned me up and said, "Look,
19 John" -- John obviously worked very, very closely with
20 the Foreign Secretary, and Jack, being very, very
21 helpful, he said, "If you want John Williams full-time
22 on this writing it, then he is there", and it was in
23 that spirit that that was being offered, not, as it
24 were, a kind of turf war trying to grab this thing away
25 from the JIC.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Okay. When this first draft was
2 distributed, which John Scarlett said had drawn on all
3 the available intelligence identified so far, the
4 response from some people on the presentational side was
5 a bit disappointed. There is an email string of
6 11 September that starts with Daniel Pruce, who wants to
7 play it more of the nature of intelligence sourcing,
8 then Godric Smith, a PM spokesman, comes in worrying it
9 is a bit of a muddle, it needs a lot more clarity and
10 then it comes to Phil Bassett, who I think worked for
11 you.

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. Well, he was a special adviser
13 to the Prime Minister.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But worked for you, and who agreed
15 it should be written more in officialese and less
16 journalistic. It needed more weight and more that was
17 new:

18 "Crucially [he complained], it is intelligence
19 lite. It feels like this is the least possible
20 intelligence material that the intell people are
21 prepared to let go, despite the fact that we say that
22 it's everything that the government knows on this issue,
23 which it clearly isn't."

24 Now, this sort of reads as if the presentational
25 team couldn't believe that the intelligence material was

1 so thin.

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That may have been their honestly

3 held opinions, but I didn't agree with them. I actually

4 thought that the paper that John Scarlett produced

5 on September 10 was -- it certainly had -- I thought it

6 was a very, very good piece of work. So, as I said at

7 the Hutton inquiry, they are all perfectly entitled to

8 make those points, if that's their opinion, but,

9 ultimately, it would not be their decision as to what

10 went in or, indeed, what the overall structure or --

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it is relevant in terms of being

12 concerned about making the maximum impact.

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes --

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If this was their reaction --

15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that is relevant, and I think

16 it is interesting, of course, that when -- look, when --

17 the Prime Minister wrote a note to -- I think it was one

18 of his Monday morning notes that I referred to earlier,

19 and he said on the dossier:

20 "The expectations must be right ..."

21 I have dated it. It says:

22 "Remember, the case we need to make is for the

23 return of a tough inspections regime, not that he is

24 about to launch a strike."

25 Now, if people were expecting a document that said

1 we are all going to be sitting cowering in our homes
2 because Saddam Hussein is about to launch off nuclear
3 weapons at Peterborough, that was not what was being
4 said. Therefore -- I think the Butler Report pointed
5 out that, when the dossier itself was published, lots of
6 the media said it was very dull, very cautious, nothing
7 much new, but we never wanted it to be anything other
8 than setting out -- people talk about it being the case
9 for war. It was not the case for war, it was the case
10 why the Prime Minister had become more concerned.

11 Now, if somebody in the press office thought it
12 wasn't this, and it wasn't that, fine, but I thought it
13 was a very, very serious, solid piece of work.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It is not just a question of the
15 nature of the threat it is presenting, because, as you
16 say, this wasn't necessarily a threat assessment, it was
17 an assessment of the evidence, but it was a sense
18 that -- you could say that they were assuming that what
19 they were seeing was the tip of an iceberg, in terms of
20 intelligence material, but, actually, there was nothing
21 below the water, that this was actually all that there
22 was.

23 So what they were drawing attention to was the
24 problem that, whatever the message, the intelligence on
25 which it seemed to have been based, at least on which it

1 had been shown in that draft, was thin.

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: They were entitled to that view, but

3 I didn't share it.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But on that evening of 11 September,

5 you met with John Scarlett, and, after that meeting,

6 a note went round reporting, I guess, on your views. It

7 says -- it states that:

8 "Number 10, through the Chairman, want the document

9 to be as strong as possible within the bounds of

10 available intelligence."

11 So this is urging more to be done, looking for more

12 material.

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think, look, there was a process,

14 like there is with any such publication, and, as I said

15 to you earlier, I think that was the point at which John

16 came to me and said, "Look, I need presentational advice

17 and support on this", and that's what I gave, but

18 I think, as John Scarlett also made clear many, many

19 times at the Hutton Inquiry, at no time did I ever ask

20 him to beef up, override any of the judgments that he

21 had and so forth.

22 So it was -- and what's more, I think that the --

23 the JIC wanted this document to be as strong and

24 complete as possible as well.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the problems that comes into

1 focus as you are taking an intelligence community which
2 in its normal workings is very tentative, is very
3 cautious, there are fine degrees of probability which it
4 used to qualify its judgments, and the world in which
5 you are involved, which is much more definite, geared to
6 the news cycle and so on. Bringing these two into line
7 is bound to affect in some way the way that a normal
8 intelligence product would be presented.

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, I'm not sure about that. Look,
10 is it the normal stuff of intelligence officers' work,
11 to be engaged in that kind of production? No, is the
12 answer to that. But they weren't really normal times
13 and you were in a situation where, on this particular
14 policy, as it evolved and developed, this did become --
15 I mean he is the Prime Minister, he is conscious of the
16 fact that he had got an incredibly difficult and serious
17 decision that he is going to have to make, a serious set
18 of decisions that he is going to have to make as this
19 process evolves, and I think he was just in a position
20 of saying, "Here I am. I see this intelligence, I am
21 becoming more and more concerned that we are going to
22 have to face up to this and we are going to have to deal
23 with it. We are going to have to stop turning a blind
24 eye to it", and he wanted to share that with the public.
25 Now, once he has made that decision, as the

1 Prime Minister, and ultimately the head of the
2 intelligence services as well, then, where I sit, I have
3 to kind of do my part of that -- the job that follows
4 from that, and they have to do it, but at no point did
5 anybody, from the Prime Minister down, say to anybody
6 within the intelligence services, "Look, you have got to
7 tailor it to fit this argument, that argument". It just
8 never happened.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the pressure is on --

10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but if John Scarlett --

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You are trying to make a case. We
12 have heard from Sir William Ehrman who stressed how
13 careful were officials to indicate that intelligence was
14 sporadic and patchy, poor, limited. The 9 September
15 estimates on which much of the dossier was based says
16 that intelligence remains limited. So there is
17 a problem here that you want a strong case, but it has
18 to be based on limited evidence.

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: All I can say is that that document
20 that was presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister
21 was -- it was a JIC document with the Prime Minister's
22 foreword upon it, and I think that the -- if that had
23 been the view that -- so when the Prime Minister said,
24 for example, in the foreword, what he believed the
25 intelligence had assessed, that's what he believed the

1 intelligence had assessed, because to quote John Sawers'
2 evidence to you, he believed the intelligence. Why
3 shouldn't he?

4 So I think actually, in a sense, I -- I don't
5 really -- I don't believe that the dossier in any sense
6 misrepresented the position. I think it was cautious.
7 I think it was -- I think everybody involved in this was
8 aware of the unprecedented nature of it, and for that --
9 in part because of that took great care in the handling
10 of it and -- look, let's be absolutely frank. I don't
11 think we would be even having this exchange if it was
12 not for the controversy which subsequently ensued, which
13 was, may I say it, not of our doing?

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm not talking about the
15 controversy which subsequently ensued, this was the
16 major case that was made at the time for the basis
17 for -- not for war, for stepping up -- policy.

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Which Hans Blix himself said. He
19 said it set out the case for toughened inspections.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was about making the case, but
21 had to work with the intelligence that was available.

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, just -- we have mentioned the
24 previous inquiries that have looked at this.

25 Lord Hutton suggested that the JIC might have been:

1 "... subconsciously influenced to make the wording
2 of the dossier somewhat stronger than it would have been
3 if it had contained the normal JIC assessment."

4 Do you accept that might have happened?

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I don't, because of the nature of
6 John Scarlett. I just don't accept that at all. I can
7 see why Lord Hutton might say that, but I can just say,
8 from where I sat, seeing how John Scarlett and his team
9 approached, not just that task, but every task I ever
10 saw them involved in, I don't accept that, no.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And the Butler Committee:

12 "More weight was based on the intelligence than it
13 could bear and the language in the dossier gave the
14 impression that there was fuller and firmer intelligence
15 behind the judgment than was the case."

16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Again, all I can say is -- I repeat
17 myself -- that when the Prime Minister in his, not just
18 my exchanges with John Scarlett but also his own, he was
19 absolutely clear that they, the JIC, had to be happy
20 with that document, and in terms of its emphasis, let me
21 also say, again, because people know I'm not remotely
22 suggesting you in this, but because large parts of the
23 media now routinely rewrite the history around this,
24 I think the way the Prime Minister presented it to
25 Parliament actually was on, if you like, the cautious

1 side of things.

2 He said in terms intelligence can't give you the
3 whole picture, intelligence is not necessarily always
4 going to be right, but the intelligence he saw, both in
5 terms of -- and as it was explained to him and as he had
6 repeated discussions and meetings about it, it led him
7 to the conclusion, as he set out in the foreword, that
8 he did believe it was established beyond doubt that
9 Saddam had continued to produce chemical and biological
10 weapons, that he continued to put his efforts to develop
11 nuclear weapons, and that he has been able to extend the
12 range of his ballistic missile programme, and he sees
13 WMD as essential to his political survival.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We will come on, in a moment, to
15 some of the judgments that he made, but, just to
16 conclude this section, you have described a process in
17 which the intelligence agencies, through the JIC, are
18 keen to do their best to get evidence into the public
19 domain in a serious way possible. They understand the
20 policy context. You have told us how John Scarlett is
21 regularly attending policy meetings.

22 Maybe these are not questions for you, but it is an
23 issue that they are being drawn into helping make a case
24 and that they want to help. They want to serve the
25 government as much as you do, and, therefore, it is not

1 necessarily that surprising if, as Lord Hutton put it,
2 there was a subconscious desire to push things beyond
3 which they might normally go.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: All I can say to that is that I think
5 that the relationship that John Scarlett had with the
6 Prime Minister and the respect that the Prime Minister
7 had for John Scarlett and his integrity and his
8 commitment and his professionalism, that -- you would
9 have to ask John Scarlett this, but I just don't accept
10 that he would have felt under that pressure. I think,
11 if John Scarlett had actually felt, "Look, the
12 intelligence really doesn't bear out the argument that
13 you want to present in Parliament, I think the
14 Prime Minister would just have accepted that, but the
15 reason why we have got to this place in the first place
16 in this process in the first place, was because the
17 Prime Minister had become more and more concerned about
18 the intelligence that he received.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can we now turn to the question of
20 the foreword? Did you draft this?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, I think what happened was that
22 there was a meeting at which -- and this would often be
23 the case, in which, in a sense, the Prime Minister, if
24 you like, would give me a verbal draft. He would tell
25 me what he wanted to say within the foreword and I would

1 go away and write something and then I would show that
2 to people within the system before going back to him.

3 So again, I can't remember every step of the process
4 but that would probably be -- and I certainly remember,
5 as it were, the meeting at which he said, "Look, this is
6 what the foreword should say".

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: He was very comfortable with the
8 sort of lines that you came up with?

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, and almost certainly will have
10 rewritten them, and almost certainly a draft will have
11 gone round the system and people will have made comments
12 in the normal way, and then, ultimately, he would have
13 signed off the final version.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, Sir John told us that he saw
15 the foreword as something quite separate from the text
16 of the dossier itself. It was an overtly political
17 statement signed by the Prime Minister, and, therefore,
18 not something he felt he would change.

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He did change it, though, in several
20 respects.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: He changed it on the reference to
22 JIC.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think what happened was that the
24 foreword, I think I'm right in saying, went to John and
25 then was copied to all members of the JIC, and, again,

1 any one of them -- if any one of them had a concern
2 about any aspect of it, I know for a fact that the
3 Prime Minister would have taken that on board.

4 So I think John Scarlett made a number of small
5 suggestions, all of which were taken on board, and
6 I understand what he says -- I understand what he means
7 by that. There is a foreword by the Prime Minister,
8 which, in a sense, was in part the basis for the
9 Prime Minister's statement to Parliament as well in
10 a very high profile, pretty politically charged by then
11 context. Sir John Scarlett quite rightly said, "This is
12 the bit I have done", but I think if John Scarlett or
13 any of his team had had any concerns of real substance
14 about the foreword, then they know they could have
15 raised those directly with the Prime Minister.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So when we take the sentence:

17 "What I believe the assessment has established
18 beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to produce
19 chemical and biological weapons."

20 Nobody challenged the "beyond doubt"?

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Then:

23 "Sir William Ehrman noted to us that intelligence
24 does not have that certainty attached to it."

25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think, as a general -- if you like,

1 going back to the point you made earlier, as a general
2 philosophical point, I think that is a perfectly fair
3 point to make, but this is the Prime Minister presenting
4 this to Parliament and saying, if you like, that he is
5 in no doubt, based upon the fact that the intelligence
6 people who briefed him are clear that this is a --
7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: "Beyond doubt" sounds like beyond
8 anybody's doubt.
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but at that time, if you would
10 have spoken to the head of the French intelligence
11 service or the German intelligence service -- even the
12 countries that ultimately did not go with the
13 United States and the UK and the other allies in this,
14 nobody was really saying that Saddam Hussein did not
15 have weapons of mass destruction and that he wasn't
16 a potential threat with them.
17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We can argue about some of that, but
18 it is a very strong phrase and --
19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But again -- and this is why --
20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It supports the view that a case has
21 been made that is irrefutable.
22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Okay. Would it have been that
23 weakened, had those two words not been there? Probably
24 not. Because, in a sense, what the document did was it
25 set out a pretty broad-ranging case, and it had the

1 history.

2 If you go to the -- I repeat the point I made
3 earlier that was noted in the Butler Report about the
4 media commentary at the time. It was that this was
5 pretty conservative, it was very cautious, there was
6 nothing terribly explosive about it. The reporter who
7 provoked the controversy later actually said, "There is
8 nothing new in this, we have known all this for years".

9 So I don't know what more I can say about that,
10 other than -- because I can't remember every part of
11 every discussion about it, but I think that what we were
12 doing, as I say, was making a case as to why the
13 government, why the Prime Minister, had grown much, much
14 more concerned about this as a serious credible current
15 threat.

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think it was sensible to
17 incorporate the foreword into the document in the way
18 that it did, because it did suggest that the JIC was
19 endorsing the foreword. Indeed, the process you have --
20 I mean, it is moving on. It is moving the JIC --

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look the Prime Minister was going to
22 be going along to Parliament and standing up and making
23 a statement which is based on the contents of the
24 foreword, and he was going to be saying, "It is all
25 based upon this". There is not that much difference

1 between that. It was going to be put into the political
2 and public arena on a global basis.

3 Now, you could argue as to whether that judgment
4 should never have been taken, but I'm going back to the
5 point I made earlier about the changing nature of the
6 media landscape and the political landscape and the fact
7 that people no longer are just prepared to say, "If the
8 Prime Minister says it is intelligence, yes, okay,
9 Prime Minister, we will buy that, that's fine".

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I intervene? I just want to establish
11 one point, if I may, just regarding Sir John Scarlett
12 and indeed others' ability to raise points on the text
13 of the foreword.

14 Sir John told us that he saw the foreword as
15 something quite separate to the text of the dossier, and
16 that is not disputed, but he also told us that it was,
17 in his judgment, an overtly political statement, yes,
18 signed by the Prime Minister and not something therefore
19 that he could change. Desmond Bowen, in his evidence --
20 or, rather, in a minute indeed -- said much the same
21 thing. Now, they had the opportunity to intervene, they
22 could, but they didn't, because they felt they couldn't.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't -- look --

24 THE CHAIRMAN: You don't agree with that?

25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I'm not disagreeing with how -- look,

1 I don't -- I'm not going to say anything remotely
2 critical about John Scarlett, for whom I have huge
3 regard, but I don't believe that, had any of the JIC
4 thought that the foreword in any sense overstated the
5 case to a degree that would make the work that they had
6 done -- hit its credibility, that they would -- either
7 they didn't feel they had the opportunity to say
8 something, or, indeed, that they wouldn't have done.

9 I think, as I said to you earlier, albeit that they
10 were quite minor changes, the JIC did make changes. It
11 is not as if they say, "That text there a sacrosanct.
12 You can't touch it".

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I just follow up the point? There are
14 two references to doubt in the foreword. One is the
15 Prime Minister saying, "I'm in no doubt that the threat
16 is current and serious". Fine. But it also says, "What
17 I believe the assessed intelligence has established
18 beyond doubt ..."

19 Not fine?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Not fine?

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Because assessed intelligence never
22 establishes anything beyond doubt.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: All I can say to you, this is the
24 Prime Minister presenting this document to Parliament
25 and him saying what he believes it tells him, and also

1 that -- you know, I had been in meetings with
2 John Scarlett and other intelligence officials, and, is
3 that what they were saying? Yes, it is.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally on the foreword,
5 Jonathan Powell emerges saying the document does nothing
6 to demonstrate a threat, let alone an imminent threat,
7 from Saddam. Then you reply saying:
8 "That is why TB's foreword sets out the case that
9 I'm making."

10 So in a sense, the importance of the foreword is
11 that it turns an intelligence assessment into a threat
12 assessment?

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No. No. I think actually Jonathan
14 was making -- look, we were never saying that this was
15 us setting out that Saddam Hussein was about to, you
16 know, do something terrible to the British mainland.
17 That wasn't what we were saying. So I don't think
18 the --

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, it can be a threat assessment
20 without having --

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but I think the foreword was
22 really never anything other than the Prime Minister,
23 yes, putting his stamp on this document and also on the
24 debate that was going to flow from it, and it was,
25 I suppose, the basis for some of the arguments that he

1 then set out in Parliament, but I don't accept that it
2 changed the -- as it were, took parts of an argument
3 from here and then made it something different in the
4 foreword.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, it made it something different
6 in the sense that it drew the policy implications in the
7 foreword.

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He is the Prime Minister. That's in
9 part what he is there for.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In the first draft of the dossier it
11 stated:

12 "The case I make is not that Saddam could launch
13 a nuclear attack on London or another part of the UK.
14 He could not."

15 Which reinforces the point you have just made, but
16 then that sentence was removed for the final draft.

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Again, no idea why specifically --
18 but he made a very, very similar point in Parliament.

19 So -- look, you would be aware of this, that things
20 get drafted and redrafted and written and rewritten but
21 there was no sort of significant strategic or policy
22 reasons as to why that sentence shouldn't be there.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Let me stay with the nuclear issue.
24 It seems from what we have already looked at, that, on
25 the presentational side, there was a concern

1 particularly about the thinness of the material.

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Not by me, and not by the

3 Prime Minister, more importantly.

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: "In our evidence from Tim Dowse and

5 William Ehrman, they confirmed the view that the nuclear

6 issue was manageable with Saddam so long as sanctions

7 were in place."

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On the 16 September draft it noted

10 that:

11 "With sanctions in place, Iraq would not be able to

12 produce a nuclear weapon. Without sanctions, it would

13 take five years."

14 They conclude from this that:

15 "The timescale would shorten if Iraq succeeded in

16 obtaining fissile material from abroad."

17 That is taken directly from the JIC, I believe. So

18 basically, the line that has been taken here, put it

19 this way, was the Iraqis knew how to cook, but they

20 lacked the ingredients. So long as sanctions were in

21 place, they wouldn't get the ingredients; if sanctions

22 were removed, it would take them five years to get the

23 ingredients themselves.

24 But, self-evidently, and to my mind possibly

25 implausibly, if someone just gave them the ingredients,

1 then it would take them far less time. That is
2 basically the sort of position that they are taking.

3 But you have now got a particular problem with that,
4 which was retaining some sort of consistency with the
5 Americans. President Bush in his speech to the UN
6 General Assembly on 12 September said:

7 "Should Iraq acquire fissile material ..."

8 Which is this basic point about somebody giving them
9 the ingredients:

10 "... they would be able to build a nuclear weapon
11 within a year."

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, that obviously begs all the
14 important questions about how they would get the fissile
15 material.

16 So did you see that as a problem of reconciliation
17 between a rather relaxed timetable suggested by the JIC
18 and this incredibly urgent timetable that had been
19 mentioned by the President?

20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I saw the latest Guardian conspiracy
21 theory story yesterday about this issue and I had no
22 knowledge of any discussions between Britain and America
23 on that. So far as I recall, the only discussion I had
24 on that particular section in the dossier, on nuclear
25 timelines was because in one of the drafts I genuinely

1 did not understand what they were saying, because they
2 appeared to be suggesting that Saddam Hussein could get
3 a nuclear weapon more quickly with sanctions in place
4 than with sanctions removed, and what it transpired was
5 what they were not making clear in the earlier draft was
6 the question of legality.

7 So that is -- and another point on this, if I may:
8 when this issue was raised at the Hutton Inquiry,
9 Mr Dingemans, the Council's QC, took me through the
10 issue in some detail and pointed out that the Institute
11 of Strategic Studies had said that they thought Iraq
12 could get a nuclear weapon in nine months.

13 Now, if we were in the sexing up business, I think
14 I'd have been, and we'd have been, pressing for that.
15 So I am afraid, on this whole business about us trying
16 to align with the Americans, if that was going on at the
17 intelligence level, I have no idea, but in terms of my
18 role in relation to the dossier I had nothing to do with
19 it whatsoever.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But on 17 September you sent
21 a minute to Scarlett, noting that:

22 "The Prime Minister shares your worries about this
23 ... "

24 -- paragraph, the one that was in the 16 September
25 draft, and you both would like a timeline. It says:

1 " ... radiological device in months, nuclear bomb in
2 one to two years."

3 Which was different from what that had been on the
4 16th -- and that does start to align with the
5 Americans -- five years with no sanctions. But it makes
6 it much more specific.

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, maybe it does, but all I'm
8 saying to you is that the point that I've been making in
9 relation to nuclear timelines within the dossier was not
10 about what they were saying, be they the JIC or the
11 Americans or the Institute of Strategic Studies; it's
12 the fact that I couldn't understand how, in one of the
13 drafts, it had appeared to suggest that he could do it
14 more quickly without sanctions than with sanctions.
15 That's the point --

16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But that wasn't the only email you
17 sent on that around that time. There was one on
18 18 September. You reported the comments of someone in
19 your office who found the nuclear section confusing and
20 unconvincing:

21 "It left me thinking there is nothing much to worry
22 about. Sorry to bombard you on this point but I do
23 worry that the nuclear section will become the main
24 focus and, as currently drafted, is not in great shape."

25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, it wasn't clear. That's the

1 point I was making.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In response John Scarlett explained
3 that they had no intelligence to justify saying anything
4 on an improvised nuclear device, which, of course, is
5 a radiological weapon, but he had amended the sections
6 to make it clearer, and the section in the 19 September
7 draft does change and it now includes this one- to
8 two-year timeline.

9 So something had changed. So, for some reason, this
10 had not been in the initial draft but now it is saying:

11 "We, therefore, judge that if Iraq obtains fissile
12 material and other essential components from foreign
13 sources, the timeline for the production of a nuclear
14 weapon could be shortened and Iraq could produce
15 a nuclear weapon in between one and two years."

16 That is quite a significant change --

17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Because, on the evidence that we
19 had, the focus was on five years after the lifting of
20 sanctions. Now, we are taking up a very particular
21 scenario, in which somebody is giving Iraq an awful lot
22 of help.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Right. But all I'm saying to you --
24 I can only talk to you about what I know and what I do
25 and what I did, and all I'm saying to you is that, in

1 writing anything that flowed from any intelligence
2 assessment, then that was not my role, that was not my
3 position. So, if it did change from draft to draft,
4 then that is because John Scarlett and his team have
5 chosen, based upon the intelligence assessments, to
6 write it in a different way.

7 I pointed out, I think, a perfectly legitimate
8 point, which is that I did not understand it. If you
9 like, a layman's point: I did not understand what they
10 were saying, and as a result of that --

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: As I said, this was not the only --

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I know the email --

14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It may not have been the only email,
15 and the fact that somebody else -- that email that you
16 read to me, written by somebody else, seems to me to be
17 making the same point.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, no --

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, it is impossible to get
20 a transcription with cross conversation.

21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Sorry.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The email I was just quoting was you
23 reporting somebody else's comments to you.

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So you thought that was important

1 to --

2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, if the email is what I think it

3 is --

4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It was somebody in your office.

5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Right, and what I did was I took --

6 at a stage -- look, quite a few people within the office

7 have seen this in every stage, every draft. I took it

8 to somebody who had not been involved in the process at

9 all and said, "I would just like you to read this. You

10 are now a member of the public. I want you to tell me

11 what you think about it," and I think actually they are

12 making exactly the same point that I made. I don't --

13 she couldn't quite understand that point.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In your published diary for

15 19 September you say that:

16 "Nuclear timeline is just about sorted."

17 So what did you mean by that?

18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What I meant by that is that finally,

19 after a bit of discussion about it, Julian Miller and

20 John Scarlett had written it in a way that I understood,

21 everybody else understood. But let me -- I cannot

22 stress strongly enough, in relation to anything that

23 flows from an intelligence assessment -- and I think

24 this was very, very clear from the memos that you

25 referred to, both my memos to John Scarlett and his

1 responses, that not a single one of them at any time
2 sought to question, override, rewrite, let alone the
3 ghastly "sex up" phrase, the intelligence assessments in
4 any way, at any time, on any level.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But what we are looking at is
6 a process where the overall impression you get from the
7 intelligence shifts, and we start off with the
8 situation, which we have had confirmed to us, was the --

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, you should ask John Scarlett
10 about that.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm not just talking about
12 John Scarlett -- a situation in which the overall view
13 was that five years after the ending of sanctions could
14 produce a nuclear weapon to one where the Prime Minister
15 stands up in the Commons, doesn't mention the five years
16 but says:

17 "There will be others who say, rightly, that, for
18 example, on present going, it could be several years
19 before he acquires a usable nuclear weapon. Though, if
20 he were able to purchase fissile materiel illegally, it
21 would only be a year or two."

22 So this is now highlighted.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't accept that it is
24 highlighted. What he has done -- and also you could
25 have added at the end of that: although the Institute of

1 Strategic Studies, a hugely respected body on this issue,
2 says it could be nine months.

3 So I think -- I'm sorry to repeat myself but I think
4 we are in part having this discussion -- I completely
5 accept that there is an argument to be had about whether
6 intelligence material should be used by an elected
7 Prime Minister in explaining to the public the
8 decision-making process. I think it is a good thing.
9 I think actually it showed much greater openness in
10 government. I think it was a genuine attempt to take
11 the public into his confidence about why he was as
12 concerned as he was.

13 I really do believe that it is only because of the
14 subsequent controversy that we are still talking about
15 this line, that line, this paragraph, that paragraph,
16 and some of the changes that took place in the drafting
17 process.

18 And all I can say -- I'm sorry, I'll just repeat
19 myself because, when it came to it, I was not being
20 accused of, sort of, you know, moving this line and
21 moving that line, shifting this paragraph, shifting that
22 paragraph; I was being accused of distorting
23 intelligence, of forcing intelligence officials to do
24 things that they didn't want to do, and it was simply
25 untrue. Now --

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On this basis, you will be delighted
2 to know I am now going to turn to the 45 minutes claim.

3 Now, this has been a subject of great interest,
4 a number of inquiries. It has been established that you
5 didn't make up the claim and that you didn't insert it
6 in the dossier.

7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It has been established, yes.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So that's fine. But important
9 issues still have been raised about the way the claim
10 was expressed and used.

11 Now, one view is that there was nothing particularly
12 exceptional or surprising about this information, and we
13 have this from Tim Dowse in his evidence. He recalls
14 his assumption that this was:

15 " ... referring to something like multi-barrelled
16 rocket launches, the sort of weapon or delivery system
17 that could be kept ready for rapid deployment in the
18 event of a conflict."

19 So the key thing is that this refers to battlefield
20 systems. The JIC assessment of the new intelligence,
21 used after drafting discussions on 9 September, states
22 that:

23 "Iraq has probably dispersed its special weapons,
24 including its CBW weapons. Intelligence also indicates
25 that chemical and biological munitions could be with

1 military units and ready for firing within 20 to
2 45 minutes."

3 After the dissemination of the first draft of the
4 dossier, it was suggested that this new intelligence
5 should go in to the next draft, and that appears as:

6 "The Iraq military may be able to deploy chemical or
7 biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do
8 so."

9 Right? Now, we can already note here an important
10 ambiguity creeping in. This isn't just a question of
11 distortion or misleading or anything like that, it is
12 about the problem, when you are dealing with quite
13 technical issues, of creating an accurate sense of what
14 is involved, because when you are using the word
15 "munitions", that really conveys battlefield use,
16 whereas "weapons" could be anything; they could be long
17 range weapons.

18 I'm just wondering whether you or members of your
19 team were involved in the discussion of how this
20 45 minutes was going to be introduced in the drafting
21 and whether this distinction was one that was understood
22 by your team or mattered.

23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think the -- again, I think
24 somebody -- one of your earlier witnesses talked about
25 this iconic 45 minutes -- and again it certainly wasn't

1 us that made it iconic and again I noted in the
2 Butler Report that -- I had forgotten this, but that the
3 Butler Committee wrote to 60 editors and senior
4 journalists to ask whether the government had been
5 seeking to promote this 45 minutes point as a major part
6 of the September dossier, and uniformly they said, "No,
7 we had not."

8 It wasn't within the discussions, to be frank, it
9 wasn't that big a deal. And you may say, "Well, it was
10 mentioned here and the Prime Minister mentioned it in
11 his foreword, he mentioned it in the house." That's
12 true, he mentioned lots and lots of different things: he
13 mentioned lots of different arguments, he mentioned lots
14 of different parts of the dossier. I have made two
15 points on this. I mean, the original intelligence, as
16 you say, says 20 to 45 minutes. If we had been in the
17 sexing up game, I think we would have said, "Come on
18 John, can't we do the 20 minutes rather than the
19 45 minutes?" That discussion never took place. I don't
20 think actually I was even aware of that until quite late
21 on in the process, and likewise, when the Prime Minister
22 stood up in the House of Commons -- and I think, in
23 terms of the public, what they would see out of the
24 dossier -- I don't know how many people actually read
25 it, I don't know, but more people would have seen the

1 Prime Minister standing up in Parliament, and when he
2 referred to the 45 minutes, within the same sentence he
3 talked about including against his own Shia population.

4 So I don't think we were ever saying, "Look,
5 Saddam Hussein has got these weapons and he can whack
6 them off the Cyprus in 45 minutes," and if one or two of
7 the papers went down that line, they weren't pushed
8 there by us.

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I accept that but if you are talking
10 about the importance of bringing intelligence into the
11 public domain, which personally I'm all in favour of --

12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Could it have been clearer?

13 Obviously. You can go back, with the benefit of
14 hindsight, and you can rewrite every single thing, but
15 I'm simply saying to you that that was not that big
16 a point within the overall presentation of the case that
17 the Prime Minister was putting at the time.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just make a couple more points
19 on this then? First, there is a purely presentational
20 question, which I don't want to spend a lot of time on,
21 but if you actually look at the way that the 45 minutes
22 claim was presented at the start of chapter 3 in the
23 dossier, it appears some distance away from the point
24 where chemical and biological weapons have been
25 developed for artillery, freefall bombs, sprays and so

1 on, and then just after a piece on extended range
2 versions of scud ballistic missiles capable of reaching
3 Tehran, Eastern Turkey and Cyprus. So, just one of the
4 consequences of where the point was located, it was that
5 it encouraged a link with longer range weapons than was
6 the case. I'm not saying whose responsibility it was
7 but it certainly had a impact.

8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think that's -- I think,
9 again, we are only looking at this in such microscopic
10 detail in that way because it became such
11 a controversial thing subsequently.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But it was something that --

13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Nobody was really saying that at the
14 time.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, they were in the sense of how
16 it was picked up by the press, which I will come to in
17 a second.

18 Then we have this question, which again was the
19 discrepancy between the draft text, which said:

20 "The Iraqi military may be able to deploy these
21 weapons within 45 minutes of a decision to do so."

22 But the executive summary says:

23 "... has military plans for the use of chemical and
24 biological weapons, some of which can be ready within
25 45 minutes of an order to use them."

1 And by the next draft the text has come in line with
2 the executive summary. Now, you did make a suggestion
3 that that should be done.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I pointed out an inconsistency,
5 which I think is exactly what I was there to do. As you
6 rightly say, it was expressed differently in different
7 places and I pointed that out. What I didn't say was,
8 "You should write it this way."

9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would you have been surprised if
10 a "may" had come into the executive summary?

11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It was entirely then -- once I'd --
12 in the memo that you referred to, and I set out a series
13 of observations -- it was thereafter entirely up to John
14 Scarlett to decide how he resolved those, and on that
15 one I simply pointed out -- I said, "Look it is
16 mentioned here and it is expressed differently in this
17 other part of the paper." So -- and as I understand
18 it -- again this is from memory -- I think Julian Miller
19 had already spotted it anyway.

20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And it also would have been an
21 inconsistency with the foreword, where it was stated
22 that his military planning allows for some of the WMD to
23 be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them.

24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think it is an -- I don't
25 think it is -- I think it is expressed differently but

1 I don't think it is inconsistent and, as I say, he
2 expressed it differently again when he stood up in the
3 House of Commons. But, you know, we don't all go round
4 saying the same thing in exactly the same way on every
5 occasion. I really don't think that -- I think this is
6 a point that has been gone over exhaustively, not
7 because of any of the decision-making process at the
8 time of the dossier, but because of the controversy
9 which followed much later.

10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I am about to finish and I will come
11 to that. I just want to check first: were you aware
12 that there were a number of intelligence
13 professionals -- I am thinking here of Dr Brian Jones
14 and others in DIS -- who were aware that this
15 tightening-up of language was creating a degree of
16 certainty in the language that was not justified. He
17 wasn't opposed to including the phrase but he said
18 intelligence -- it should be "intelligence suggests".

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I wasn't, and I was aware, as I said
20 earlier, of some reports in the press of some people
21 within the agencies suggesting disquiet, but as I said
22 to you earlier, John Scarlett, Richard Dearlove and
23 others made clear that that did not represent the view
24 of the leadership of the agencies, nor indeed their own
25 assessment of how most people within the agencies felt.

1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just -- finally can
2 I conclude with -- you have mentioned already this
3 footnote in the Butler Report which comments on
4 correspondence with editors of national and regional
5 newspapers, and what it says there is:
6 " ... a number of suggestions that the 45-minute
7 story attracted attention because it was eye-catching in
8 a document containing much that was either not new or
9 rather technical in nature."
10 So it did attract a lot of attention, it wasn't just
11 because of what happened with the Today story and so on;
12 it attracted a lot of attention at the time.
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It attracted some. I think the
14 main -- look, the big message and the big point
15 that came out of that day's events, as I recall, was
16 that Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, was publishing an
17 intelligence-based dossier that explained why he
18 believed Iraq was a current, serious and credible
19 threat, and then lots and lots and lots and lots of
20 detail, and virtually every single point within the
21 dossier was getting some sort of attention and some sort
22 of coverage. But all I can say to you is we did not see
23 it and did not plan our communications around that
24 particular point.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think Jonathan Powell sent you

1 an email on 19 September:

2 "Alastair, what would be the headline in the

3 Standard on the day of publication? What do we want it

4 to be?"

5 What did you want it to be?

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What did I reply?

7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I don't know. What did you want it

8 to be?

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, by then -- you can -- I know

10 that we have a -- and maybe I have a reputation for sort

11 of worrying and obsessing about headlines. The truth is

12 I don't and I never did for a very, very large period

13 that I was in Downing Street because I reached the point

14 of understanding -- this goes back to the point about

15 what strategic communications is. It is not really

16 about one headline, it is not about one bulletin, it is

17 whether you are communicating over time your objectives

18 clearly, your strategic thinking clearly, and whether

19 you are getting your message through to the public. So

20 Jonathan enquiring like that, fine. As to whether

21 I replied or what I replied, I haven't got a clue.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So when you saw, Evening Standard:

23 "45 minutes from attack. Iraqis could have N bomb

24 in a year. There are some Brits 45 minutes from doom

25 ... "

1 A reference to Cyprus. Express:
2 "Saddam can strike in 45 minutes."
3 Were you surprised by those headlines?
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I'm not surprised by anything that
5 most of the British newspapers write on a daily basis,
6 but all I can say to you is it was -- when we were
7 preparing that -- and it is really why it is so
8 unfortunate that the debate developed as it did
9 subsequently, when the BBC broadcast the broadcast that
10 they did -- actually I think it was a very, very
11 important development in government communications, and
12 I think -- I think there is a risk arising out of this
13 that in future very difficult international crisis
14 situations that develop, because of the controversies
15 that have subsequently flowed, the politicians and --
16 they take -- they don't take the decisions that maybe
17 they should.
18 I still -- I defend every single word of the
19 dossier, I defend every single part of the process, and
20 I think it was a genuine attempt by the Prime Minister
21 and the government to engage the public properly in
22 trying to -- in understanding why the Prime Minister's
23 thinking was developing as it was.
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I'm sure others want to come in.
25 Just as a final point: again, I think from one of the

1 lessons -- we are about lessons learned, and the
2 importance of this -- and maybe we agree on your final
3 observation, in terms of governments may want to do this
4 sort of thing in the past(sic), that it isn't,
5 therefore, important to understand why this particular
6 product is now looked at so negatively, and perhaps the
7 lessons that are to be learned are about taking more
8 care with the --

9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, I really would like to come
10 back on that because I don't believe that it was looked
11 at negatively at the time. It was -- it was -- insofar
12 as you say it's looked at negatively, it is looked at
13 negatively by a media that just refuses to accept that,
14 when Lord Hutton investigated it and looked at it in the
15 detail that he did, he came to the only conclusion that
16 any analysis of the evidence could lead to, since when
17 they never tell anybody what the Hutton Report
18 concluded, they simply say that it was a whitewash and
19 this man of Ulster granite, who put us all through our
20 paces, oh, heavens -- heaven forfend --

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: --

22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, but that's the point. That is
23 why --

24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's not the point that I'm
25 concerned with here.

1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: When you say this is viewed
2 negatively --

3 THE CHAIRMAN: Please don't cross talk.

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I really think I should have the
5 opportunity to respond to this because I think it is --
6 I think it goes to the heart of it. You say the dossier
7 is regarded negatively. Now, actually, a lot of people
8 do not regard it negatively because they understand that
9 the basis of the case that the Prime Minister made is
10 contained within there, about a genuinely perceived
11 threat.

12 If you have a media culture that decides that,
13 because a certain Inquiry did not find, as they kept
14 telling their viewers and listeners and readers they were
15 going to do, on the points that you have just been
16 raising, and day after day after day they tell people,
17 "Actually, they didn't get to the truth, only we can get
18 to the truth," then no wonder people end up thinking,
19 what was that about, and then, when they deliberately
20 conflate with the paper that we will no doubt come on to
21 in February -- so they routinely say that the dossier we
22 have been discussing was lifted off the Internet -- it
23 is no wonder the public start to think, what was that
24 all about.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the reason why the document

1 became controversial and the issue arose in the end was
2 because unfortunately a lot of the material that was
3 contained within it, when tested against what was
4 actually in Iraq after the invasion, turned out not to
5 be there. The big problem was that --

6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I see. Then you have the debate
7 about the intelligence, which the Butler Inquiry --
8 that's what that was about. But my point -- I think
9 actually that point makes my point for me. Lord Hutton
10 stated in terms: even if the intelligence turns out to
11 have been wrong, it did not justify the reporting of the
12 issue, and my point is it is the reporting of the issue
13 and the controversy that caused, and indeed the tragedy
14 that caused -- that is what makes it viewed by some in
15 the way that you described, and, I'm sorry, that is my
16 very strongly held opinion, and I cannot see it any
17 other way.

18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think we are coming from
19 a different direction to that but I will pass on that
20 for now.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'm going to declare the lunch
22 break at this point. We have heard evidence so far on
23 your role as Director of Communications and Strategy, on
24 some of the key meetings you attended in that capacity,
25 and on the September 2002 dossier. I think one or two

1 of my colleagues have got just a couple of follow-up
2 points on that after the break. Then we would like to
3 take further evidence on the February dossier, your
4 understanding and involvement in the development of
5 British Government policy on Iraq after that and the
6 co-ordination of the government's wider public
7 information campaign on it.

8 So I suggest we break until 2 o'clock and come back
9 then.

10 Now, could I just bring to the attention of those of
11 you who have been attending throughout the morning, if
12 you wish to attend again this afternoon, you will need
13 to re-register, and the reception desk will open for
14 that purpose at 1.15. That's downstairs.

15 So, with that, we will come back at 2 o'clock.

16 Thank you.

17 (12.53 pm)

18 (The short adjournment)

FINAL