1 Tuesday, 12 January 2010

2

3 (The short adjournment)

4 (2.00 pm)

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome back everyone and our witness.

6 Picking up from where we left off before the lunch break

7 with two or three supplementaries on the September

8 dossier, first off, I'm going to ask Sir Roderic Lyne to

9 take up one or two points that he wants to raise.

10 Sir Roderic?

11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: When you were talking about the

12 Prime Minister's press conference at Sedgefield in

13 early September of 2002, you said that this followed

14 a period in which neo-cons in America had stirred up

15 quite a lot of speculation about the possibility of

16 military action, and that the Prime Minister's purpose

17 in that press conference had been to try and calm down

18 the atmosphere. That's a fair reflection?

19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but not just at the press

20 conference. In the days prior to that, in Mozambique

21 and then South Africa, it is fair to say that our media

22 travelling with us were in a close state of frenzy about

23 Iraq in the sense that a decision had already been

24 taken, it was going to happen, only a matter of time

25 that, kind of thing.

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1 So I think the tone at the Sedgefield press
2 conference and the purpose was really to do two things.
3 One, as I say just to calm things and say, "Look, you
4 are all getting ahead of yourselves. No decisions have
5 been taken. There will be all sorts of questions that
6 will have to be answered", and he listed some of those
7 questions at the press conference and then announced
8 that, as part of this ongoing debate and deliberation,
9 we would publish the dossier.
10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Then, as we heard this morning, the
11 45-minute claim in the dossier, heated up a new frenzy
12 and very big headline stories, and, as you said, the
13 Butler Committee established that this was not as
14 a result of briefing by you, but nevertheless a frenzy
15 happened.
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't think it was a frenzy then,
17 at the time of publication.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think Sir Lawrence Freedman referred to
19 huge headlines right across the first page of the
20 Evening Standard.
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: One Standard headline is not
22 a frenzy.
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's not split hairs over this.
24 A number of newspapers covered this in a very dramatic
25 way, I think. Would that be a fair --

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1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: When I talk about a frenzy, I mean
2 when newspapers are all chasing the same story, the
3 television and the radio are all talking about it 24/7.
4 That's what a frenzy is.
5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The 45-minute claim attracted some very
6 big stories in a number of newspapers. I do not have to
7 characterise that one way or another. Did you take
8 action then to dampen down that speculation? Did you
9 get on to those papers to correct the misrepresentation
10 of the story?
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I didn't specifically, but insofar as
12 anybody else would have followed them up, it would have
13 been made clear what that referred to, but, to be
14 absolutely frank, this is why it wasn't a frenzy.
15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you weren't proactive. You and your
16 office were not proactive in pointing out to them that
17 a claim that had referred to munitions, essentially
18 battlefield weapons, was being represented in a quite
19 different and much more alarming way by some newspapers.
20 You just let that ride, you didn't take any action to
21 straighten the story?
22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, I didn't, and so far as I can
23 recall --
24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you were in charge.
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, I was. As far as I could even

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1 recall any discussion about it -- bear in mind you have
2 had the Prime Minister doing the statement, you have had
3 the dossier. The issue moved on pretty quickly. The
4 45-minute thing, you say it was a frenzy. It wasn't.
5 It was like one or two newspapers did it reasonably
6 prominently and then it fell away. It was not that big
7 an issue.
8 So proactively, did we go to the Evening Standard
9 and say, "Look, you got this wrong"? I didn't. Were
10 other people minded to follow that story up and talk to
11 our press officers about whether they had overblown it?
12 They would have said probably they did, but I'm not
13 aware that even that happened.
14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. You didn't think it necessary to
15 take action to correct the story?
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, bear in mind, if we corrected it,
17 every single story in every newspaper that we knew to be
18 wrong, we'd be 24/7.
19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's, I think, your area of business,
20 not mine, I'm very glad to say.
21 Like other colleagues who have already referred to
22 the point, I mean, I'm interested in the statement in
23 the Prime Minister's foreword to the dossier that -- if
24 I can find the correct quotation:
25 "What I believe the assessed intelligence has

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1 established beyond doubt is that Saddam has continued to
2 produce chemical and biological weapons, that he
3 continues in his efforts to develop nuclear weapons and
4 that he has been able to extend the range of his
5 ballistic missile programme."
6 Now, the statement, "The assessed intelligence has
7 established beyond doubt", is a very strong statement.
8 Had JIC assessments used the words "beyond doubt" in
9 describing the intelligence about Iraq?
10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The straightforward forward answer to
11 that is I don't know, can't remember, would need to go
12 and re-read it. But, as I said to Sir Lawrence this
13 morning, that's the Prime Minister giving his assessment
14 of the assessment that has been given to him, and so, if
15 he were to have sat round, as he did many, many times,
16 with the intelligence chiefs and said to them, "Are we
17 pretty sure about this, and about this, and about this?"
18 They were.
19 As Sir John Sawers said to you when he gave
20 evidence, he [the Prime Minister] believed the intelligence, and why
21 shouldn't he believe the intelligence?
22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What I'm trying to establish is what you,
23 as the drafter of this, and the Prime Minister, as the
24 person who signed it, had for saying that the
25 intelligence was "beyond doubt", those two words which

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1 are so definitive.
2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: They are definitive and like I --
3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What was the basis?
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The basis was the intelligence
5 assessments that were presented to the Prime Minister,
6 and the basis was also the nature of the discussion and
7 the dialogue that he had with the intelligence chiefs
8 prior to the dossier being published.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I find that a little puzzling. I mean,
10 isn't it the case that doubts and caveats were expressed
11 in just about every JIC assessment on Iraq?
12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: There were, and doubts also were
13 expressed in the Prime Minister's statement to
14 Parliament about intelligence never being a complete
15 picture and about you can never be sure that everything
16 is right. That is his judgment, and, when it comes to
17 it, you can have all the advisers you want and you can
18 have all the military advisers and the diplomats and all
19 the rest of it, he has to make judgments, strategic,
20 diplomatic, political. He has to make those judgments
21 and he has to present those judgments to the public.
22 That's what he is doing there, based upon his analysis
23 of what the intelligence chiefs are telling him and his
24 analysis reading the intelligence over a period of time,
25 through a period where the JIC themselves talked about

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1 a step change in terms of their assessment of
2 intelligence --
3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Is that the phrase that they used, "step
4 change"?
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It is in the JIC report in 2001.
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, Sir William Ehrman, in his evidence
7 to us, said to us, giving us a few of the things that
8 were said:
9 "The picture was limited on chemical weapons
10 in April 2000. The knowledge of WMD and ballistic
11 missile programmes was patchy. March 2002, the
12 intelligence on the Iraqi WMD and ballistic missiles
13 programmes is sporadic and patchy."
14 Going on, August 2002, very near to the period we
15 are talking about:
16 "There is [I quote] little intelligence on Iraq's
17 BCW doctrine ..."
18 That's biological and chemical weapons doctrine --
19 sorry "BCW" I think is a misprint, "CBW":
20 "... and we know little about Iraq's CBW [chemical
21 and biological weapons] since late 1998."
22 Then, crucially, the assessment of 9 September 2002:
23 "The intelligence remains limited."
24 So in August, the JIC says there was little
25 intelligence. In September, it says the intelligence

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1 remains limited, on 9 September, and about two weeks
2 later the Prime Minister tells Parliament in a document
3 presented to Parliament that the assessed intelligence
4 has established "beyond doubt".
5 Now, this is why I'm puzzled. I can't make those
6 statements fit together.
7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, William Ehrman will have to
8 speak to his statements and I can only tell you from the
9 position I was in, not as an intelligence person, as the
10 Prime Minister's communications director, alongside the
11 Prime Minister, as he is engaged in ongoing dialogue
12 with the intelligence agencies about the intelligence
13 that they are presenting to him, and that is his -- the
14 way that he decided to put it to the public at that time
15 and I suspect when he comes along, whenever he is coming
16 to the Inquiry, that he will stand by that again.
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you certainly still stand by the words
18 "beyond doubt"?
19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I do, because at the time that was
20 the judgment that he was led to make. I would also
21 stand by -- I know that the Butler Report felt that it
22 overstated things, to talk about "extensive" and
23 "detailed", and so forth, and "authoritative". I stand
24 by that as well, because I think the document had the
25 full authority of the Joint Intelligence Committee. It

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1 was detailed, and it wasn't just about the intelligence
2 that had come in in the last couple of days and I think
3 some of the caveats were in there.
4 You could certainly make the point, as both you and
5 Sir Lawrence have now done, that there could have been
6 more in terms of the public presentation, putting over
7 the case about why those caveats were important, but
8 I think, ultimately, in terms of what the public would
9 have taken out of it, it wouldn't have made that much
10 difference, because it was a cautiously put case.
11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So if the JIC assessments, when we are
12 able, perhaps -- I don't know if we will be able to
13 publish them, but certainly re-read them -- were not to
14 correspond to the phrase "beyond doubt", and if members
15 of the JIC -- and we have already heard somebody who did
16 serve on the JIC, Sir William Ehrman -- were to say that
17 "beyond doubt" was not a phrase that was justifiable,
18 would you at that stage say that Parliament had been
19 misled by the Prime Minister saying "beyond doubt"?
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I wouldn't.
21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You wouldn't? Okay. Thank you.
22 Can I just move on to my final point? Again a broad
23 point arising from what was said this morning. You used
24 the phrase which I have seen used many times to describe
25 the threat, the phrase "current, serious and credible

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1 threat from Iraq". But when the Prime Minister spoke in
2 the debate in Parliament on 24 September, when
3 Parliament was reconvened and the dossier had just been
4 put in the library of the House of Commons, he used
5 a different phrase. He said:
6 "His [meaning Saddam Hussein's] WMD programme is
7 active, detailed and growing."
8 Now, what was the basis, the evidence, for him to
9 tell Parliament that Saddam's programme was growing?
10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It was within the dossier. It was
11 the story, the narrative that he was setting out within
12 the dossier.
13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the dossier doesn't use the word
14 "growing".
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The dossier may not, but that, again,
16 is the Prime Minister setting out what he has read from
17 the intelligence that has been presented to him.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But I can't find this concept of
19 growing --
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, A step change in his
21 preparations of ballistic missile programme. That's
22 growing.
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We have been through thousands of
24 documents, intelligence reports, and the idea of
25 "growing" doesn't really appear in them. If I can quote

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1 from your diary for 23 July 2002, again you record the
2 Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw as follows:
3 "Jack said that of the four powers posing
4 a potential threat with WMD, Iran, Korea, Libya and
5 Iraq, Iraq would be the fourth. He does not have nukes,
6 he has some offensive WMD capability."
7 Now, turning then from that statement by the Foreign
8 Secretary to the dossier, the dossier referred to Iraq's
9 continuing possession, after 1991, of chemical and
10 biological agents. It referred to Saddam's continuing
11 capability to produce them. It referred to his covert
12 attempts to acquire technology and materials which could
13 be used in the production of nuclear weapons. None of
14 that describes Saddam's actual programme as growing. So
15 was it accurate to represent the threat from Iraq at
16 this time as growing?
17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I have said to you many times this
18 morning that the reason the Prime Minister wanted to put
19 the dossier into the public domain in the way that he
20 did was because he had grown more and more concerned
21 about the threat that Saddam Hussein faced based upon
22 intelligence being presented to him.
23 Yes, there was the unaccounted for, the leftovers
24 and so forth that had been there for an awful long time,
25 which were not inconsiderable in quantity or in effect,

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1 but the intelligence picture being presented to him, he
2 assessed it did show a growing threat and it certainly
3 led him and the government to be more concerned.
4 Jack Straw I think was making a slightly separate
5 point and he may well have been right, if you were going
6 to say, "Which of those four had the most advanced
7 nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes?",
8 but, as I said this morning, the Prime Minister did see,
9 I think, Iraq as a unique threat, in part because of the
10 history and its use of chemical weapons, in part because
11 of the means it had deployed to obstruct the
12 United Nations, to conceal the weapons programme, and
13 also because there was no element there that could
14 remotely -- anybody could remotely get into, in terms of
15 having any sort of dialogue at all.
16 He did see that -- as I'm sure he will say when you
17 see him, he did see that as a growing threat.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But this, as you will see, comes back to
19 the point I made earlier, as to whether this unique
20 threat had actually been contained since 1991.
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But that's a judgment in the end,
22 isn't it?
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Or whether it was growing. I'm trying to
24 find out -- it is very important to this Inquiry -- what
25 that judgment was based on that it was growing.

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1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, the Prime Minister is the guy
2 who made the decisions, but I will say what I think he
3 would say were he here: that the containment policy
4 wasn't working as effectively as it had been, that
5 September 11 had changed the context in terms of how the
6 United States, Britain, other countries, were going to
7 address this issue, and that the volume of intelligence
8 that was crossing his desk about this issue was making
9 him more concerned about it.
10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: All of that can be perfectly true without
11 the intelligence saying that the threat is growing. The
12 Prime Minister becoming more and more concerned -- as he
13 said in the foreword, "increasingly alarmed", the phrase
14 he used -- is one thing, but seeing that the threat is
15 growing, as you will understand, is another.
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: But ultimately the -- you can
17 present, as the intelligence people do, as the diplomats
18 do, as all the advisers do, they can present all the
19 factual analysis, including all the caveats and all the
20 rest of it, and, ultimately, the Prime Minister has to
21 make judgments about that and that's the judgment that
22 he made.
23 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?
24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.
25 Mr Campbell, in the course of the morning you said

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1 that the development of the dossier was important in
2 terms of government communications, it was an
3 innovation, and you also said that these were not normal
4 times.
5 Now, when the decision was taken to have this
6 innovative approach to pushing information out to the
7 public, was consideration given, was there a discussion
8 about the constitutional proprieties that you have to
9 consider, because the cardinal principle of keeping
10 intelligence rigorously separate from those who make
11 decisions is very much embedded in the way
12 constitutional proprieties operate.
13 Now, given your role, because your trade is
14 communications, and you were a special adviser with
15 executive powers, but is -- getting at one with the
16 process for developing this, was that actually
17 discussed, "What would be the proper way of developing
18 this?"
19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because you, yourself, said that it
21 is a pity because -- will this happen again? Because
22 this goes to the heart of public trust. These
23 proprieties exist for a reason. Was this actually
24 discussed? Did anybody draw this to your attention?
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Was it discussed? Yes. Were people

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1 aware of its unprecedented nature, and, therefore, did
2 that increase the level of -- both of discussion and
3 potential concern? Yes. Was the judgment then reached,
4 including with complete support from the intelligence
5 agencies that this remained a right and proper thing to
6 do? Yes.
7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Whom did you discuss that with?
8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: With the Prime Minister, with other
9 Ministers, with John Scarlett, with other people
10 involved in the process.
11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was the Cabinet Secretary involved?
12 Were these things discussed? Innovation?
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The Cabinet Secretary would have been
14 involved in the discussions about whether to do
15 something as significant as this right throughout the
16 whole process.
17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did anybody draw to your attention
18 what the conventions were?
19 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: The conventions? Well, it was
20 unprecedented --
21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The convention I'm talking about is
22 keeping the intelligence completely separate from
23 decision-making and the judgment to sort of put
24 a dossier together with a political foreword and the
25 information --

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1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It is impossible because --
2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- because you have blurred the
3 lines.
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I don't think you can say that
5 you blur the lines between intelligence and
6 decision-making. Yes, I think you can say that
7 intelligence became more involved in public
8 communication and public diplomacy than it hitherto had
9 been.
10 That is a development, a response, if you like, to
11 the sort of changing media and political landscape that
12 I talked about earlier.
13 Were we aware that that was a significant change?
14 Of course we were. Were we aware that people might have
15 concerns about that? Of course we were. Was it still
16 nonetheless, despite its unprecedented nature, despite
17 the fact that this was -- the intelligence services were
18 being asked to do something that maybe they wouldn't
19 normally be expected to do? Would the Prime Minister,
20 and, I hope, the intelligence agencies still say that
21 was the right thing to do? I think the answer to that
22 is yes.
23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Given that these are not normal
24 times and this was a quite serious decision, to make --
25 to want to go to war or whatever, having listened to you

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1 earlier, do you think the process was rigorous enough?
2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Absolutely. I'm sorry to repeat
3 myself. I'm going back to the point I made to
4 Sir Lawrence Freedman this morning: I think the process
5 was utterly rigorous. I think its integrity was very,
6 very strong and profound at every level of that
7 operation, and I really do think that we are only having
8 this discussion in large part because of the subsequent
9 controversy, which was, frankly, just caused by an
10 utterly dishonest piece of journalism. That's the fact.
11 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's move on at this point to the February
12 dossier. Sir Lawrence?
13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Given what you have just said, about
14 the quality of the dossier and --
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, that's an unfortunate link,
16 I would agree.
17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Before we actually get to
18 the February dossier, I'm just interested in -- you
19 obviously thought a good job had been done with
20 the September dossier, that it had helped the
21 Prime Minister.
22 Was there a discussion with the JIC or with
23 John Scarlett about the possibility of having more
24 exercises of this sort or was this seen as a one-off?
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think at that time it was seen

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1 as -- I don't know about a one-off, in that you'd never
2 do it again, but I certainly don't have any feeling that
3 the Prime Minister wanted to do it again.
4 Now, there may be -- it may be, as the situation
5 developed, if it actually -- if the diplomatic process
6 had gone on much, much, much longer, that perhaps there
7 would have been, but there was certainly no such
8 discussion.
9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So how were you then supporting the
10 Prime Minister in the way you supported him with the
11 dossier, in terms of helping get out the factual
12 background, the evidence analysis, to support the works,
13 so that, rather than just speeches and press
14 conferences, there was more substantial documentation
15 around?
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think the bulk of the -- as I said
17 this morning, there were periods -- even during this
18 time, when Iraq was really quite a permanently
19 controversial and high profile issue, there were periods
20 where actually there were other subjects that had
21 completely taken over the agenda, where most of my work,
22 I suppose, would be going. A lot of it domestic
23 policy-related, some other international issues --
24 Northern Ireland was always kind of there or
25 thereabouts, in terms of being a difficult and

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1 significant area.
2 But -- so I think the bulk of communications would
3 actually have been the sort of thing that you have just
4 referred to: speeches, exchanges in Parliament, press
5 conferences, interviews, the normal stuff of day-to-day
6 political communication.
7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Could you explain for us the role of
8 the Iraq Communications Group?
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That really evolved in a way there
10 from the fact that -- the rhythm of my day, if you like,
11 used to be usually see the Prime Minister first thing.
12 I then would chair a meeting of most of the main
13 government departments, the obvious big government
14 departments, the Deputy Prime Minister's office,
15 Treasury, Home Office, Foreign Office, and, if there was
16 any other issue going on, other departments would come,
17 and that would be to go through, as it were, that day.
18 Now, what was becoming clearer at a certain point
19 was that Iraq was dominating, and we decided actually
20 that, although that meeting continued, that it would
21 also be useful just to have a once a week -- it evolved
22 into once a week -- it started off we just sort of met,
23 but then became more formal --
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What sort of time are we talking
25 about here? May 2002? Would it be 2003?

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1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. I will look -- I have got it
2 written down somewhere, the exact date when it started.
3 That became really just trying to step out of the
4 day-to-day the whole time and just talk and think
5 a little bit more strategically.
6 To be frank, I used a lot of it just for my own
7 educational purposes, if you like. We had people come
8 along, we would set up an Islamic media unit, for
9 example, we had experts who were advising us on the way
10 that, for example, some of the messages that we would be
11 communicating very proactively within a British context
12 just -- often will have -- where you think actually you
13 are gaining some understanding of what you are trying to
14 do, we had somebody there who would come along regularly
15 and just explain to us how some of those messages were
16 being received in an Arab and a Muslim audience. It was
17 that kind of discussion.
18 Other discussions would be -- I can remember one, to
19 go back to the discussion we had at Camp David, we did
20 have quite regular discussions about how we kind of
21 tried to help the Americans address this whole business
22 of anti-Americanism, which, I think, as the
23 Prime Minister said in his speech at one point -- it may
24 have been in a note, I can't remember -- he said this
25 anti-Americanism, up to now the Americans have been

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1 happy to see it as an irritant, but actually now they
2 see it as being related to a threat --
3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Obviously to sort of get the
4 narrative right, if you like.
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: And also analyse what it was that we
6 were putting together in terms of this strategy that,
7 elsewhere, we were taking forward on a day-to-day basis.
8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So that was getting the messages
9 right, making sure you understood what you were doing on
10 a very day-to-day --
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Also, given that this is an area
12 where -- it is not my natural area of expertise, for
13 lots of people in my team it is not their natural area
14 of expertise. It was also an opportunity to sit down on
15 a fairly regular basis with people whose expertise it
16 was. Some of them from the intelligence services, some
17 of them from the Foreign Office, some of them every now
18 and then bringing people from outside.
19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What was the role in this of the
20 Coalition Information Centre?
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That -- for that, we have got to go
22 back a few years to -- that all started in relation to
23 Kosovo. What happened in the communications on Kosovo
24 is that there came a point where both President Clinton
25 and Tony Blair felt that, although the military

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1 campaign, clearly -- I mean, NATO against Milosevic,
2 there was a fairly -- strict, you know, in terms of
3 military balance[1], but that on communications and public
4 relations, if you like, and public opinion, we were
5 losing that particular battle, because Milosevic had
6 complete control over his own media systems, and that
7 gave him complete control over the media systems of the
8 journalists from those countries that were there,
9 including Britain and elsewhere.
10 So I was asked to go and help NATO put together
11 a different communications model, which we did, and we
12 took elements of that and we recreated a different form
13 of the same communications model post-September 11th and
14 then we adapted that again, Iraq, and the CIC, its first
15 incarnation was really post-September 11th.
16 That was the -- what that was about was having all
17 the different major time zones -- at that point, it
18 would have been Islamabad, Washington, London,
19 information centres, where we were all linked up all the
20 time, understanding everything that every leader
21 involved in the coalition was doing, saying and so
22 forth, and then we brought that forward post -- for the
23 Iraq conflict and the CIC was the British element of
24 that, based partly in the MoD, I think, and partly --
25 mainly in the Foreign Office, but working very much as

[1] The witness subsequently advised the Inquiry of the intended meaning of this statement: there was a clear dominance in terms of military balance of NATO over Milosevic.

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1 part of the overall Iraq communications.
2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So members of your team were part of
3 it?
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Members of my team, members of the
5 American team. We had a system of swapping. We had
6 a very senior person from the American side who was
7 there. We had -- at different times, you may be
8 surprised to know, we had French people, we had
9 Spaniards, we had Poles, we had Australians, we had
10 Dutch and we had people from all across Whitehall.
11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But this was the group that was
12 commissioned to do the February dossier?
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It was, yes.
14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So can you tell us how that came
15 about?
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That came about from -- one of the
17 SIS people who occasionally attended as an expert
18 adviser really, this weekly -- it wasn't always weekly
19 but it was a fairly regular -- an Iraq strategic
20 discussion group is how I would call it really.
21 He informed us that there was intelligence that had
22 come in, which related to the Iraq campaign of
23 concealment, obstruction, intimidation of the UN
24 inspection process and he went through some of the
25 things that that entailed, which was not necessarily

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that surprising, given that people knew that the inspectors had always been subject to a certain amount of intimidation, but there was an awful lot of interesting detail.

Now, within that -- I then had a discussion with him and said, "Look, is any of this" -- sorry, do you want to --

THE CHAIRMAN: We don't want to get too far into the sensitive detail. That's all.

MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Okay, fine. I think most of it was --

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The ISC --

MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Anyway, so that -- we then had a discussion about whether any of that could be -- could be used publicly. That decision wasn't made then. I think there were further discussions about that. Then word came back, yes, we could.

We didn't really know at that stage how that was going to be done, but I commissioned, at a certain point, the CIC to do a paper on Iraq and the issue of concealment, obstruction, intimidation and the general messing around of the inspection process historically as well as currently.

They started to work on that and produced a paper, which I think that we then discussed. That was fine.

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1 I made a number of -- I changed, I think, the title,
2 I made a number of textual changes within it. It went
3 down round the system and all that.
4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When it went round the system, does
5 that include to the JIC?
6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It went -- the answer to that is
7 I don't know. There were representatives of the JIC at
8 that meeting that discussed it. What they then did with
9 it, I don't know.
10 Then the decision was made -- and I'm trying to
11 remember which visit to America this was. I think it
12 was the one in -- would it have been February, to
13 Washington? We were meant to go to Camp David, but the
14 weather was too bad and we stayed in Washington --
15 I think it was that one -- where the decision was taken
16 that we would give this as a briefing paper to the
17 Sunday journalists, the Sunday press. I think there
18 were about half a dozen of them travelling with us on
19 the plane to Washington.
20 As it happened, it got next to no coverage at all.
21 I think they thought it was quite interesting. It was
22 there, it maybe informed some of the things that they
23 wrote. I don't know. But it wasn't -- contrary to
24 the September dossier, which got massive global
25 exposure, this got relatively little, and it became much

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1 better known amid a rather unfortunate controversy when
2 it emerged that, actually, elements of it -- I know it
3 is routinely stated it was taken off the Internet. It
4 wasn't. I'm not apologising -- I'm not defending it on
5 these terms, by the way, but as a matter of fact, it was
6 taken from an article in a Middle Eastern journal, and
7 then, once that, as it were, process point became
8 exposed, I think it was by Channel 4 News, you know,
9 whoosh! Frenzy.
10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just go back to the point you
11 have just said? First, the context in which this was
12 being done, why was it considered important to have
13 a document on concealment at this time?
14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Because one of the arguments that
15 kept being put is that -- about giving -- you know, just
16 give the inspectors more time, a tougher inspection
17 regime, is the fact that, in an ideal world, great, the
18 inspectors go in, they do their job, but actually the
19 reason -- and people say, "If all these weapons are
20 there, why have these guys never been able to stumble
21 across them as they wander around Iraq?" Answer:
22 because there is this system of obstruction and
23 concealment and intimidation. So it was really just
24 informing that part of the debate.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But this came in at a quite critical

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1 point in the UNMOVIC process. It has been put to us by
2 previous witnesses that there had been the hope that
3 a smoking gun would be found, and, so far, a smoking gun
4 hadn't been found, so doubts were already being raised
5 about the credibility, in a sense, of the September
6 dossier.
7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It was published, I think, on
9 3 February, and, as I think the Prime Minister made
10 clear when he told Parliament about it, a couple of days
11 later, Colin Powell was going to make a big presentation
12 to the UN Security Council. So this was not a trivial
13 issue at the time. This was one of the --
14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, no, I have said that.
15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, you haven't. This was one of
16 the big issues of the moment, and the dossier does
17 describe UNMOVIC facing a pretty hopeless task. It
18 talked about, I think, 20,000 intelligence officers to
19 108 inspectors, hiding documents, surveillance of hotels
20 and offices, bugging --
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Bugging, car crashes, yes.
22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- et cetera. So that was the point
23 of it. I'm puzzled by what you said about this being
24 something that was given to journalists, because the
25 Prime Minister did put it in the House of Commons --

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1 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That's right. That's true. The
2 reason I said that is that that was -- we gave it to the
3 journalists. It got some very limited attention over
4 the weekend, I think, in some of the newspapers.
5 I can't remember. I don't think it was picked up by
6 broadcasters, but the fact that the Prime Minister had
7 been away, he was going to make a statement on his
8 return to the House of Commons and, therefore, as it was
9 a document that we had put into the public domain, it
10 was put in the library of the House and he referred to
11 it.
12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: He referred to it in the Commons on
13 3 February, and he said:
14 "We published further intelligence over the weekend
15 about the infrastructure of concealment. It is
16 obviously difficult when we publish intelligence reports
17 but I hope the people have some sense of the integrity
18 of our security services."
19 It goes on in a similar way. It says:
20 "In the dossier that we published last year, and
21 again in the material that we put out over the weekend,
22 it is very clear that a vast amount of concealment and
23 deception is going on."
24 So --
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just say by the way, my first

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1 reference to the Iraq Communications Strategy Group
2 is December 11 or 19. I haven't been able to get all
3 the papers on this. It is around there.
4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But the point I was making in
5 quoting the Prime Minister there was that this was
6 presented as if it had a similar status and process to
7 the September dossier. It was obviously a much smaller
8 document, there hadn't been the same amount of advance
9 publicity, but the Prime Minister certainly, wittingly
10 or not, unwittingly maybe, gave that impression to the
11 Commons.
12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Look, I absolutely accept that
13 this -- the integrity and the professionalism and the
14 meticulous nature of the September dossier, I will
15 defend to the end of my days.
16 In relation to this, somebody within the CIC who was
17 putting it together, he made a very, very simple but
18 quite serious mistake, which is that he put information
19 into it that -- the accuracy of which, by the way has
20 not fundamentally been challenged. It was from
21 a leading expert, a gentleman by the name of
22 Dr Al Marashi. It was part of the historical section.
23 It wasn't in the section that had any of the
24 intelligence in it. That's what made it subsequently
25 very controversial.

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1 We didn't know that until later in the process. In
2 fact, we didn't know that until the media informed us of
3 that when the story first broke, and then that -- so
4 that's where the mistake was, and, fair to say that,
5 when Lady Prashar talked earlier about trust, then that
6 was a -- that did not help, put it that way.
7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You have made the point, but I think
8 it is worthwhile just underlining it, that the quality
9 control, if you like, of the sort of materials was not
10 there, and there is no -- although this was -- the
11 question is whether the JIC or the intelligence
12 community were aware that the Prime Minister was going
13 to present it in those terms.
14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just say on that: when the --
15 the September dossier, that was the purpose of recalling
16 Parliament, that was the purpose of the Prime Minister's
17 statement.
18 This event, the Prime Minister was bringing the
19 House up-to-date on a very important set of discussions
20 with President Bush, and a very, very minor part of that
21 was to refer to the fact that we had released this
22 document and it was in the library of the House.
23 I don't think he made any reference really to the
24 content beyond what you have just said, but I totally
25 accept the point about quality control. In fact, I'm

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1 just looking at a memo here that I wrote on 7 February,
2 where the very first sentence says:
3 "I hugely value the work of the CIC, but the
4 controversy over the concealment document shows the
5 absolute necessity of quality control. This is
6 particularly important in any documents such as this
7 when it includes intelligence assessment."
8 I then set out considerable displeasure, if you
9 like, at the fact that it had happened, and, also, as
10 a result of that, I spoke to John Scarlett, I spoke to
11 David Omand, I spoke to Richard Dearlove, and I spoke to
12 the Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office and
13 Jack Straw, and we agreed a new set of procedures,
14 whereby basically nothing that had any intelligence
15 component whatsoever could be used in any form of public
16 communications without going through the same rigorous
17 process that the September dossier had been.
18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I ask just one final question,
19 which is, as time passes, with the UNMOVIC inspectors in
20 Iraq and matters -- things aren't found. Now, there is
21 an argument that they weren't found because the Iraqis
22 were very good at concealing them, but it must have
23 occurred to somebody at some time that maybe they
24 weren't being found because they weren't there.
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was that an issue for you? Did you
2 raise it as a problem for somebody concerned with
3 strategic communications?
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That was an issue. It was a big
5 issue, and, again, I'm just looking for a date, because
6 there was a day when John Scarlett actually stated
7 directly, you know, how big a problem is it, if all
8 this -- obviously the military were there and they'd do
9 what they had to do on the fighting front, as it were,
10 but also they were looking for weapons of mass
11 destruction, and I can remember the reason why, when
12 people say, "You always knew they weren't there", and
13 one of the sort of glib lines that is run against us,
14 I can remember being at one of the military briefings
15 with the Prime Minister where Admiral Boyce and his team
16 were explaining the preparations for our forces as to
17 what would happen if and when chemical and biological
18 weapons were used against them, the equipment that they
19 had, and I can remember actually feeling absolutely
20 chilled by the nature of the discussions.
21 So our belief that, when the forces went in, they
22 would find the chemical weapons, the biological weapons,
23 all the stuff that had been set out in the September
24 dossier, it was real, it was profound.
25 So knowing as we did, that this was a hugely

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1 controversial decision, that large parts of the -- large
2 sections of the British public had been totally opposed,
3 huge sections of the Parliamentary Labour Party had been
4 opposed, to be told that it is perfectly possible that,
5 actually, you might now be facing a situation -- as if
6 you haven't got enough problems on the Prime Minister's
7 plate -- where you are going to have to accept that
8 there are no WMD there, that was a very, very big issue
9 and a very difficult situation.
10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did this only become apparent after
11 the fighting? We heard General Fry tell us of his
12 surprise that he wasn't finding anything.
13 I mean, I mention it in -- whether or not the
14 possibility at least occurred to you even before the
15 fighting.
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Again, I can only speak for myself.
17 April 28, John Scarlett warned there may be no find of
18 WMD. That -- I was never in doubt, based upon --
19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That it was beyond doubt?
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. What I saw, what I heard, the
21 discussions that I was involved in. So it was
22 a considerable -- obviously, as the invasion took place,
23 and that was the focus, and then there was a -- I think,
24 as other witnesses far better qualified than I have said
25 to you, perhaps the outcome came more quickly than had

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1 been anticipated or planned for, but certainly I fully
2 expected and envisaged and I think the Prime Minister
3 did, that, within a reasonably short timeframe, the --
4 somebody in the military and the intelligence would be
5 coming round and saying, "Here is this, here is that and
6 here is the other", and apart from a couple of mobile
7 labs, there was nothing much to report.
8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Those mobile labs didn't last very
9 long because --
10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, in answer to your question, was
11 it an issue? Yes. Had we thought about it? To the
12 extent that people had been suggesting it, as it were,
13 those who were very, very strongly opposed, as I said to
14 you this morning, when, for example, the Prime Minister
15 was having discussions with Jacques Chirac, who was
16 fundamentally opposed to the decision that was finally
17 taken, there never appeared to be any doubt in his mind
18 that, yes, there were weapons of mass destruction.
19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think Vladimir Putin did suggest
20 it.
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He did it in a very dramatic press
22 conference. Yes, he did.
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just one point, to come back to
24 the February briefing paper, Sir Lawrence asked you to
25 what extent the JIC were aware of that, and in your

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1 supplementary memorandum of 24 June 2003 to the Foreign
2 Affairs Committee, referring to that paper, you wrote
3 that:
4 "John Scarlett attended the four meetings, at which
5 the issue of Iraq's infrastructure of concealment was
6 one of several items discussed. He was not consulted on
7 the paper and nor did he see it in final form. He was
8 aware of the fact that SIS had authorised the use of the
9 intelligence material in the public domain."
10 Isn't it a bit surprising that the JIC Chairman, who
11 had led or co-led with you the work on the previous
12 dossier, was not consulted on a new paper that was also
13 using intelligence material and that it wasn't even
14 copied to him in draft?
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Was it not even copied to him in
16 draft?
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: According to your evidence to the Foreign
18 Affairs Committee -- I don't know actually. Perhaps --
19 was it copied to him in draft:
20 "He didn't see it in final form. He was not
21 consulted on the paper."
22 Perhaps I'm wrong in inferring from that he didn't
23 see it in draft. Seeing it in draft means you are
24 consulted, I would have thought.
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It is just, at the time -- the

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1 systems that we put in place subsequently, as I say,
2 nothing like that would have happened without going
3 through, not just John Scarlett, but all of the other
4 intelligence agency leaders. As to whether he did at
5 that time -- as I said in my evidence, he was at the
6 meetings. He was aware that it was being done. I just
7 don't know whether those who were putting it together --
8 it was SIS at the time -- would have sent it to him.
9 They certainly should have done.
10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. They should have done?
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think that is -- I think that is
14 the lesson that was learned very, very quickly from that
15 and it was a very -- that was a really difficult
16 episode.
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So they should have sent it to him, and
18 he, knowing it was happening should presumably have
19 asked to see it to make sure he vetted it before it went
20 out in public.
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It may well be -- because I can't
22 remember exactly who, apart from John Scarlett and this
23 other person from SIS, was at that meeting, but there
24 may well have been other members of John's team there
25 who were aware. I just don't know.

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The difficulty is that even
2 John Scarlett presumably would not have picked up
3 a plagiarised section.
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That is the point. So he probably
5 would have been -- I suspect would have been quite
6 content with it and maybe there was somebody from the
7 JIC team that was there who was content with it.
8 Certainly the SIS were perfectly happy for it to be used
9 in the way that it was. Again, it is the controversy
10 that came later, that, if you like, contaminated the
11 whole thing.
12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm just surprised -- obviously the
13 Foreign Affairs Committee asked you to go back, check,
14 and then you wrote them the memorandum. So you must
15 have checked at this point and you must have, at that
16 point, clearly established that he had not been in the
17 loop on this.
18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: He had been in the loop to the extent
19 that he had been in all the meetings.
20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: He knew it was happening, but he had not
21 been consulted on the paper. But, as you say, it should
22 have happened.
23 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
24 THE CHAIRMAN: Just for the record, you used the term
25 "John's team" referring to SIS. It wasn't of course.

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1 At the time, he was still the JIC Chairman.
2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I was talking about JIC, the
3 assessments team, yes.
4 THE CHAIRMAN: We are going to turn the questioning now to
5 a different topic. Sir Martin?
6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn from the
7 intelligence aspect and ask you about your work in the
8 period 2002 and early 2003 with regard to communicating
9 the government's Iraq policy to the media and public and
10 answering the public's considerable concerns and
11 questions.
12 Immediately after Crawford, the Prime Minister set
13 out certain priorities, sometimes they are called
14 conditions, for supporting the United States. The top
15 three were taking the UN route, advancing the
16 Middle East peace process and gaining the support of
17 public opinion. In your diary at the beginning
18 of September 2003 you write:
19 "It was clear that public opinion had moved against
20 us during August."
21 I'm wondering if you could tell us how you set about
22 dealing with this beyond the dossiers. What was your
23 method? What were your methods of dealing with this
24 problem?
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I mean, there was nothing -- there

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1 was nothing terribly fancy or -- that you didn't see and
2 weren't able to see at the time. The most unprecedented
3 move was the publication of the dossier. We had, at one
4 point, what we came -- what the Prime Minister came to
5 christen as the "masochism strategy", which was
6 basically to take him out to very hostile audiences,
7 because what his view was, that -- and I think he said
8 this in these terms at one of those speeches -- it might
9 have been Sedgefield, where he said, "Look, people are
10 asking -- you have got some people who will be opposed
11 to what we do, come what may. There will be some of
12 those. There will be some people who will be saying,
13 'Why haven't you gone after Saddam a long time before
14 this?'"
15 There are people in the middle who had genuinely
16 legitimate questions that they were asking. I can
17 remember he referred to Gerald Kaufman and another MP.
18 I have forgotten who it was, but he said they both made
19 speeches with a series of genuine legitimate questions.
20 What he saw the communications as trying to do was
21 to answer some of those questions. So, obvious
22 question: role of the UN? Obvious question: is this
23 just about regime change? Obvious question: are you
24 going to do this come what may? What's the impact for
25 the Middle East peace process? Where does this leave

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1 you in relation to the broader, what George Bush called
2 the war on terror? So totally legitimate questions.
3 Will Parliament have a say?
4 What we were trying to do was answer these questions
5 over time and the thing about communicating, there is no
6 one thing that will get through at any one point. You
7 have got to keep setting out arguments. We planned
8 this -- I don't think he thanked me for it that much --
9 but, having said, "I have got to go out and take on the
10 people who disagree with us", we -- so, for example, the
11 day that I discovered about the February dossier and the
12 unfortunate provenance of it, we were up in Gateshead
13 doing a long, extended programme with Jeremy Paxman for
14 Newsnight, I think with an audience. We had a thing
15 with Trevor McDonald, where literally their brief was to
16 go and find women who were totally opposed to what we
17 are doing, fill a room, and the Prime Minister sits down
18 and takes all their questions and tries to answer them.
19 So that was part of the communications, and the rest
20 of it was just the fact, you know, every week he is in
21 Parliament, once a month he has got his press
22 conference, fairly regularly up before this committee,
23 out and about.
24 There was nothing that I would say we added beyond
25 realising that we were now trying to bring in a more

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1 internationalised communications, trying to tie in much,
2 much more closely to the Americans because, you know,
3 the reality is their communications can affect ours, and
4 they did understand that. I think some more than
5 others. I think it is fair to say -- I know
6 Donald Rumsfeld's name has been mentioned a few times at
7 this committee and I think there are times when we
8 thought he could have thought a bit more about the
9 impact of public statements on other countries.
10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Again, about a month after
11 your September diary entry you note:
12 "Iraq still tricky. TB just wished the Americans
13 would do more to put over a proper message to the
14 world."
15 Did you have American interlocutors whom you were
16 able to put this to?
17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I did. To be fair, they were always
18 very -- I go back to -- I would actually like, if I can,
19 to -- I would like you to see the papers that we did
20 around Kosovo and September 11th that developed in this
21 way, because I think that was the basis, and those
22 relationships were very good.
23 I spoke most days to -- we had a system whereby if
24 anything -- any of us felt untoward or difficult,
25 requiring immediate attention, happened, any one of us

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1 could instigate a conference call at any time.
2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the aspects of American
3 presentation that you found disturbing or unhelpful?
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I suppose -- you know, they have
5 a very different political system. There is -- you
6 can't -- you know, you can't choose your -- the
7 leadership of another country, but I think -- it was
8 just really that question of not always understanding
9 that their statements and positions would have an impact
10 way beyond their shores.
11 They felt very comfortable with the idea of just
12 saying, "Look, Saddam is a bad regime. Has been for
13 a long time. It was Clinton's policy to go, you know,
14 regime change. That's our policy too."
15 Now, to be fair to George Bush, I think he got this
16 more than others in his administration, if I can put it
17 like that. There was at least an understanding that
18 there were other countries out there and they had other
19 interests.
20 So, for example, just to give you one example,
21 where, you know, people talk about what was he able to
22 do in relation to George Bush, I remember at
23 Hillsborough, I think it was April 8th, when the UN --
24 the issue of the UN's role in any aftermath was fairly
25 high up the agenda, for whatever reason, at the time.

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1 Condi Rice was very, very -- she was quite insistent
2 that any words that were agreed at that meeting at
3 Hillsborough were not too forward in relation to the
4 role of the UN, and she wanted to say it would be an
5 important role.
6 I can remember saying, "Well, that sounds a bit
7 grudging", and her basic attitude was it was kind of
8 meant to be. The Prime Minister went to see George Bush
9 and said, "This has got to be stronger than this", and
10 I think, if I'm right, that finally they agreed that
11 there would be a vital role for the UN. That was
12 important when, subsequently, the UN did become involved
13 in the aftermath.
14 So I think that the exchanges -- the relationship at
15 the very top level between the President and the
16 Prime Minister, very frank, able to have very, very open
17 discussions, I think it was the same -- I think
18 David Manning had a very, very close and professional
19 relationship with Condi Rice, and I tried to do the same
20 with the communications. So most days I would speak to
21 my opposite numbers in the White House, the
22 State Department, the Pentagon, and, if there were
23 problems, say to them, "You are giving us a problem
24 here", and they would say to us, likewise, "Why do you
25 guys keep going on about the UN all the time, when, you

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1 know, what we're trying to do is keep our Republicans on
2 board for this and that?"
3 That's just the way political exchanges are,
4 I guess.
5 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: One of your problems, however, with the
6 Americans was one that only you could resolve in your
7 communications strategy, and you describe your
8 discussion with Vice-President Cheney and you say how --
9 actually the word you used is "pissed off" in your
10 diary -- how cross he was when you said that -- when you
11 talk about democracy coming to Iraq, your aim being
12 democracy, people just say, "Oh, well, that is
13 Americanisation, it is not democracy at all".
14 How did you deal with that?
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That was at Camp David. The real
16 substance that day was the Prime Minister persuading
17 Vice-President Cheney to go along with the President and
18 his subsequent visit to the United Nations, take it down
19 that route, but there was then this broader discussion,
20 where -- and again, I think out of a genuine sense of --
21 I don't think hurt, but I think they were quite --
22 because after September 11th, the whole world loved
23 America for a while, and I can remember the
24 Prime Minister saying to Putin at the exchange that we
25 referred to earlier, "Look, for the rest of the world

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1 September 11 was a massive event and a massive moment,
2 but it passed. For the Americans it is not going to
3 pass. It is now a part of their psychology".
4 So they couldn't really understand why there was so
5 much of this anti-Americanism. I thought we had quite
6 a serious discussion about -- we were giving them our
7 assessment of what it was about. I, for example,
8 I believe this strongly. I think it is about the fact
9 that people have grown up on the idea of these two
10 poles, Russia, the Soviet Union and America, two great
11 superpowers, they can both battle it to the death, but
12 that is the sort of geopolitical framework.
13 Suddenly, you have only got one superpower and the
14 other countries are looking at them saying, "Okay, you
15 have got the power, but we want you to understand that
16 means engaging us and involving us as well".
17 So we had that sort of discussion and I just made an
18 observation that I felt in their communications that,
19 when they talked about, "We are going to spread
20 democracy" -- back to the point about how a message in
21 Britain or America might be heard in a totally different
22 way in the Middle East or the Gulf, they are hearing
23 that they are talking about America, they want to bring
24 America here, and he was -- as you so eloquently put it,
25 he looked a bit pissed off.

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1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You also expressed your concerns at
2 different times that the British public -- there was
3 a feeling, sometimes a very strong feeling, that Britain
4 was only embarking on this course of action with the
5 United States, one, because it was what the Americans
6 want us to do, and, of course, to protect our
7 relationship with the United States.
8 How were you able to establish that there was
9 a specific British agenda with regard to Iraq and what
10 was that agenda?
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: With difficulty. Because once --
12 I mean, this was, in a sense, the problem with the whole
13 attempt to communicate on this, because you had --
14 I guess if I can put it in this term, the left of our
15 media, that basically just was opposed to the whole
16 thing and very aggressively ran the kind of "Blair is
17 Bush's poodle" line. There is a political hit in that,
18 and, on the right, I think a sense that -- I don't know,
19 that once you got into the whole -- the dossiers and
20 that kind of thing and the BBC became very, very hostile
21 in its coverage of Iraq, it was quite difficult to get
22 out any messages undiluted on your terms, as it were,
23 other than through just the Prime Minister getting out
24 there and talking.
25 But it was difficult. It was very, very difficult.

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1 The sense of -- all you can do in the end, all the
2 Prime Minister could do and the Ministers could do was
3 get out there and explain that we are not doing this
4 because George Bush wants us to do it, we are doing this
5 because we think it is in the British national interest.
6 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: There was going to be a problem at some
7 point if the matter was to go before Parliament, because
8 it would, of course, have had to have Parliamentary
9 support and this would depend on some groundswell of
10 public support.
11 At the end of 2002, you proposed a more active
12 strategy and one in which you wanted the Prime Minister
13 to become even more actively involved. Can you give us
14 some indication of what that was and, in particular,
15 what it involved the Prime Minister as having to do?
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: By that time, I couldn't tell you
17 what proportion of his time this was taking up, but it
18 was considerable, obviously. I think he accepted, and
19 the Americans, I think, also realised that there was
20 a benefit to their communications in a sense from
21 Tony Blair being very proactive, in terms of
22 communicating the issue, the background to the issues
23 and the case that we were trying to make.
24 So it really just involved him having a very pretty
25 regular sustained set of activities around set-piece

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1 speeches, visits, interviews, press conferences and so
2 forth.
3 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How did you assess the effectiveness of
4 this heightened strategy?
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think in the end you have to rely
6 on instinct to a large extent. I mean, we didn't do --
7 I don't know whether within the government any polling
8 was being done. I didn't see any, as it were, other
9 than the published public opinion polls, but my sense
10 was, as the debate went on -- and this is often is the
11 case, that in these really difficult, quite long
12 debates, there is always a period in which you sense
13 deeper public engagement in them, reflection upon them.
14 It is now sort of routinely stated that there was
15 massive opposition and hostility. It is true that there
16 was opposition and hostility. There was also
17 a considerable amount of support for the government's
18 position, and I think there still is, but it just
19 doesn't get much airtime.
20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In the work that you did on
21 presentation and communications -- and I know this is
22 a topic that you were concerned with -- how did you
23 assess and how did you deal with the relative impact on
24 the public mind of the threats of weapons of mass
25 destruction where at one point you said there was the

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1 word "fatigue" in the public mind on WMD, and, on the
2 other hand, what you called the unrivalled barbarity of
3 Saddam's regime itself. What was the balance between
4 these two?
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think they went together all the
6 time. It is why -- yes, it is true that when the -- if
7 you actually look at what the -- what is in 1441 and the
8 arguments that the Prime Minister is putting at the
9 time, it was about disarming Saddam Hussein of his
10 weapons of mass destruction. But it is right linked
11 into that are two other issues. One is the transatlantic
12 relationship and the importance of preserving and
13 maintaining that, and, secondly, the history of the
14 regime. That was an important part of the
15 communications, because I think -- I mean, people --
16 they have short memories and you have to just keep
17 reminding people that when -- when we just talk about
18 the Iran/Iraq war and we say 1 million casualties,
19 people hear that and you have to kind of find ways of
20 saying, "Listen".
21 So rather than just saying that, you -- you might
22 look for a list of all the towns that have a population
23 of 1 million people, and people go "Oh, yes, I had
24 forgotten about that". Halabja, it is one of those
25 incidents -- the impact at the time was profound, but

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1 now you say "Halabja", and people say, "Oh, yes,
2 chemical weapons, I remember that".
3 So in a sense you are trying to get over to people
4 that when we have say these things, Iran/Iraq war,
5 annexation of Kuwait, the death squads, the
6 intimidation, taking the tongues out of people who speak
7 against the regime, it is worth listening to some of
8 that. It is worth understanding that is why the
9 Prime Minister is so concerned about this regime,
10 a regime that, if it has used chemical weapons before,
11 what is to stop him doing it again, particularly if the
12 United Nations walks away from this?
13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were enough people listening or were
14 you getting any sense that you were making headway?
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: In the end, we are just people. When
16 you talk about public opinion, that just means: what do
17 people think? We all think different things. No two
18 people think alike about every issue.
19 But I certainly had a sense -- I can remember, for
20 example, the day of the debate itself, I think more than
21 any other debate, specific Parliamentary debate, you
22 just got so many messages from people, not necessarily
23 in the political circle, you had a sense of the country
24 following that debate, as it unfolded. I will never
25 forget -- sometimes I used to run to work and sometimes

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1 I used to get the 24 bus, and I can remember listening
2 to a conversation of two women on a bus about
3 Resolution 1441 on their way to -- they were quite
4 elderly women and they were talking about what
5 resolution -- and I thought, "People are engaging on
6 this now on a deeper level. It has gone beyond the
7 flim-flam that really represents a lot of what passes
8 for debate in the media today". People were engaged in
9 the debate.
10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My last question on this relates to the
11 extraordinary demonstration, on 15 February 2003, in
12 which vast numbers of people, including two of my three
13 children walked through the streets of London protesting
14 about the Iraq war, and it was said to be one of the
15 largest demonstrations of recent times.
16 What account did you take of this strength of public
17 opinion and how did it inform the Prime Minister's
18 preparation for what was going to be this very important
19 Parliamentary debate?
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: In one very specific way -- I think
21 the day before the march, I think I'm right that we were
22 in Scotland. I can't remember that precisely. The
23 march was getting huge publicity in the build-up. It
24 was clearly going to be an enormous event, and you have
25 got to remember this is a democracy, the Prime Minister

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1 was intending to stand for re-election, he knew that
2 this was a deeply unpopular policy with an awful lot of
3 people and not just unpopular like some of the other
4 issues that were unpopular, tuition fees or whatever it
5 might have been; this was deep.
6 I always have a rule of thumb that, if somebody goes
7 on a march, there are probably ten others who thought
8 about it. So there were a lot of people who were
9 opposed. I think, what it definitely -- look, there was
10 the political consideration. That was a big protest and
11 he was -- he thought about it a lot and he was seized of
12 its significance. But ultimately, I think it just made
13 him think more deeply about the issues.
14 The day before -- I will check the chronology on
15 this -- he did a speech. We met some Iraqi exiles in
16 a hotel in Scotland, who had got in touch with me
17 actually and said -- because they sensed the UN thing
18 going wrong, and they just came and said, "Look, he has
19 got to see this through. He has got to see this
20 through. We have got family back there, we know what
21 Iraq is like. You have got all these people on the
22 march, no doubt well-meaning, but they just do not
23 understand the reality of this regime. Please."
24 I took some of them to see the Prime Minister and he
25 then made a speech where I think the line that was taken

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1 out of it by the media, he made what he called the moral
2 case for war, because people were talking about the
3 moral case, those on the march, the moral case for
4 inaction, and the Prime Minister really just set out
5 that there is a different view to take here and,
6 ultimately, he didn't -- he always used this word. He
7 said, "I don't disrespect those who have come to
8 a different conclusion."
9 But he is elected as the Prime Minister and I saw
10 the seriousness with which he took the decision, I saw
11 how much it weighed upon him, but, equally, I saw
12 somebody who fundamentally really deeply believed that,
13 unless the world confronted Saddam Hussein at that time,
14 ultimately, sadly, in that way, because the diplomatic
15 route failed, then there would be a bigger day of
16 reckoning later on, and I think he still believes that
17 now.
18 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was this moral case one that you were
19 then able, in the short time that remained before the
20 debate, to promulgate in some way through your efforts?
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, he made a speech, and the
22 speech got considerable public attention. Then up to
23 the -- the other thing I would say at this time is that
24 in terms of the really big moments -- I mean, like, yes,
25 we all drafted and we all chipped in and we all had

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1 thoughts and so forth, but when it came, for example, to
2 the speech in Parliament, that was very much the
3 Prime Minister's hand, and, yes, people would fill in
4 thoughts and so forth, but -- you know, that's why
5 I always find -- look, like him, I understand why people
6 reached a different position.
7 You had members of your family. I can remember the Monday
8 after the march. There were several people within the
9 room who had members of the family who'd gone on the
10 march. I think a majority. So people knew from within
11 their own households how divisive and how difficult this
12 issue was, and that's why I say, yes, people can reach
13 a different conclusion, but, for heaven's sake, let's do
14 away with all the conspiracy theories that it was about
15 oil, it was about George Bush telling Tony Blair what to
16 do. Somebody who has been elected Prime Minister and
17 wants to get re-elected, does not do something as
18 difficult and controversial unless they really, really,
19 really believe that they should be doing it.
20 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You, yourself, had no doubts about the
21 moral case?
22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I supported him right the way
23 through. I won't pretend I did not have doubts about
24 all sorts of things throughout that process. Of course
25 you do. One of the doubts was whether he would survive.

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1 I remember myself and Sally Morgan actually saying to
2 him at one point, "Are you so sure about this that you
3 are going to put your entire premiership, your entire
4 reputation, the lot, on the line?", the way it seemed to
5 be and I think I recorded it in the diary. He said,
6 "Look, Saddam has been a threat for far too long, the
7 world has stood aside for far too long. Sometimes you
8 have just got to do the right thing regardless of what
9 people around you may be saying". He believed that.
10 I respect him for the way that he did that, and
11 I supported him the whole way through with doubts along
12 the way. Of course I had doubts.
13 Sometimes, did you think that the Americans were
14 being impossibly difficult to deal with on this or that?
15 Of course you did. But that doesn't explain -- you
16 know, the British Government, in my view, has to stand
17 up for its own policies, its own ways, and I think it is
18 wrong for people to say, "It was all the Americans'
19 fault", and all the rest of it.
20 I think Britain, as a country, should feel
21 incredibly proud of the role that we played in taking
22 one of the most brutal barbarous regimes in history, and
23 now you have, a few weeks down the line, elections which
24 look like they are going to go pretty well.
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I'm going to call a short ten-minute

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1 break to give us all a breather, and then we will come
2 back for about a final half hour, if that's okay with
3 you.
4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: What's to go? ORHA?
5 THE CHAIRMAN: Some tidying up, and Sir Roderic, I think,
6 has got a question set to do with government process.
7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Are we doing the aftermath?
8 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and that should finish it.
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Okay. Thank you.
10 (3.10 pm)
11 (Short break)
12 (3.23 pm)
13 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's get restarted. I will turn straight
14 off to --
15 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Can I just say that the moral case
16 speech was the day of the march?
17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you for staying on this long. You
19 are showing considerable stamina, more than you used to
20 show when you ran.
21 I have just got a few questions to finish off with.
22 Firstly on the question of the way that the Cabinet was
23 involved in the policy as a whole. Your diaries are
24 pretty illuminating on Cabinet discussions on Iraq.
25 Jack Straw, I think, said, that:

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1 "The Cabinet discussed Iraq 28 times
2 between September 2002 and March 2003."
3 But the Butler Report commented on the fact that
4 there was a remarkable absence of papers for these
5 Cabinet discussions. Why weren't there papers for the
6 discussions?
7 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't know. My job was not
8 preparing papers for Cabinet.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, but you were an intimate adviser in
10 Number 10. You might have known why these Cabinet
11 discussions didn't have the sort of papers that would be
12 normal in Cabinet, but you don't know.
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: My sense was that there were a lot of
14 debates and meetings with the smaller group that
15 I talked about earlier. The Prime Minister, sometimes
16 John Prescott, Jack Straw, Geoff Hoon, and then, there
17 was a broader -- once the War Cabinet came into being,
18 Gordon Brown, David Blunkett. Off the top of my head
19 I can't remember the whole grouping, but that certainly
20 would be a group of people that I assume was being
21 serviced with papers properly.
22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the Cabinet, as a whole, had to take
23 responsibility for the decision, as, of course,
24 subsequently did Parliament. Clare Short, Cabinet
25 Minister at the time, said in her book "An Honourable

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1 Deception":
2 "There is a great difference between the Cabinet
3 being updated each week on the events they are reading
4 about in the press and any serious discussion of the
5 risks and political, diplomatic and military options,
6 and the hammering out of an agreed strategy to handle
7 the crisis."
8 Now, did the Cabinet, in 2002, early 2003, as one
9 approached the conflict, at any stage have a properly
10 informed debate, not a briefing, about the strategy?
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, they did. I mean, look, I think
12 the Prime Minister once said in a different context that
13 if he thought the first time he was aware of
14 a difficulty within the Cabinet or people who had very,
15 very strongly opposed what he, as the leader of the
16 Cabinet, and the Prime Minister was saying or doing, if
17 the first time he knew about it was when he got to the
18 Cabinet table, he would see think his political systems
19 weren't up to much.
20 So it is true that there were lots and lots of
21 discussions outside Cabinet and I can see why sometimes
22 people might have thought, "Well, he is just going to
23 bring us up to date", and sometimes that was all that
24 there was, in a sense, to do, but I was certainly
25 present at Cabinet meetings where really pretty vigorous

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1 discussion went on, and also where -- I think obviously
2 those inner people, Foreign Secretary,
3 Defence Secretary, Deputy Prime Minister, the people who
4 were involved in the ongoing discussion that was really
5 sort of 24/7, they probably would be taking the lead,
6 but then I think what others were doing, who maybe
7 weren't directly involved in the day-to-day formulation
8 of policy, they were challenging, they were testing.
9 We talked about one meeting where I think there was
10 David Blunkett and Margaret Beckett and others who were
11 raising questions. Often the -- I think, was
12 Charles Clarke the Chairman of the Labour Party at the
13 time? But often there would be both he and the
14 Chief Whip giving very, very frank assessments as to
15 what people were saying, what people thought, what their
16 concerns were and the Prime Minister then having to
17 engage in that.
18 But you will know from your discussions with him as
19 well that I think sometimes it is said that, well, the
20 last Labour government used to have Cabinet meetings
21 that went on for one or two days, and I think the
22 Prime Minister would not think that was a very effective
23 form of Cabinet government. He would know what his
24 Ministers -- his colleagues were thinking, what concerns
25 they had, and the Cabinet table was often where they

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1 were thrashed out.
2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why wasn't the Secretary of State for
3 International Development included in this inner circle
4 of people, given that her department was going to be the
5 lead department on questions to do with humanitarian
6 relief and quite a lot of dealing with the aftermath of
7 the conflict as well as with its humanitarian
8 consequences?
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: That is a very good question, and
10 I think, in an ideal world, the Secretary of State for
11 International Development would, should, and could, have
12 been in all of those discussions.
13 I mean, how can I put this? I think it is fair to
14 say that, when -- let's step back a bit. Cabinet
15 government. People have talked about Rumsfeld in
16 America being difficult for the President sometimes to
17 deal with. Cabinet, in the end, they are appointed from
18 within a fairly narrow pool, MPs, peers, a small number,
19 and sometimes you have to make political -- you have
20 been there when John Major was putting together
21 a Cabinet. Sometimes you are putting together different
22 political factors.
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I didn't work in the political capacity.
24 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, but you know sometimes how
25 difficult it was to organise a reshuffle and put

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1 together a Cabinet. So the point I'm making is you will
2 get a collection of individuals, of variable competence,
3 of variable trustworthiness in the Prime Minister's eyes
4 and sometimes he would want to have discussions with a
5 smaller group of people.
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Are you implying in your deeply
7 diplomatic way that the Secretary of State for
8 International Development was not regarded as
9 trustworthy or as competent?
10 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: When Clare Short and her department
11 were in support of a Government policy or position, then
12 I think she was both trustworthy and competent, and
13 I think there are people you can talk to in DFID who say
14 that she was terrific at every level. I can remember,
15 for example, during the Kosovo crisis, to go back to
16 that, Clare did an awful lot of pretty extraordinary
17 work at the time. But, look, it is no secret here, she
18 was very, very difficult to handle at times.
19 I think sometimes the military -- and I think that
20 emerged in the evidence of some of your earlier
21 evidence. I think the military found her approach to
22 them quite difficult to deal with. I think sometimes
23 there were -- there probably were concerns at times
24 about whether -- very, very sensitive and tightly held
25 conversations, as to whether, in a political

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1 environment, whether sometimes you would maybe be
2 a little bit worried that things would get out into the
3 public domain that you didn't necessarily want to get
4 into the public domain.
5 Is that diplomatic as well?
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because she was difficult, her department
7 couldn't therefore be included fully in the work. They
8 didn't receive, as we have heard from earlier witnesses,
9 the Iraq options paper of March 2001. She heard about
10 it later and complained.
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I must say I did find that
12 surprising.
13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You found that surprising?
14 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It was sent out from Number 10, but they
16 were not on the distribution. That was not a sensitive
17 document. She asked for an intelligence briefing --
18 again, she says in her book -- in September of 2002 and
19 initially was told by SIS that she couldn't receive the
20 briefing on orders from Number 10. A similar story over
21 a military briefing.
22 What were the consequences of this for the
23 Government's, as a whole, ability to plan effectively
24 for the aftermath of the conflict?
25 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Again, I'm not an expert on that side

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1 of Government policy and planning. I mean, I think it
2 would be -- obviously, if you had really good, strong,
3 harmonious working relationships right across
4 government, then I suspect that, hopefully, your
5 Government machinery and its operations would be
6 improved and I know that there were times when people
7 who were out there -- you have heard from some of them
8 who said we just had a sense that some elements of DFID
9 were just a bit disengaged from the whole thing, whereas
10 in previous situations, where Clare Short was very
11 supportive of the overall position of the government,
12 those people would be able to really get stuck in.
13 I think it was something that was difficult, but,
14 I hope, correctable in a fairly short timeframe.
15 I don't think -- for example -- if you get on to the
16 aftermath, I don't think you can say that was the reason
17 why things went so -- as badly as they did at times in
18 the aftermath, but would it have helped to have had
19 better relations? Almost certainly.
20 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It certainly didn't help. Just turning
21 for a moment to the Ministry of Defence, were they
22 affected a bit by this inner circle factor as well? The
23 CDS at the time, Admiral Lord Boyce, has told us that he
24 wasn't able, until a rather late stage, to talk to the
25 head of defence logistics. Were you conscious that the

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1 Ministry of Defence were under constraints?
2 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: As in not being able to plan
3 because --
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Because they had not been given a clear
5 instruction, or, indeed, clear approval to do things
6 that might become publicly obvious in the autumn of 2002
7 when it was publicly fairly obvious that contingencies
8 were being thought about.
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think on that, that would be
10 because -- the Prime Minister, as I have said, he is --
11 in a sense he has got this diplomatic strategy and
12 possibly at that time that's what he is trying to push
13 the hardest, as it were, and I can see why.
14 I certainly was aware of, at times, the military
15 feeling of, "Look, if this is going to happen, we have
16 got to get on with things", and I think the
17 Prime Minister had a very good relationship with the
18 CDS, who was able to speak very, very openly and frankly
19 to him and give him a very frank assessment of what was
20 going on and what he might need, but I think what was --
21 I don't remember that in detail, but I suspect what was
22 happening -- there may have been perfectly legitimate
23 political considerations at the time that led the
24 Prime Minister to say, "Look, let's just hold on for
25 now", but I can remember, before Crawford, Mike Boyce

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1 and his team were at least thinking about planning, just
2 because they knew that the Americans were thinking about
3 planning.
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That early on?
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes.
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So this is right back in March 2002 that
7 they were thinking about it?
8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, I think they were -- everybody
9 was aware that the issue was on the agenda, the
10 Prime Minister was being pretty clear that conflict is
11 not inevitable, he is going to be disarmed, and I think
12 I recorded in my diaries a meeting before Crawford,
13 where Mike Boyce, to his credit -- I read this the other
14 night -- I think he's right in there saying, "Look, if
15 this is going to happen, whatever timeframe, we need to
16 start thinking about the aftermath now".
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were you encouraging Lord Boyce to be
18 more optimistic in his assessments? He said, without
19 naming who said this, when he came to us, that he had --
20 never had any hesitation in making his reservations
21 about what was going on known, and I think particularly
22 referring to the state of planning for the operation.
23 Indeed, I quote here:
24 "... was taken aside from time to time to say, can't
25 we make it more of a half full rather than a half empty

1 assessment?"

2 Can you remember if that's the sort of phrase you

3 might have used to him?

4 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: No, I saw, after he said that, that

5 the Financial Times ran a story saying that that was me.

6 I certainly don't remember ever saying that to

7 Mike Boyce.

8 There was always, before those meetings, you know,

9 a little bit of chit chat, and you might say, "Look, the

10 Prime Minister is you know, in a bit of a mood, or he is

11 fed up with this, or he is fed up with that". As you

12 know, I would never encourage anybody to be anything

13 other than totally frank with the Prime Minister. That

14 is the approach I always took and it is the approach

15 I would encourage others to take.

16 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can I just now turn a little bit to the

17 aftermath? You obviously, in your central position,

18 were one of those who were thinking about the aftermath,

19 including about the communications aspects of this, and

20 I believe that Major General Tim Cross, at some point,

21 I think, came and had a discussion with you about the

22 way that the post-conflict was being handled, and in

23 particular the media team, and he said that you were

24 happy to see him and subsequently produce some support

25 for the media team.

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1 Would you like to say a little bit about your
2 perspective from Number 10, about how the Coalition
3 prepared in the run-up to the conflict for what was
4 going to happen after the military campaign and how, up
5 to the time that you left Number 10 in August of that
6 year, you saw the post-conflict situation being handled
7 by organisations with names like ORHA, which may ring
8 a bell with you.
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: It does. As I said, Admiral Boyce,
10 the Prime Minister, others, from very, very early on,
11 before there was any real understanding that there even
12 would be military action, it was plugged into the
13 thinking that, should there be military action, then the
14 morning-after planning has to be done on an ongoing
15 basis, and I think there was a lot of planning going on.
16 There was a lot of -- I certainly saw pieces of work
17 that came down from different parts of the government
18 system.
19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Where? Where was this?
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, within different departments in
21 government, and also the -- I know that we probably were
22 led to believe that the State Department in the States
23 was taking the lead in a lot of this, and, of course,
24 they [the Pentagon] would take the lead in any military operation and
25 I think that would lead to an acceptance and

1 understanding they [the Pentagon] would be very, very centrally in
2 a dominant way involved in the aftermath, and I think --
3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was there a moment at which you
4 discovered that the Americans actually hadn't been
5 planning properly for the aftermath?
6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, there was.
7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you describe that?
8 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Well, for me, it was -- certainly
9 Tim Cross coming to see me was a bit of a revelation.
10 He was very, very -- he was -- he made a big impact on
11 me, and, as I think he told you, I went and saw whether
12 there was any space in the Prime Minister's diary and he
13 came and saw him, because he had been to the States and
14 he had been at that meeting that he described to you
15 with the Secretary of State for Defence and it just --
16 I think we had been constantly saying, "Is the
17 planning -- is it being done?", and getting assuring
18 noises back.
19 I think within what the British Government could do,
20 I think there was a lot going on, accepting, as
21 everybody does, that in any immediate post-conflict
22 situation there is going to be lack of clarity, there
23 are going to be difficulties, there are going to be
24 unintended consequences. Everybody accepted that, but
25 I think there was quite a lot of work going on.

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1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Is it fair that the British Government
2 wasn't, at this stage, allocating British resources to
3 the aftermath because we were working on the assumption
4 that the United Nations were actually going to take the
5 lead on a lot of that?
6 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I don't know is the answer to that
7 question, in terms of what discussions there then were
8 at that time in the Treasury and so forth.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What we have heard from earlier
10 witnesses --
11 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I certainly think that we saw, both
12 in terms of the politics/diplomacy of this that the --
13 and I think Jeremy Greenstock put the point well: in
14 being seen to try so hard to take it down the UN route,
15 the UN, perhaps minus America, understood that it would
16 be -- we would find it easier to get the UN the vital
17 role that we thought they should have.
18 Did that affect thinking in terms of financial
19 planning on the British perspective? I don't think so,
20 but I wasn't really involved in that kind of discussion.
21 But I think there certainly was an assumption.
22 Assumptions were made about the State Department
23 planning, and I think, once we had realised that
24 actually -- that the Pentagon appeared to be taking the
25 lead on almost every level on this aftermath, I think

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1 from that moment on, the Prime Minister was -- he was
2 rattling a lot of cages within the British system and
3 asking for an awful lot of things to be done.
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did it go badly wrong?
5 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, but not only for reasons that
6 you can -- again, it is back to the point earlier.
7 There is no one simple thing. You can't say it was all
8 Donald Rumsfeld, or, if only Clare Short had been
9 getting on better with the Prime Minister at the time.
10 I don't think it is that.
11 I think what happened was there wasn't that grip in
12 the immediate aftermath. Again, I'm speaking here way
13 out of my knowledge and expertise, but there wasn't that
14 grip. The invasion -- people have talked about
15 catastrophic success, and it happened very, very quickly
16 and then it became a security problem, and then, once
17 I think the -- once that Al-Qaeda and the Iranians and
18 the way that they did -- sort of alighted upon it in the
19 way that they did, a kind of lack of grip security
20 problem became a really serious security problem and
21 that then affected every aspect of what was going on
22 there.
23 Again, Tim Cross -- you see a lot of the concerns
24 that he talked about when he first came, I think they
25 were real concerns, genuinely held but probably sortable

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1 in a fairly short timeframe once you managed to get
2 people in there who were capable of sorting. But once
3 the security situation developed as it did, you then had
4 this obviously very kind of -- Mike Boyce talked about
5 this, this almost kind of philosophical difference in
6 approach between the British and the Americans, in terms
7 of fighting wars and peacekeeping. So, for a period of
8 time, it was clearly very, very difficult, and, again,
9 on my side of things, and on the communications side,
10 I did what I could.
11 I sent half of my -- at one point, I was going to go
12 there, but I think there was a worry that it would be
13 seen as a sort of British -- the Americans were very
14 sensitive to this idea of the Brits taking over and so
15 forth, but I sent half of my office out there, and
16 Tim Cross, whatever he needed, people on the
17 communications side.
18 I eventually did a plan which I have been trying to
19 find and we have not been able to find it, but I have
20 found John Sawers' reply to it, but we did a plan for
21 Bremer of communications structures based upon what we
22 had done previously, but adapted to it, and then
23 John Buck from the Foreign Office, who had been running
24 the CIC, he went out there. We put together a pretty
25 detailed communications plan. We filled the bits that

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1 we were meant to fill. Lots of the other bits just,
2 frankly, didn't get filled, so -- and in the end, one of
3 the guys we sent ended up working in the new Iraqi
4 Prime Minister's office. So I think the guys that we
5 sent did a really, really good job in incredibly
6 difficult circumstances, but, on the bigger picture,
7 I think that immediate lack of grip became an incredibly
8 difficult security problem which took a long time to
9 resolve.
10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just a couple of final questions from me,
11 because I need to allow time for my colleagues too. You
12 said just before the break to Sir Martin Gilbert, that
13 the diplomatic route had failed, but earlier witnesses,
14 including some senior diplomats, have suggested to us
15 that the diplomatic process had actually been cut short
16 by the American military timetable. Which is correct?
17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I know Christopher Meyer used the
18 phrase about the military wagging the diplomat --
19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I'm thinking of evidence from others,
20 like Sir David Manning, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and so on.
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: You can say that, and I also have
22 huge respect for David and for Jeremy, and they both
23 said there should have been more time for inspectors,
24 and that is a view you could take.
25 I think where the Prime Minister was by then,

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1 particularly after some of the discussions with the
2 French, which I was present at, which were difficult,
3 I think that he had reached a conclusion that, having
4 persuaded the Americans to go down the United Nations
5 route six months earlier, that having done all the work
6 that was done on 1441 four months earlier, that there
7 came this point where, once the French said, "Look,
8 regardless of what is put down, if there is any
9 suggestion that failure to implement yet another
10 United Nations Resolution with Saddam disarming
11 voluntarily, that there could be no military action
12 ensuing from that", that was the end of the process, and
13 not least because, within the discussions that were
14 going on, I know Jeremy Greenstock said that he never
15 felt there were more than four votes on the Security
16 Council: America, Britain, Spain and Bulgaria.
17 But the six, the undecided six, I think at various
18 points, my impression from the Prime Minister, who was
19 talking to them the whole time, and other Ministers who
20 were talking to them the whole time, was that actually
21 there did seem to be a point where certainly the three
22 African countries looked like they might come across and
23 then Chile and Mexico, but once the French made that
24 position so clear, their line was basically, "Look, you
25 have got a huge power. We have got these great

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1 elephants trampling all around us, and one of the really
2 big powers has basically said, 'You can jump if you
3 want, but it is not going to happen'."
4 I think that totally changed the nature of the
5 debate, and that was -- Jeremy, to his credit, kept
6 going, the benchmark tests put down, the French
7 immediately went out and said, "These are unacceptable",
8 and that was the position.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You have expressed today your support for
10 the policy that was followed on Iraq with very great
11 conviction.
12 Do you consider now that it has been a success and,
13 looking back on it, what lessons would you draw from it
14 beyond the points that have already been made, for
15 example, just now, about the aftermath, and what
16 regrets, if any, do you have?
17 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Do I support it? Yes. I think that,
18 as I said to you just before the break -- I think that
19 Britain, far from beating ourselves up about this,
20 should be really proud of the role that we played in
21 changing Iraq from what it was to what it is now
22 becoming and the potential impact that that has on the
23 region.
24 I think, for example that Libya and the moves that
25 it made in relation to WMD, I think -- I don't know

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because I wasn't involved in those discussions, but I wouldn't be surprised if that wasn't in part driven by them seeing these guys are serious now about this issue.

I think that the -- when -- I saw the Prime Minister as closely and probably as often as anybody else, and I saw somebody of really deep conviction and integrity, who was making, without doubt, the most difficult decision of his premiership, knowing there were going to be consequences, but also understanding there are "what if" questions, had he taken another decision.

Again, I thought Chris Meyer was really glib about the potential impact on the transatlantic relationship in relation to that.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Looking at the huge cost in loss of life over, now, six and a half years, at the effects on the stability of the Middle Eastern region, at the development of international terrorism within Iraq, do you consider that, overall, the policy has succeeded?

MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I do, but not without reflecting often and realising the import of the caveats that you have just put into that. I think, in relation to the Middle East peace process -- and bear in mind the road map is still -- the outline -- and the Prime Minister did get the Americans to go down there. I don't think they can solely be blamed for the fact there has been

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1 such little progress.
2 I think, in terms of security, yes, the death toll
3 has been high in terms of Iraqis, and obviously any loss
4 of any British soldier's life is not just tragic but it
5 obviously weighs heavily on anybody who was involved in
6 that process, most particularly, obviously, the
7 Prime Minister.
8 But I still think that when you -- I mean, he had --
9 and I saw it long before September 11th. He was going
10 on about this, about AQ Khan and about the potential
11 link between WMD, terror groups, failed states -- that
12 this is the agenda that he saw that had to be addressed
13 by leaders of the democratic world, and he raised it in
14 his very, very first -- he raised it in his very, very
15 first meeting with George Bush: This is going to be the
16 number one issue of your time. That was
17 before September 11th.
18 So I think that -- could things have been done
19 differently? Almost certainly. Any decision -- you can
20 go back over it but I think on the big picture, on the
21 leadership that he showed, on the leadership that the
22 British Government showed on this issue, I was
23 privileged to be there, and I'm very, very proud of the
24 part that I was able to play.
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Final questions. Lawrence?

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, I don't want to ask too much
2 but can I just -- one -- a couple of questions and some
3 more reflections from you.
4 The first question -- you described to us, before
5 the break, about the -- your shock at discovering that
6 there weren't any, or there may not be any, WMD. When
7 did you first realise how difficult the aftermath might
8 be? At what point did this strike you in the same way?
9 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Early. Seven days -- I think
10 seven days after the invasion there was a meeting at
11 which John Scarlett talked about some of the real
12 difficulties within ORHA: the sense of the Americans
13 really not knowing -- not appearing to have the plan
14 that we thought that they did -- really quite big
15 serious questions, starting quite early.
16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: And what was the response to those
17 concerned? What did you think you could do?
18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I'm not sure there was much that
19 I could do.
20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That the government could do?
21 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: I think from that point on -- and I
22 think that -- I mean, I have not read all the papers
23 beyond my time, but I know those who have will say --
24 and certainly, obviously, I kept in touch with the
25 Prime Minister after I left Downing Street, that I think

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1 he was -- you know, he was seized of all the problems
2 and, yes, a lot of them were very difficult to resolve.
3 I think at that point -- David Manning talked about the
4 Americans sort of -- there was a period where they
5 appeared to lose focus and not have that -- you know,
6 staying on top of all the problems. So there is no
7 doubt there was a very difficult period.
8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can you reflect a bit on what you
9 described, in answer to Sir Martin Gilbert, this
10 intensity of debate that was taking place
11 in January, February and March, the polarisation in the
12 country? Did that make it difficult within government
13 to have a re-evaluation of where you are, that, because
14 the stakes had been raised so high politically, that, if
15 you were in a sense standing back from it, you might
16 even be seen to be edging, if you like, to the other
17 side?
18 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: You see, it is true that the country
19 was clearly very, very divided, and the Parliamentary
20 Labour Party very, very divided. I think actually
21 within the Cabinet there was a lot of genuine support
22 for the position. Obviously, ultimately, Robin Cook
23 resigned, eventually Clare Short resigned. But the
24 support there was strong. I think the questions that
25 were constantly being put and the issues and concerns

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1 that were being raised, they weren't of a nature that
2 was said, let's fundamentally re-evaluate the position
3 here. The position was: Saddam is a threat, in the eyes
4 of the British Prime Minister and the British Government
5 becoming a greater threat, and he had to be confronted,
6 he had to be forced to face up to his United Nations
7 obligations. That remained, I think, the case the whole
8 way through. Did it mean that -- obviously, every
9 aspect of policy was looked at at different times, in
10 different ways, but that didn't really change throughout
11 the whole thing. Did it make it more difficult, the
12 fact that there was so much public opposition?
13 Obviously.
14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did it also mean that there was
15 perhaps more of a focus on the war itself than on the
16 aftermath, that it was -- and on the UN process, that
17 the big decisions that you would have to face, should
18 regime change take place, were not given the same
19 attention as, should we go to war and what about the UN.
20 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Do you mean in --
21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In that period, yes.
22 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: My recollection is that all of those
23 issues were getting very, very large public debate, but
24 it is true, after the invasion -- when the Inquiry sent
25 me the letter about the issues that we would be going

1 through, and it is -- again, this could be my memory not
2 being that great, but my sense is that the aftermath in
3 a sense didn't become as big a media and political issue
4 at the time, as if -- I'm being frank -- I thought that
5 it probably could and should have been, and I think
6 it -- you know, maybe if it had, the corrections that
7 had to take place might have happened a bit more
8 quickly.
9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: But this is a consequence of such an
10 intense political debate, that it focuses on particular
11 things.
12 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes, and don't forget as well, within
13 the British political and media system, once the BBC
14 broadcast the report that they did in May, when the
15 Prime Minister first went there, that really, to a large
16 extent, just completely took over the debate. It was
17 another of the very, very unfortunate consequences of
18 that.
19 So, actually, there was probably less attention,
20 less focus, upon what was then actually happening in
21 Iraq at a media level and a political level than there
22 should have been, and I think meanwhile those who were
23 getting into Iraq, military and the intelligence guys
24 and so forth, but also then those who were trying to
25 restore some kind of civil administration and public

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1 service and so forth, they had a tough job.
2 But I tend to agree, not as an expert and not as
3 somebody who knows about it as much as the people on the
4 panel, but I do actually think -- I tend to agree with
5 John Sawers' reassessment that actually, given the
6 circumstances, they did a pretty amazing job getting
7 things up eventually in the way that they did.
8 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we have pretty much come to the end
9 of this session. My question to you, Mr Campbell: have
10 we given you sufficient opportunity to offer us your
11 reflections on the lessons to be learned, real world
12 lessons, from that whole experience?
13 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Real world?
14 THE CHAIRMAN: Real world lessons, as opposed to theoretical
15 conceptions.
16 MR ALASTAIR CAMPBELL: Yes. I would just say a couple of
17 points really. As it is lessons learned, I think,
18 looking from where I am now, which is out of government
19 but obviously I still follow things closely and still
20 stay in touch with people, I think -- I have a sense
21 that we have already learned some of the wrong lessons
22 in relation to strategic communications. I think, when
23 I look at -- whenever people say, in relation to
24 Afghanistan, you know, why are we there, that's
25 a communications issue.

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1 I was at a conference, organised by the British
2 military, recently, on Afghanistan and they seemed to
3 think -- there were lots of other military there, from
4 other countries there, but they seemed to think, post
5 President Obama's announcement that there are 30,000
6 extra troops, that they have got what they need
7 militarily, but they just kept saying, "Look, we are not
8 getting the case over." That's all that communications
9 is in the end.
10 So I think, if I can say, in terms of lessons
11 learned, I really hope that we don't -- because of all
12 the controversy, some of which we have talked about
13 today and because of the events that followed from that,
14 I hope we don't sort of say, "Let's go back to a very
15 old-fashioned sort of communications that doesn't
16 understand the impact of the way that the media has
17 changed." I mean, 24-hour news, embedded media who are
18 able to communicate right round the world something that
19 they see, there and then, so that you see a snapshot
20 here and a snapshot there. The job of political
21 leadership, that is to show the big picture and to keep
22 the public, whether it is in America or Britain or in
23 any other country in the world engaged and involved in
24 that, and then, when it is an international crisis, it
25 is to coordinate that internationally. I hope that the

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1 conference that there is on Afghanistan in the near
2 future will look at that and go into that.
3 The only other thing I would say is that I think it
4 is -- ultimately, you can have -- there is a point
5 I have sort of made: you can have all the advisers you
6 want, whether it is people like me or it is the
7 diplomats and the military and in the end, but
8 ultimately the guys who are elected, at the top, they do
9 finally have to make decisions, and I hope that, as
10 a result of the totally understandable remaining
11 divisions and difficulties over the policy on Iraq, that
12 we don't put a future generation of leaders in
13 a position where the really, really, really difficult
14 decisions can't be taken.
15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
16 I would like to thank our witness, in particular for
17 agreeing to stay on for a much longer session than we
18 had originally foreseen, and to thank all of you who
19 have been here in the room, both this morning and this
20 afternoon.
21 I would like just to say a brief word about
22 tomorrow. We are going to look at other important
23 aspects of the ministerial and official decision-making
24 process on Iraq, at issues of resourcing and the
25 capability of government departments to deliver their

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1 policy objectives. We shall be hearing from
2 Dr Nemat Shafik, the Permanent Secretary at the
3 Department for International Development from 2008 to
4 the end of our period, and from Lord Turnbull, who was
5 Cabinet Secretary 2002 to 2005.
6 With that -- that's a 10 o'clock start tomorrow --
7 I will close today's business. Thank you all very much.
8 (4.00 pm)
9 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)
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