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Wednesday, 3 February 2010

(9.00 am)

SIR KEVIN TEBBIT

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Good morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning and welcome. We are hearing from a number of witnesses in the course of today and in this first session we are hearing from Sir Kevin TEBBIT, who was Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence from July 1998 to November 2005, a long stint indeed.

Sir Kevin has already appeared before the Inquiry alongside Lord Boyce, when we heard evidence from them about the planning for the invasion of Iraq, but today we shall be mainly focusing on issues following the invasion and how the MoD was able to respond to them.

One issue we do not plan to focus on in detail today is equipment provision, both before the invasion and afterwards, but we plan to come back to that later in the Inquiry.

Two things I say on each occasion: we recognise that witnesses are giving evidence in part based on their recollection of events, and we, of course, cross-check what we hear against the papers.

I remind every witness that they will later be asked

1 to sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that  
2 the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

3 With those preliminaries, I will ask  
4 Sir Lawrence Freedman to open the questions.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: When you came before, we spoke about  
6 the defence budget and you said that urgent operational  
7 requirements for Iraq were met without any problem, but  
8 the basic problem was the defence budget, and, since  
9 then, we have had a number of conversations, including  
10 the other day with Lord Walker, but also with the  
11 Treasury.

12 I just want you to take us through exactly what  
13 happened with the defence budget, starting really with  
14 the funding of the strategic defence review through to,  
15 say, 2004/2005. Let's start with the funding of the  
16 strategic defence review.

17 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Okay, I ought to preface my remarks  
18 by saying that I don't think any defence ministry has  
19 ever said that it has got enough. It is in the nature  
20 of defence that you can always absorb any amount of  
21 resource given the vast variety of activities and force  
22 structures one is trying to develop.

23 Having said that, when I came to the department in  
24 1998, it was just after the completion of the defence  
25 review. I had been involved at the beginning in the

1 Foreign Office where I was partly responsible for  
2 drafting the foreign policy framework, but I had not  
3 been involved in the detail or what that meant in terms  
4 of force structures.

5 When I came back to the department, I went through  
6 the SDR and my own calculations were that we were about  
7 half a billion short. That was based on a very  
8 demanding efficiency challenge that was built into the  
9 settlement, but also because most of the costings were  
10 fairly broad-brush and, one could say, on the optimistic  
11 side.  
12

13 Now, the department didn't accept that. My  
14 colleagues, when I returned, said, "It is not as much as  
15 that", but actually, I think it probably was, and the  
16 game was to recover the position in the  
17 2000 spending review. We did not manage to do that in  
18 the 2000 spending review. So the problem remained. We  
19 were always under stress. When we move on to 2002,  
20 and the run-up, as it were, to the Iraq operation,

21 I was  
22 satisfied that our resource position was still  
23 sufficient to mount a large-scale operation, should it  
24 be required, and certainly the Treasury, as I said  
25 before, were forthcoming, according to the proper

1 processes, with these extra resources to sustain the  
2 operation, to conduct it, and for the urgent operational  
3 requirements.

4 I think that continued to be the case.

5 The most serious problem that the defence budget hit  
6 was after the 2002 settlement. That was, in principle,  
7 as far as the Defence Ministry was concerned, a very  
8 good settlement, because it was the first one -- and we  
9 are going to get technical here, so I do apologise-- but  
10 it was the first settlement and the first public  
11 expenditure round throughout government which was done  
12 on what is called an accruals basis, resource  
13 accounting, rather than, as previously, cash accounting.

14 What that means, in short, is that, instead of  
15 simply managing by virtual cash, salaries, fuels, stock,  
16 consumption, travel, those sorts of issues, departments  
17 moved to a resource budget, where the cost of  
18 depreciation, of depreciation of their assets was  
19 included, capital charges were introduced to encourage  
20 departments to bear down on the asset base that they  
21 had. I think it was 6 per cent in the initial  
22 settlement, and also money for write-offs. So we moved  
23 on to commercial accounts. There was a transitional  
24 period over the previous two years, but it went live in the 2002  
settlement.

1           The government had decided to manage departments by  
2           resource, not cash. There was no cash control in our  
3           settlement. The only reference you would find to cash  
4           in that settlement came at annex E to the settlement  
5           letter, where it was described as being there for  
6           presentational and illustrative purposes, not as  
7           a control mechanism.

8           The problem, however, for the Treasury was that,  
9           whereas in most departments the transition from cash to  
10          accruals didn't make very much difference, in the case  
11          of defence it made a huge difference, because our asset  
12          base was something between 70 and 90  
13          billion pounds, a massive amount of money.

14   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to stop you there for a second,  
15          when the -- Mr Hoon wrote back and said, "This is an  
16          excellent settlement --"

17   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was based on the assumption that we  
18          were controlled now by a resource total, not by a cash  
19          total, and that we had freedom -- this was written into  
20          the settlement -- to manage our budget entirely on that  
21          basis.

22          Now, the amount of, as it were, depreciation,  
23          capital charging, write-off allowance that was in that  
24          settlement, was a  
25          a prudent figure, based on what we had

1       been doing for the previous two years.

2               But it did mean, as it transpired, that we had the headroom to  
3       achieve what I felt we had always failed to achieve  
4       before in my previous three years there, to actually  
5       fund the defence programme properly, and we proceeded  
6       on that understanding that we would be controlled by  
7       resource, not by cash.

8               I should say that our understanding of this  
9       settlement was validated subsequently, after we ran into  
10      a disagreement with the Treasury on this by an  
11      independent report by Capgemini, Ernst & Young, which  
12      will be available to the Inquiry, should you want to get  
13      into these sad, technical details. I don't recommend  
14      it, but it is there.

15              The result was that we were using a lot of cash,  
16      reporting this properly to the Treasury, but by the  
17      summer of 2003, after, as it were, the Iraq  
18      operations -- this is why it is not directly relevant.

19      SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, it is relevant in terms of  
20      what happened afterwards.

21      SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: The Treasury felt that we were using far  
22      too much cash, and in September 2003, the Chancellor of  
23      the day instituted a complete guillotine on our  
24      settlement, and we were then, from then onwards,  
25      controlled by cash, not by resource.

1           This was, in fact, reopening our settlement against  
2           the terms of the original letter, and it meant that we  
3           had to go in for a very major savings exercise in order  
4           to cope with what was effectively a billion pounds reduction in our  
finances. So we  
6           conducted a major exercise, finishing in around  
7           March 2004.

8           The whole question of what our budget was then based on was left  
9           open. We could not engage with the Treasury actively on  
10          this until we got the 2004 settlement, when it was all  
11          wrapped up in a further public expenditure  
12          round and we got a new budget from 2004 onwards, which  
13          gave us some relief, I have to say, so we managed to  
14          regain some of the losses that we  
15          had incurred, but not all, and that major savings exercise  
16          had to be carried forward. So that, in short, is the,  
17          crisis period.

18          I should point out that I know another witness has  
19          said that the Ministry of Defence was increasing its  
20          cash allowance by around 9 per cent, and that could not  
21          be allowed. I would only point out that in the 2002  
22          settlement the Department of Transport in one year had  
23          an uplift of 12 per cent and DFID had an uplift of  
24          8 per cent. So it was not, as it were, completely  
25          unreasonable for the Ministry of Defence to be behaving

1           in the way it did.

2   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's extremely helpful. Now, this

3           presumably is the context for the discussion that we had

4           with Lord Walker about the view of the Chiefs about what

5           they were being expected to cut or not cut at this time.

6   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Not quite, if I may say so, because that

7           was about the actual nature of the 2004 settlement,

8           where, I say, we managed to regain some of the lost

9           ground. I think we secured nearly 4 billion of extra

10          cash in that overall settlement. It was 1.4 per cent,

11          I think -- I may be wrong -- real terms increase, not

12          massive, but we also gained some flexibility to move

13          from the non-cash element of our budget, if I can put it

14          like that, into cash. Not as much as we had enjoyed

15          under the 2002 settlement, but about 350 million a year.

16          That did help avoid the worst kinds of cuts.

17          So, Lord Walker and his colleagues were

18          reassured, although it was still very, very tight, by

19          that settlement in 2004, which I might say was concluded

20          about 10 o'clock at night with the Chancellor and the

21          Defence Secretary and myself, about six hours before the

22          final settlement for the whole public expenditure round

23          was printed. So it was pretty hard going.

24   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That sort of argument was that

25          presumably the Chancellor did not want you to have as



1 much as you eventually got?

2 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That is correct. I think it is fair to

3 say that the Treasury, as a whole, didn't want us to

4 have as much as we got under the flexibilities in the 2002  
settlement. I think it is fair to say that

5 most people were surprised at the extent to which the

6 MoD was moving from the depreciation capital charging

7 write-off area of the budget into the cash area.

8 Frankly, I had hoped that we would have had

9 a negotiation on that and it would have come out

10 somewhere in the middle, but the Treasury position and

11 the Chancellor's position was tougher than that.

12 I'm unrepentant, because my task was to provide the

13 resources necessary for the MoD to carry out its

14 functions and I believe that's exactly what we needed.

15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So basically you are saying that

16 there had not been a proper negotiation on this. All of

17 a sudden you pushed it very hard at the very last minute

18 in order to extract extra resource from the Treasury?

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, let me be clear, the final settlement

20 in 2004 was a normal, hard negotiation and that was

21 concluded amicably. The guillotine that came down

22 in September 2003 was an arbitrary issue.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This matters to the extent that it

24 affects the future defence programme. I think the

25 Prime Minister, talking about this yesterday, said it is

1            basically up to the Ministry of Defence how it handles  
2            these sorts of pressures on its budget.

3            What were the consequences for the defence programme  
4            of the way that this guillotine came down?

5        SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I think, again, the way we ran the  
6            budget was that, clearly, one prioritised according to  
7            the most important activities and functions. So the way  
8            in which we went through this exercise was to preserve  
9            resources for Iraq, for the operational scenarios that we  
10           were currently engaged in, and to make the cuts and the  
11           savings in the areas which were least likely to be  
12           called upon, and so the savings were in ships,  
13           destroyers and frigates, in Nimrod patrol aircraft, in  
14           submarines, in mine countermeasure vessels, mine  
15           sweepers, patrol vessels, some helicopters but  
16           helicopters not relevant to Iraq, more the result of the  
17           withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

18           We were able to run down more quickly some of those  
19           resources that were no longer needed for the  
20           Northern Ireland situation, which by that stage, of  
21           course, had eased. We took out some heavy armour -  
22           Challenger tank squadrons, AS90 guns. There was quite  
23           a large list of things.

24           We drew down and retired early our Jaguar aircraft.  
25           We took manpower to some extent out of the three

1           services from, the Navy, from the air force, not by huge  
2           amounts, I would have said by about 5 per cent --

3   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   But the basic picture --

4   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   -- but across the board we had to make  
5           savings, and we took 10,000 civil servants,  
6           a progressive reduction, and reduced headquarters size  
7           and numbers of buildings.

8           So it was a general, across-the-board, major savings  
9           exercise.

10   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   The way you approached it was to try  
11           to protect --

12   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   Naturally.

13   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:   What about long-term impact on our  
14           ability to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan?

15   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   I think it is very difficult to say that  
16           it did have a long-term impact. For example, we had to  
17           reduce the allocation in our forward programme for  
18           helicopters. But these were not specific programmes

19           As you probably have seen in the Green Paper  
20           published yesterday by the Ministry of Defence, they now  
21           intend to give ten-year forward perspectives of  
22           allocations for broad areas of capability. We had never  
23           published those before, and still don't at the moment,  
24           but, were we to do so, we would have seen that the  
25

1 helicopter provision for the future was reduced.

2 Now, that would not have made an effect on Iraq or

3 Afghanistan, in my view, because the programmes would probably only  
now just be coming

5 on-stream. So this was a longer term resetting of the

6 defence programme rather than an immediate or early

7 effect on helicopter availability, for example.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that's basically where

9 I wanted to get.

10 Just one final question: in terms of training, the

11 longer-term preparation of troops, were you able to

12 sustain this at a satisfactory level, while still having

13 to find resource to keep people in the actual

14 operations?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think -- it is never possible to say

16 this definitively. I think some training, obviously,

17 was reduced, but not the operational training, but these

18 things have a long-term, corrosive effect on a force

19 structure. It is not the short-term effect that would

20 have been noticeable in terms of Iraq, or, I think,

21 initially anyway, in Afghanistan.

22 Defence is a long-term business and the effects of

23 these sorts of reductions usually only come through in

24 the long-term, basically because, I have to say -- and

25 it is not me, I have to say my colleagues in the MoD are

1       very good at planning and prioritising, but throughout  
2       my period as PUS, I was running essentially a crisis  
3       budget rather than one with sufficient resource to be  
4       able to plan as coherently and well for the long-term as  
5       we would have liked, which is part of the reason we had  
6       such difficulty with some of our major programmes. We  
7       were always having to cut or defer or reduce the amounts  
8       of off-take, which obviously added to the overall cost  
9       of the programmes.

10    SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.

11    THE CHAIRMAN: Martin?

12    SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Given what you have just told  
13       Sir Lawrence Freedman, essentially, about the long-term  
14       rather than the short-term impact of the 2004  
15       settlement --

16    SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, no, it was the 2004 cuts necessary  
17       as a result of the Chancellor withdrawing the  
18       flexibility within the budget to move from non-cash to  
19       cash. The 2004 settlement gave us some relief and we  
20       were able to add certain things back. There was, of  
21       course, then another settlement in 2007. The government  
22       decided not to have a settlement in 2006 -- after my  
23       time, I have to say, but when I looked at it from the  
24       outside, I felt that that was a particularly bad  
25       settlement for the MoD.

1 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of 2004, you were describing  
2 essentially that this had no immediate effect on the  
3 problems which might be created by our going into  
4 Afghanistan. I was just wondering what advice you were  
5 able to give the Secretary of State for Defence with  
6 regard to what our undertaking the Afghan commitment  
7 would mean in terms of our resources, our ability to  
8 fund the two operations.

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Obviously there were two aspects to  
10 Afghanistan. One was the deployment of the headquarters  
11 formation, which happened to be provided by the UK but  
12 was a NATO formation, and the other was the actual  
13 provision of a force, about 3,000 or so, which went into  
14 Helmand province afterwards. The commitment coming  
15 later than the original commitment to send in the  
16 headquarters.

17 I was concerned about this. My view, as  
18 Permanent Secretary, while we were still heavily engaged  
19 in Iraq and we were still in the process of  
20 recuperation, recuperating, as it were, the force  
21 structure from a large-scale engagement, according to  
22 our plans, was that I was very concerned about a new commitment  
23 in Afghanistan.

24 I think we had a difficulty, which was that, at that  
25 stage, the UK was seeking particularly to integrate, to

1 co-ordinate better the US operation and the NATO  
2 operation and the deployment of the headquarters  
3 was one of the means to seek to achieve this, and it was  
4 quite clear that only the UK really could do that, could  
5 try to bring the rest of NATO and the United States  
6 together, a rather familiar theme.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just interrupt, Sir Kevin? Was that  
8 a relationships thing rather than a capability --

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: It was both, it was both. These things  
10 are intertwined. As far as the deployment of the  
11 headquarters was concerned, I think that decision was  
12 taken more or less in 2004 through the NATO process.

13 I think the deployment of our forces to Helmand from  
14 the north was a different matter. I was apprehensive  
15 and felt that this could be a mission too far and I made  
16 my concerns known to my planning staff and to the Chiefs  
17 of Staff. I think their view was that they could do it  
18 and it was manageable. I think they were making some  
19 very fine judgments about capability. It is what one  
20 admires about them, and I think they were satisfied that  
21 they could manage that deployment within the resource.

23 We  
24 had a meeting with the Chiefs of Staff. I was  
25 concerned. The weight of views of the Chiefs of Staff

1       themselves was in favour, and since it was they who  
2       would actually have to ensure they could do this, I did  
3       not press my objections fully.

4             One of the things that weighed with me in not  
5       pressing those concerns was that if the UK  
6       didn't come forward, nobody else was going to. If the

7       UK came forward, we hoped to create a snowball effect, to get other  
countries to come with us. This was the

9       planning assumption. We would have other countries to  
10      provide support forces, helicopters, the things that we  
11      were relatively lacking in.

12            If we didn't kick it off, nobody else was going to  
13      and nobody could predict at that time -- we are now in  
14      mid-2005, I would guess -- what would actually happen  
15      and whether we would indeed get those commitments. It  
16      was certainly clear that, unless we took the first step,  
17      nobody else was going to make a move, and that was the  
18      grounds on which I didn't force my concerns, as it were,  
19      to a formal recommendation.

20            I think when the Secretary of State, John Reid,  
21      actually took a formal view, he was reassured by the  
22      Chiefs of Staff that it was do-able.

23   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What were the objections that you  
24      didn't feel you could press fully?

25   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think they were very general ones.



1       They weren't to do with the specific elements  
2       of the force package. It was because I felt that we had  
3       not fully recuperated from the major operation and at  
4       that stage we could only be contemplating a small scale  
5       deployment. Afghanistan at 3,000/3,500 in Helmand, in  
6       pretty uncertain circumstances, seemed to me to be right on the  
7       margins of that.

8   THE CHAIRMAN: With a concern about mission creep, having  
9       committed that --

10   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was the real concern, Chairman. It  
11       wasn't that it wasn't do-able, as it were, in immediate  
12       terms. It was about the risk that was being  
13       introduced, as it were into our capabilities.

14   THE CHAIRMAN: Fingers into the mangle, in fact.

15   SIR MARTIN GILBERT: These points you didn't press?

16   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't press as a formal objection, and  
17       it was just one  
18       person's view. As I say, the Chiefs of Staff were  
19       satisfied they could do it and I think John Reid --  
20       I mean, I did have discussions with him and he did press  
21       very clearly the department on these points about the effect on  
22       capability, on whether it was do-able, in various ways. So I think  
23       that process was gone through properly.

24   THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I'll turn to Baroness Prashar.

25   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. I would just like to

1 move on on the arrangements within government to enable  
2 us for proper co-ordination and planning.

3 What was your view of the effectiveness of  
4 collective planning within government during 2002 and  
5 the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003? I'm talking  
6 about pre-invasion.

7 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think, as I said in my first  
8 appearance, the Ministry of Defence, I think  
9 did it very well, within the constraints that there  
10 were. The constraints, obviously, being that, as we  
11 were trying to synchronise military preparations, as  
12 a contingent measure, with a diplomatic effort, which was  
13 the main effort, there were difficulties in being able  
14 to do as much as early as one would have wished to have  
15 done, and that was quite clear.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: There was a constraint because you  
17 were not -- asked not to make these arrangements --

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct, and I mean, it wasn't  
19 a question, as it were, of resenting being held back.

20  
21 It was more a question of  
22 the proper integration and  
23 management of those two tracks. We were able,  
24 I think, to begin planning for urgent operational  
25 requirements in September.

1           The first batch was approved by Geoff Hoon but he  
2           had to hold back, I think, 4 out of 16, as I recall, at  
3           the time, and we were continuing to  
4           do just enough, but not as much as we would have  
5           desired, as we went through the autumn. But in terms of  
6           the actual machine -the Chiefs of Staff meetings,  
7           briefings of the Secretary of State, involving as many  
8           outsiders as we possibly could - it was, I think, well  
9           done. When I say "as we possibly could" --  
10       BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Outsiders? Who were the outsiders?  
11       SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: There were operational security issues.  
12           Not just our own, but also American ones. When you are  
13           doing this military planning, and you are actually  
14           beginning to put people's lives at risk, you are very  
15           careful about how wide you make the community which is  
16           engaged in the planning.  
17       BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about co-ordination planning  
18           across government departments? Because you are talking  
19           about your own department, but it was working with DFID,  
20           FCO, the Cabinet Office?  
21       SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, the Foreign Office set up  
22           their Iraq Planning Unit during the autumn, I think, and  
23           there was quite a lot of cross-discussions between us.  
24           The Chiefs of Staff involved other departments, the  
25           Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office, at a very early

1 stage. But I think that this general problem we had --  
2 and I have this throughout -- I will be very frank --  
3 the Ministry of Defence moved on to very much a crisis  
4 operational footing. I didn't sense that that was true  
5 throughout Whitehall. In a way, why should it have been  
6 in 2002? The main effort was working on the diplomatic  
7 track and the Foreign Office was flat out in that  
8 direction at the time.

9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And DFID?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: My remarks earlier -- a rather  
11 flippant remark - about poverty relief and that Iraq  
12 didn't qualify, that referred very much to sort of early  
13 discussions with DFID in 2002, not what actually  
14 happened in 2003. DFID were not engaged in the process  
15 until quite late on.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you wrote to Andrew Turnbull on  
17 5 March and you dealt, among other things, with the  
18 importance of ensuring the right structures --

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: 5 March --

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: 2003.

21 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Oh, yes. That was much later.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because I was asking before then.

23 What were your concerns at that stage, that you chose to  
24 actually write to the Cabinet Secretary?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: That was more a formal thing.

1       My view, at that stage, was that a decision to  
2       commit our forces in those circumstances was obviously  
3       a matter for the Attorney General, but it was also  
4       a matter for the Cabinet and it was a decision to be  
5       taken by government at the highest level  
6       with the integration of the --

7   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But in that letter, I understand you  
8       also wrote about the importance of ensuring the right  
9       structure in place to enable effective planning and  
10       co-ordination. So what were your concerns about  
11       planning and co-ordination?

12   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Can I go back to September 2002, when  
13       I think I was talking to a number of people in Whitehall  
14       about co-ordination and planning?

15       Structures were set up, both in the Cabinet Office  
16       committee structure, at a slightly lower level, and at  
17       a higher level chaired by David Manning. My feeling was  
18       that he did heroically and he kept everybody very, very  
19       well informed in the inner circle, as it were, of  
20       precisely his discussions with the United States.

21   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you were saying --

22   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: But --

23   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: -- that it was a smaller inner  
24       circle and at that stage DFID wasn't part of it?

25   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: When I said that, I wasn't necessarily

1       referring to DFID. I meant that, when you are doing  
2       that type of planning, you keep it quite small.

3             Let me be clear about this. I felt that we didn't  
4       have strong enough co-ordination mechanisms in place.

5       I raised this issue with David Manning, I raised it with  
6       Number 10. I raised it with --

7   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: IPU wasn't set up  
8       until February 2003.

9   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct. I'm sorry, I said earlier.  
10       Yes, okay. I did feel that we needed a rather better  
11       mechanism to involve very senior civil servants, in  
12       order to plan better for the sort of crisis that finally  
13       arose. I asked, for example, to be more involved myself  
14       in the discussions that were going on, and the decision  
15       was that that was not the way things were going to be.

16            I think Number 10 felt that it was quite a crowded  
17       place already and that to widen it would mean widening  
18       it too far from their point of view at that stage. But  
19       I think it was a weakness. As I say, David Manning did  
20       extremely well in keeping everybody informed that needed  
21       to know about his discussions with the United States,  
22       about how planning was going, and we did set up  
23       machinery and mechanisms. The one I should have  
24       mentioned was the one chaired, I think, by  
25       Desmond Bowen, not by the Foreign Office and the IPU,

1 but they were not really at a high enough level, I felt,  
2 to engage the people who needed to be engaged in  
3 departments in serious planning of an active nature.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: General Viggers was pretty frank in  
5 what he said to us. He said:  
6 "Lives are being lost as a result of amateurs being  
7 put into key decision-making roles without a clear  
8 understanding of the implications of their decisions".  
9 Do you think that's a fair assessment?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, I think that's going far too far.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You do not agree?

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, I don't agree with that.

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Why would he make that comment?

14 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I have no idea. I'm not even sure what  
15 he is referring to. I'm sorry, I didn't read his  
16 transcript.

17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay. You started to talk earlier  
18 about the aftermath planning and the position of  
19 personnel before we got the Resolution 1483.  
20 What were -- do you think we fully understood the  
21 implications, when the MoD offered the largest package,  
22 we would become a joint occupying power? Was that fully  
23 understood by ministers, you know, by the  
24 Prime Minister?

25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, we're dotting around a bit

1 and these are very complex issues. I think the scale of  
2 deployment was consistent with our planning assumptions, with  
3 what we had done in the Gulf ten years  
4 earlier. It was the type of operation that we expected  
5 from time to time to be able to mount. So in itself  
6 a large-scale deployment was consistent with what we had  
7 developed from the strategic defence review.

8 I think the shift from a plan which involved  
9 us going into south-eastern Turkey and holding, as it  
10 were, the line to prevent Saddam moving into the Kurdish  
11 areas and disrupting that end of the country, I think  
12 the move from that, which took place progressively in  
13 planning from, I don't know, middle of December to  
14 middle of January, I think that was a very significant  
15 shift, to move us down into the south of Iraq.

16 It was at that time, I think, I felt that it was  
17 important to reappraise, to pause, to take stock as to  
18 what was going on.

19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was that done?

20 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I certainly wrote to the Secretary of  
21 State about it. I think I wrote a personal note to him,  
22 which I am afraid I can't find, in the Christmas of  
23 2002, expressing my concerns that we were, as it were,  
24 being led into a possible military action, where we  
25 might not actually have secured our objectives; in other



1 words, we wouldn't have disarmed Saddam by  
2 the diplomatic route. We might not get a second  
3 resolution. We hadn't got post-conflict planning as  
4 well pinned down with the United States as any of us  
5 wanted at that stage.

6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you get any response to that?

7 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I discussed this with the Secretary  
8 of State and I think we were very much of one mind that  
9 this did need to be thought through very carefully.  
10 There were, I think, ministerial discussions.

11 I think we put forward the plan finally to go into  
12 the south on about 16 January. I think the Secretary of  
13 State wrote that to the Prime Minister at that stage, or  
14 his office did, and I think ministers did have  
15 a discussion, I'm not sure about what detail.

16 I recall, after our discussion, mine with the  
17 Secretary of State, as a result of what I gave him over  
18 Christmas as my thoughts, he asked me to do one thing,  
19 which was to provide him with a note on the  
20 transatlantic relationship. One of the  
21 issues at that stage was that we had gone so far,  
22 by the end of December, with the United States in  
23 planning - not just because we wanted to be with the  
24 United States, but because I knew the government  
25 believed in what it was doing - that to have gone back at

1           that point and decided not to proceed, in circumstances  
2           where we hadn't disarmed Saddam Hussein --  
3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:   So what you are saying --  
4 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   -- would have been particularly difficult  
5           for our relationship with the United States.  
6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:   -- is that a commitment had been  
7           made at a certain stage. There was no going back at  
8           that stage there was no room for reassessment?  
9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   There was never an unconditional  
10          commitment at all. I think when one begins to engage in  
11          military planning, one takes on a risk that, if one  
12          doesn't see it through in a way that was designed to  
13          achieve the effect of disarming Saddam Hussein  
14          diplomatically, or the use of force if this didn't  
15          occur, then if one backs down without any of those  
16          conditions being met, then that carries with itself its  
17          own damage. That was one of the factors which I set  
18          out, I remember --  
19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:   The point I want to get to is  
20          a commitment has been made, but it is the level of that  
21          commitment. Because Lord Turnbull said to us that,  
22          because we went for the largest package, we became  
23          a joint occupying power. Had anybody thought through  
24          the implications of that at this stage?  
25 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   Yes, I think they had, I think they had.

1 Yes, certainly.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: By the way, if I could just interject, we  
3 would like to come on to the US dimension in a few  
4 minutes.

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Okay. Sorry. My point -- well, it's  
6 certainly linked to it. My point was that I felt that  
7 that was slightly more easily managed in northern Iraq  
8 than from the south. That was my own personal view,  
9 because we would have been coming down next to the  
10 Kurdish autonomous zone which was a pretty stable  
11 government area.

12 So that would have involved, I think, less  
13 difficulty than taking the four southern provinces. So  
14 that was a factor that needed to be considered. So  
15 I think we did think about this.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Do you think that this was being  
17 made clear to the other government departments, to the  
18 Prime Minister, because in a way the workings of the MoD  
19 are quite complex in any way, if you do the military  
20 operations, the civilian operations. Was that an  
21 understanding of the MoD and its operational  
22 complexities?

23 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I think so. I think the continuous  
24 stream of advice coming from the Chiefs of Staff and  
25 from the Ministry of Defence into Number 10 and key

1 ministers, I think that was very clear.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, you have been a Permanent  
3 Undersecretary, you were for a pretty long time, and  
4 during your tenure, it coincided with a number of  
5 operations in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and so  
6 on, and Iraq, of course, was one of the most enduring.

7 How did you ensure that MoD was able to deliver its  
8 parts of the UK strategy in Iraq effectively? What  
9 steps did you take?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, I'm not quite sure what you mean by  
11 that question. I mean, as I say, we prioritised in  
12 order to ensure that we could deliver the Iraq  
13 operation. The initial force deployment was in line  
14 with our overall planning assumptions. The timescale  
15 was slightly compressed, more than we would have wished,  
16 which we made very clear, so that we didn't have  
17 everything that we would have wanted at the right  
18 moment, but the shortfall was not operationally  
19 significant and we would have planned to have been there  
20 for a deployment at around medium scale for about six  
21 months -- sorry, we would have held that deployment and  
22 then began to reduce to medium scale after around six  
23 months --

24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The initial assumption was that this  
25 would be not such a long, enduring process?

1 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, that, I think, is one of the lessons  
2 that we learned --

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you able to adjust your  
4 department? Did you put your department on a war  
5 footing or was a business as usual?

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: No, it wasn't business as usual in the  
7 Ministry of Defence. I think it still may have been  
8 a bit business as usual in other departments. But for  
9 us, no, it certainly wasn't business as usual.

10 I mean, various things. Firstly, one of the lessons  
11 we have learned from Iraq is that the concept in the SDR  
12 of first in, first out, is not sustainable. We had the  
13 idea that we were very good at moving troops very  
14 rapidly over long distance, able to engage in war  
15 fighting and, indeed, transition very rapidly to  
16 stabilisation and peacekeeping, but that we would be  
17 able to leave, and others in the coalition, as it were,  
18 would be able to take the strain afterwards.

19 That has proved obviously to be unrealistic, both in  
20 Iraq and indeed in Afghanistan, and I think that is one  
21 of the concepts from the strategic defence review, which  
22 will need to be revised in the next defence  
23 review or national security review that's coming  
24 forward. We had learned that lesson by 2003, I have to  
25 say.

1           In terms of sustaining our position in Iraq, we,  
2           I think, were able to do so, but at medium scale. There  
3           was not the prospect of a larger operation than that,  
4           but I think that was very clear, and, indeed, we did get  
5           allies around in the coalition to work with us in the  
6           south.

7   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay, thank you.

8   THE CHAIRMAN: I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne in a moment,  
9           but I think Sir Lawrence has got one question first.

10   SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One quick question. You described  
11           David Manning's efforts as heroic in terms of keeping  
12           other ministries involved, despite the fact that he was  
13           also the Prime Minister's leading foreign policy adviser  
14           at the time. The Cabinet Secretary has told us he did  
15           very little on Iraq. He was obviously busy with other  
16           things.

17           Do you think we got the balance wrong within the  
18           Cabinet Office? Because in previous conflicts the  
19           Cabinet Secretary would have taken a much more prominent  
20           role.

21   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Yes, I mean, if you want my personal  
22           opinion, I think we probably did. I think, having  
23           looked at my notes, I recall the note I wrote to  
24           Geoff Hoon in September when I had had the discussion  
25           with David Manning and I think in that I said

1       that, it was difficult for David to take on both roles  
2       of being both the Prime Minister's personal  
3       adviser, and at the same time chairing the co-ordination  
4       group, a Cabinet Office-type structure - not because he  
5       couldn't manage both roles in principle: I think, if anybody could,  
6       David could, frankly. I had the highest admiration for  
7       him in terms of his objectivity. But it was just a huge  
8       amount of work to take on, and I do not think he could  
9       take on, and didn't really take on, that second role of  
10      personally co-ordinating all of the Whitehall machine that  
there needed to be. That's back to my earlier point.

12           You know, I am, myself, an advocate of also  
13      underpinning ministerial discussions with a group of  
14      relevant Permanent Secretaries who can operate under  
15      a Deputy Cabinet Secretary, or  
16      a national security adviser, whether it be  
17      David Manning - or David Omand, for example, who could  
18      have moved into that role; but it does need that type of  
19      group, I think, to really carry forward a major British  
20      operational interest of the kind Iraq was, or, indeed,  
21      of the kind Afghanistan is, because I think most of the  
22      co-ordination mechanisms we had were mainly to do with  
23      exchanging information about what was going on in  
24      individual departments or areas. It wasn't really the  
25      integrated co-ordination able to bear

1 progressively, positively on the problem.

2 Now, of course there were all sorts of other  
3 difficulties for us in Iraq. I mean, we were the junior  
4 member in a coalition, so the American actions were what  
5 really called the shots at the end of the day, and their  
6 resources were what called the shots at the end of the  
7 day, and other governments' resources. We could not  
8 possibly have carried it all ourselves.

9 Nevertheless, I think we could have done better if  
10 we had had a more integrated planning and government  
11 structure, which I would myself have put under a senior  
12 Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office system --  
13 I don't necessarily call him the Cabinet Secretary  
14 because I know Andrew Turnbull had a different remit --  
15 able to pull together at the top level of the machine  
16 the activities of colleagues.

17 As I said, with the best will in the world, I didn't  
18 feel that other government departments were on the war  
19 footing that the Ministry of Defence was on and when we  
20 moved through from the initial phase to 2003/2004/2005, and  
21 that obviously was important.

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you think Andrew Turnbull could  
23 have done more to push a system like this forward,  
24 because he must have seen the pressures on  
25 David Manning?



1 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think, you know -- I mean, it is very  
2 difficult to do that, if one -- I mean, this is  
3 a counsel of perfection and I don't think it was so  
4 obvious that one needed to go to that stage and, as  
5 I say, David Manning and his successors did extremely  
6 well. I'm just saying how one might improve the system,  
7 not that it was obviously broken, as it were, and as  
8 I say, DFID came through very strongly later, in 2003,  
9 and the Foreign Office were flat out throughout.

10 So I don't think you can say there was  
11 a fault in the activities of the departments. But it is  
12 the central co-ordinating mechanism that I think could be  
13 strengthened.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we will move on to Sir Roderic --

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, if I may just add, remember, it  
16 wasn't until the end of 2004 that we got the  
17 reconstruction unit set up, the Post-Conflict  
18 Reconstruction Unit, which did begin to integrate  
19 planning and activity. But at the beginning it was a sort  
20 of academic activity rather than an operational  
21 organisation. So this is what I mean about the need to  
22 have overseen improvements earlier, if we could have done.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Roderic?

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I would like to turn to some of the

1 broader strategic issues, including the sort of matters  
2 that you raised in your personal note to the Secretary  
3 of State you have just described.

4 Do you think that, in the end, the UK faced a binary  
5 choice between going to war to topple Saddam Hussein on  
6 the one hand, or a near certainty that Iraq, within  
7 a few years, would acquire nuclear weapons and  
8 capabilities to deliver other weapons of mass  
9 destruction and in all probability would also be  
10 a supporter of international terrorism?

11 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't see it quite in those terms.

12 I mean, if you are asking me to step back, at the  
13 strategic level, I myself was satisfied with the policy  
14 which I understood we were pursuing; that is to say,  
15 that we did need to deal with Saddam Hussein as  
16 a threat, as a result of his track record, his  
17 possession, as we believed to be the case, of weapons of  
18 mass destruction and his intentions to continue to  
19 develop that capability and intention in defiance of the  
20 international community and successive Security Council  
21 Resolutions.

22 I myself was very concerned about our position with  
23 the No Fly Zones, -- and the way in which  
24 sanctions had been eroding to our disadvantage rather  
25 than Saddam's and to the disadvantage of his people

1       rather than his regime.

2               So I mean I was not challenging our strategy and  
3       I felt that the -- whether they are conditions,  
4       criteria, deeply desired desiderata or whatever you like  
5       to call them - the various elements of our position of  
6       operating through the UN to secure disarmament  
7       diplomatically, of building a broad coalition of  
8       international partners rather than US  
9       unilateralism, of using this in conjunction with efforts  
10      for the Middle East peace process, of seeking --  
11      although we got things wrong -- of seeking to manage the  
12      post-conflict and prepare for managing the post-conflict  
13      during the build-up period. I thought all those  
14      elements of our strategy were good and right.

15             What concerned me in my note in December to the  
16      Secretary of State was the risk, as one feels in one's  
17      dark moments, that maybe we are not going to get any of these  
18      criteria achieved. It wasn't looking as if Saddam was  
19      going to back down and really comply. It wasn't looking  
20      as if the Americans were not going to pursue the  
21      military course if compliance failed. There was a clear  
22      sense of impatience, I think, in Washington.

23             The planning for post-conflict didn't seem to me to  
24      be very robust. As we could read it in the  
25      United States, a lot had been done, but it didn't seem

1           to have bite and direction.

2   SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Do you think --

3   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   So those concerns were ones which led me

4           to say to the Secretary of State at the point when we

5           were also not going to get our northern option and were

6           moving to a southern one, which seemed to me to be very

7           significant, that this is the time to reappraise and to think

8           hard before going forward.  It wasn't that I was against

9           going forward.

10  SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Was it perhaps by then too late to

11           reappraise?  Were we committed politically to support

12           the Americans, to go with them whatever, and militarily,

13           because by then our military preparations were going

14           into high gear?

15  SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   I don't think it was too late.

16           I wouldn't go that far.

17  SIR RODERIC LYNE:   But we were committed at that point?

18  SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   People have testified to say if the House

19           of Commons vote had gone the other way, we wouldn't have

20           been able to proceed.  If the Attorney had not given us

21           the advice that it was legal for us to proceed, we

22           wouldn't have proceeded.

23  SIR RODERIC LYNE:   Those are two situations in which perhaps

24           we couldn't have proceeded.

25  SIR KEVIN TEBBIT:   I think the point I was making and would

1       make again now is that, having got where we did by the  
2       end of 2002, not to have proceeded then without, as it  
3       were, very strong reasons, such as Saddam actually  
4       opening up and meeting the conditions, would have given  
5       us a real problem by that  
6       stage.

7             In other words, having indicated an intention, with  
8       conditions, to work with the United States on the  
9       military track, to have gone back at that point would  
10      have carried risks and doubts. That's all I'm saying.

11   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right. Before we reach that point, did  
12      you see a point at which the government at the most  
13      senior decision-making levels had fully reviewed and  
14      thrashed out the whole range of its options?

15   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I never saw that process taking place.  
16      As I say, I wasn't party to those discussions in  
17      Number 10.

18   SIR RODERIC LYNE: But you never saw that process taking  
19      place?

20   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Not personally.

21   SIR RODERIC LYNE: Okay. Can I now turn directly to the  
22      relationship with the United States which clearly is of  
23      great strategic --

24   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Sorry, when I say I never saw it taking  
25      place, it doesn't mean to say it didn't take place.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I know, but you, as Permanent Secretary  
2 to the MoD, were not aware that such a strategic review  
3 of options had taken place, and one might reasonably  
4 assume that you would have been, if it had, that you  
5 would have heard of it through your Secretary of State  
6 surely, you were quite likely have been involved in it,  
7 but these were only presumptions.

8 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: All I'm saying is that there were lots of  
9 meetings that ministers had --

10 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We have been told that there were lots of  
11 meetings --

12 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: -- but the details were recorded at the  
13 time or not, yes.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: There are rather few records of these  
15 meetings. There are very few details of them. It is  
16 not clear who was at them.

17 The question I was asking, you have answered very  
18 clearly. Thank you.

19 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I should just say that my understanding  
20 was that in the second half of January, after my  
21 discussions with Geoff Hoon, not because of my  
22 discussions with Geoff Hoon, but I sense that that was  
23 a point when ministers were coming to a major decision  
24 point and it was also the point where Geoff Hoon was  
25 recommending the southern option to government. My

1       understanding was that there was a pretty full  
2       discussion at that time but that's my understanding.

3       SIR RODERIC LYNE: But, as you said earlier, by then we were  
4       a very long way towards a commitment.

5       In terms of our relationship with the United States,  
6       which is clearly of great importance, there has been  
7       a suggestion from witnesses that we decided to deploy  
8       the large-scale land force in order to maximise UK  
9       influence with the United States.

10       Some witnesses have suggested that the smaller  
11       package, too, essentially air and sea without the land  
12       division, which was initially favoured by the  
13       Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence,  
14       would have been sufficient to secure the amount of  
15       influence with the Americans we required.

16       What do you think about that?

17       SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think the smaller option was probably  
18       initially favoured when we thought the Americans were  
19       going earlier, or might be going earlier, when we  
20       wouldn't have had time anyway to have put together the  
21       large-scale option. I think the large-scale option was  
22       a natural consequence of what we would do or what we  
23       would plan to do. As I say, it was built into our  
24       general planning from the strategic defence review.  
25       I think experience has shown us that putting

1 a large-scale force on the ground, as it were, gives one  
2 more influence with the United States than if you are  
3 not on the ground.

4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We would have got quite a lot of brownie  
5 points with package 2?

6 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I don't think one did this just to get  
7 brownie points, if I may say so.

8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But we weren't needed.

9 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think that -- there was also a military  
10 view about the sense of critical mass under national  
11 command that works well, which would have been a feature  
12 of the Chief of Staffs' considerations.

13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The Chiefs of Staff made it clear they  
14 wanted to be there.

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: One doesn't do these things just to  
16 indulge Chiefs of Staff.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it was an element, wasn't it?

18 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I didn't sense myself that, as it were,  
19 the military machine was forcing the political hand, not  
20 at all.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In terms of the influence we got, again  
22 we have heard arguments now from quite a number of  
23 witnesses, including the former Prime Minister, former  
24 Foreign Secretary, former Defence Secretary, former  
25 Ambassador to the United States, about the Government's



1 failure to achieve the objectives that it set out at the  
2 beginning in its dealing with the Bush administration  
3 authorisation by the United Nations, wide international  
4 support, substantive progress on the Middle East peace  
5 process, proper planning of, not only the operation, but  
6 the aftermath.

7 Now, there had been different views on whether or  
8 not we could have used our leverage more effectively.  
9 What do you think about that?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Firstly, one doesn't do this just for  
11 leverage. Secondly, it was a consideration. There is  
12 no doubt about that. I think we did have some  
13 considerable success in moving the United States into  
14 the UN and down the multilateral route. I think that's  
15 well recorded. As I said, I think before, in my earlier  
16 hearing, I recall the United States making this very  
17 clear to us, Condoleezza Rice making it very clear.

18 One never knew quite whether they were humouring us,  
19 as it were, or whether it was objectively true. My own  
20 views sort of changed from day-to-day on that, but I got  
21 the sense that we had affected and changed the way in  
22 which the United States went about the operation, in  
23 seeking to put them in the multilateral context rather  
24 than a unilateral one.

25 Having said that, I think we expected more than we

1       secured at the end of the day in terms of the benefits  
2       to the UK in the relationship. We were involved  
3       afterwards in seeking -- I mean, I think we finally got  
4       -- on the political track - the road map  
5       finally went into place, but one can't say that it was  
6       as directly linked to the Iraq operation as one would  
7       have wished.

8   SIR RODERIC LYNE: But it didn't create the environment we  
9       had hoped for?

10   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Correct. In terms of more practical,  
11       basic things, I was certainly involved in seeking to  
12       improve the intelligence relationship with the  
13       United States. It was already uniquely good, but even  
14       so, we felt that that could go further, particularly if  
15       we are doing joint things together in the world, as we  
16       were and still are. We also had a major effort to ease the  
17       bilateral obstacles in the conventional military procurement field.  
As you know,  
18       the nuclear relationship is very close with the  
19       United States. We were seeking to move the conventional  
20       military relationship into the same position, by removing  
21       obstacles to the trade between us in defence technology  
22       and goods. That actually still remains to be achieved. It  
23       has not been achieved yet. So that can't be counted  
24       a great success so far.

25       I'm thinking, for example of access to the technical knowledge  
on

1           on the joint strike fighter. I'm thinking of the defence trade  
treaty what is still

2           to be ratified. So I am

3           afraid the results haven't been as good as some of us

4           had hoped, to be absolutely frank.

5   SIR RODERIC LYNE: There are a number of other issues in  
6           that context that I would have liked to have pursued  
7           with you, but time is unfortunately running out. I'll  
8           just ask you finally one very specific question, if  
9           I may. We will have to leave the rest for another  
10          occasion, though it is rather important.

11           It is simply this: you have just talked about the  
12          intelligence relationship, and I know the Defence Select  
13          Committee has covered in its reports, the fact that we  
14          weren't able to secure access to US Eyes only military  
15          intelligence networks, despite repeated requests, so we  
16          don't need to go into that today, but we have also heard  
17          of instances --

18   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: By the way, I think we did in the end.

19          The problem there was a technical one to do with the  
20          nature of their system, rather than goodwill, but --

21   SIR RODERIC LYNE: We know that. We have also heard of  
22          instances, particularly with regard to Boards of Inquiry  
23          and coroner's inquests in relation to so-called  
24          friendly-fire instances, friendly-fire incidents, where  
25          the United States has been reluctant to provide the UK

1 with material relevant to investigations in this  
2 country, which to a lay person seems strange and a bit  
3 concerning, given the support that we gave to the  
4 United States. Could you comment on that?

5 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I must say I don't really feel qualified  
6 to comment on that. I'm not sure how far one can link  
7 these legal processes to that issue. I have to say  
8 I hadn't myself been refreshing my memory about that.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: This is a concern that has been put to us  
10 by some of the families and it is something where  
11 I think one would have hoped that the leverage with the  
12 United States might have secured more cooperation than  
13 we have had, but it is not something that you can  
14 comment on?

15 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think it would be wrong for me to do  
16 so. I must say I haven't refreshed my memory on those  
17 particular issues.

18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you. We will pursue that  
19 separately.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Usha?

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I just want to raise a couple of  
22 issues to do with access to the information at inquests  
23 and investigations and some of the issues that have been  
24 raised with us by families about the support for them  
25 and injured personnel.

1           At the start of Operation Telic, how well placed was  
2           the MoD to deal with the full range of personnel issues,  
3           because these are quite important in terms of when you  
4           send people out into the field, how they are looked  
5           after. How well placed were you?

6   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: We believed we were as well placed as we  
7           could be in terms of assessment of casualties and how we  
8           looked after people subsequently. I mean, I know things  
9           have moved on a great deal since then and there has been  
10          a learning curve all the way through from 2002 until  
11          today.

12   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What improvements have you made over  
13          that period? Because there were obviously gaps at the  
14          outset, as we have heard from families, but also we have  
15          heard that there have been improvements. What  
16          improvements have been made? How have things changed?

17   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I don't think I could give you a detailed  
18          explanation of those issues. I'm not sure how far they  
19          were, as it were, part of my own experience. It is not  
20          that I'm suggesting that they were not there, but  
21          I mean, the defence medical services and the support  
22          that has been given has been progressively improved  
23          throughout the period.

24   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, given some of the casualty  
25          estimates that we have seen, if Saddam had used chemical

1           and biological weapons, what contingency plans were made  
2           by the MoD?

3   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, we raised urgent operational  
4           requirements as you know, to deal with that. I know you  
5           weren't going into detail on equipment, but if you wish  
6           me to do so, I mean, we did ensure that we had layered  
7           protection, as it were, for chemical weapons and  
8           biological weapons in terms of personal clothing, in  
9           terms of other devices and systems which actually gave  
10          warning of chemical or biological attack. There were  
11          some shortcomings in the condition of some of the  
12          equipment that was used, but that was rectified by the  
13          time of the operation, and there were some shortcomings,  
14          I think, in terms of these pens that people were  
15          supposed to use if they were in difficulty, which,  
16          again, were rectified by the time of the operation.

17                But it was an area of difficulty as we transited to  
18          the operation, which was put right by the time of the  
19          operation itself. That's my understanding.

20   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you would say that over the  
21          period of time there had been improvements, because  
22          initially some mistakes were made?

23   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Well, I think -- I don't know about  
24          mistakes as such, but certainly, as a result of the  
25          experience of the operation, we took action, despite the

1       tight budget, which I have been talking about at the  
2       beginning, to increase our holdings of desert clothing,  
3       boots, these -- this type of equipment for future  
4       contingencies, because -- just to go back, under our  
5       planning assumptions we had stocks for medium scale  
6       operations.

7             Under our plans, we would then take from industry,  
8       the excess needed for a large-scale operation and that  
9       process was expected to take about six months. It was  
10      a planning guideline, it wasn't an absolutely strict  
11      thing, but broadly speaking, that's what it was. We had  
12      to compress some of that, so there were some areas where  
13      we knew, the Chiefs of Staff knew -- I think they warned  
14      in January, before the operation in the south, that some  
15      of the urgent operational requirements wouldn't be fully  
16      ready by, you know, a notional period.

17   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's about equipment, but I think  
18      what we have got --

19   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I'm sorry, I thought we were talking  
20      about equipment related to --

21   BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: That's one part of it, but I was  
22      also talking about the treatment of the individuals in  
23      the early stages and how the families were actually  
24      supported and treated.

25   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I hope they were supported and treated

1 well, but I can't comment in detail on that.

2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay, thank you.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: We have covered quite a lot of ground in  
4 a very short time this morning and there is always more  
5 to cover, some of it, of course, technically sensitive,  
6 and we may want to pursue that in a private hearing.  
7 That said, I wonder whether there are any final  
8 reflections you would like to make in this open hearing  
9 before we close?

10 SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: I think we have covered most of it,  
11 Mr Chairman. I think many of the lessons learned that  
12 I took from my experience through this period  
13 have indeed been implemented or are now proposed in  
14 various fora as we gear up to a general election.

15 I think it is very important to make the point that  
16 we did apply a great number of lessons in terms of how  
17 much we should expect to hold in stock and how we did  
18 treat our people afterwards. I mean, I think there are  
19 now something like three medics to each person deployed  
20 in Afghanistan, which is very different to how it was in  
21 Iraq. So I won't pretend that we didn't have a lot of  
22 lessons to be learned both immediately after the  
23 operation and subsequently, but I think some of the  
24 machinery of government issues, which we have touched  
25 on, are of interest and of continuing valid validity as



1       we go forward into a new period after a general  
2       election.

3   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As to that, there was, I think a  
4       hanging point after Sir Lawrence's intervention, which  
5       is whether there was a need not only for a stronger  
6       co-ordinating centre at senior official level, but  
7       whether the ministerial drive and direction was also  
8       applied, but we will come to that with other witnesses,  
9       I think.

10   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: All I would say about that is that, when  
11       I saw and experienced the foot and mouth disaster  
12       domestically, where we did use a ministerial drive to  
13       actually co-ordinate and carry forward the operation,  
14       I thought that was very valuable and I think there are  
15       good lessons there for other ways of doing business.

16   THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Sir Kevin. I will close  
17       the session now and we will resume in about ten minutes'  
18       time with Dr Reid as our next witness. Thank you.

19   SIR KEVIN TEBBIT: Thank you.

20   (10.07 am)

21                               (Short break)

22

23

24

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FINAL