1 Monday, 19 July 2010

2 (3.00 pm)

3 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK

4 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON

5 LT GEN MARK MANS

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon and welcome to everyone,

7 including our witnesses.

8 Our focus this afternoon is on military personnel

9 issues, many of which remain of concern to the families

10 of service personnel who died in Iraq or to those who

11 were seriously injured there. We are hearing from our

12 three witnesses who had responsibility for military and

13 personnel issues during the second half of

14 Operation Telic: Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson,

15 Air Marshal David Pocock and Lt Gen Mark Mans.

16 We will be hearing from their predecessors about the

17 earlier part of Operation Telic on Wednesday. We can't,

18 I am afraid, hear them in sequence, for reasons simply

19 of witness availability.

20 Air Marshal Pocock, you were the Deputy Chief of

21 Defence Staff (Personnel) from 2005 to 2007, I think.

22 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I was.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: You were succeeded by

24 Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson.

25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: That's correct, sir.

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: Lieutenant General Mans, you were
2 Deputy Adjutant General from 2005 to 2008, I think. We
3 are hearing from you in place of the Adjutant General
4 from that period, Lieutenant General
5 Sir Freddie Viggers, who gave evidence on his time as
6 a senior British military officer in Baghdad at an
7 earlier hearing.
8 He was, unfortunately, taken seriously ill in May
9 and is still in hospital. We would like to send him our
10 best wishes on the record.
11 Now, I say on each occasion, we recognise witnesses
12 give evidence based on their recollection of events and
13 we, of course, check that we hear against the papers to
14 which we have access and which we are still receiving.
15 I remind each witness on each occasion that they
16 will later be asked to sign a transcript of the evidence
17 they have given to the effect that it is truthful, fair
18 and accurate.
19 With those preliminaries done, I'll turn to
20 Sir Martin Gilbert to open the questions. Martin?
21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We would like to start by getting
22 an understanding of your respective roles and I wonder,
23 Admiral Wilkinson, if you could start by to us
24 describing your role as Deputy Chief of Defence Staff
25 (Personnel).

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1 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes, the role of the
2 DCDS (Pers) -- and it is probably easier if we refer to
3 him through that means for the afternoon -- is to ensure
4 that, at the strategic level, we have the correct
5 personnel policies in place to make sure that there are
6 sufficient capable and motivated service personnel
7 available to the Chief of Defence Staff and government
8 ministers so that they can carry out government's
9 objectives.
10 To achieve that, the DCDS (Pers) works closely with
11 the PPOs, the three principal personnel officers of the
12 armed forces, the Adjutant General, the Second Sea Lord
13 and the Air Member for Personnel.
14 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What is your reporting chain of
15 command?
16 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: My reporting chain is my
17 first reporting officer is the Vice-Chief of Defence
18 Staff and my second reporting officer is the CDS
19 himself, which I think proves the point that I'm
20 a central staff officer rather than working for any of
21 the individual single services.
22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: On a day-to-day basis, what sort of
23 issues would you deal with? What level of detail?
24 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The -- although I mentioned
25 sufficient, capable and motivated as the strapline that

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1 guides a lot of the DCDS (Pers) work, in actual fact,
2 much of my time is spent on the 'motivated' part of that
3 strapline, and I'm dealing with a range of terms and
4 conditions of service issues across all 180,000
5 full-time serving personnel and the 50,000 or so
6 reservists.
7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was that similar in your day,
8 Air Marshal?
9 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I would put it slightly
10 differently. I used to describe myself to civilian
11 colleagues, my role, as a sort of group HR Director for
12 the armed forces. That doesn't do it justice, or
13 perhaps it does too much for it, but that's a reasonable
14 description.
15 It evolved quite a lot in my time, in that more and
16 more issues which were within the purview of the single
17 services, ministers, chiefs, CDS, PUS, all sorts of
18 people, would come to DCDS (Pers) looking for a single
19 answer and although, strictly speaking, in most areas,
20 not at all, DCDS (Pers) is a policy person, more and
21 more we were being asked to do delivery-type issues as
22 well.
23 Without wishing in any way to be too light-hearted
24 about it, when I went to address staff colleagues --
25 I was asked to speak to them on the subject of strategic

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1 HR in the armed forces -- I introduced myself by saying,
2 if that's what they really wanted to hear about, they
3 needed to hear from a Lieutenant Colonel on my staff,
4 because I dealt with events. That was very much what
5 life was like in my time, whatever was in your diary, it
6 could just be turned around by issues on the day.
7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We will be coming in due course to
8 these specific issues, of course.
9 General Mans, the Adjutant General is the army's
10 principal personnel officer. Can you explain to us what
11 that involves?
12 LT GEN MARK MANS: I should say that, when I was the
13 Deputy Adjutant General, the AG's responsibilities were
14 slightly different, because I'm now the
15 Adjutant General, so I will refer to the
16 responsibilities that the AG had when I was the Deputy.
17 The strapline that DCDS (Pers) referred to, as far
18 as sufficient, capable and motivated underpins
19 everything that the army did, but if I perhaps can bring
20 that to life and be a little bit more specific, we --
21 three or four years ago, we worked along four lines of
22 activity for want of a better term. One was manning; in
23 other words, ensuring that the army was fully manned.
24 The other was recruiting and individual training. The
25 next one was conditions of service, and the other -- the

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1 fourth one was career development.
2 Those were our sort of principal activities in terms
3 of formulating policy in conjunction with DCDS (Pers)
4 and, indeed, my fellow then PPOs. So it was policy
5 formulation and then ensuring that the delivery of those
6 policies did meet their original remit.
7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So how do -- how does the -- what is
8 the reaction really, between the Deputy Adjutant General
9 and the personnel officers?
10 LT GEN MARK MANS: It is very much actually as his deputy.
11 I had probably more responsibilities for manning and,
12 indeed, for what we would call conditions of service;
13 that's pay, allowances, discipline and welfare. But we
14 really did work hand in glove as his deputy and, indeed,
15 I worked with my fellow deputy PPOs, just in the way
16 that the PPOs did then and indeed as now.
17 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Given the number of people and
18 organisations involved, how do you ensure consistency,
19 where appropriate, across the military personnel?
20 LT GEN MARK MANS: I think the consistency -- first of all,
21 across defence, and that's why, as DCDS (Pers) has
22 already mentioned, both him and the three PPOs, we do
23 work very closely. Indeed, when I was the deputy, they
24 worked very closely. We used to meet at least once
25 a month and, even now, as the Adjutant General, we meet

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1 almost fortnightly, and that gives us very good rapport
2 and a very good understanding of some very quite complex
3 issues to do with our people.
4 So that's how we worked across defence, because so
5 much within the people area is tri-service in nature,
6 obviously pay, conditions of service, those sort of
7 things are tri-service by nature. So single services --
8 in my case, the army -- we just cannot go alone. There
9 are certain specific issues perhaps where single
10 services can pursue their own policies, but they tend to
11 be few and far between in personnel.
12 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How are the decisions recorded?
13 LT GEN MARK MANS: Well, there is a board, there was the
14 DCDS (Pers) chairs, what's known as the Service
15 Personnel Board, and that was in existence when I was
16 the deputy. So there was a board that actually makes
17 decisions, chaired, as I say, by DCDS (Pers), and then,
18 at my level, when I was the Deputy Adjutant General,
19 there was another group which underpinned that board
20 where, again, decisions were recorded and made in that
21 forum.
22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What relationship did you have with the
23 Defence Medical Service?
24 LT GEN MARK MANS: We had a very close relationship because,
25 within the PPO's organisation, we have the

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1 Director General Army Medical Services and, therefore,
2 at the Major General level, the army's policies in terms
3 of health and wellbeing were formulated there, but
4 again, he worked very closely -- just as I would work
5 very closely with DCDS (Pers), he worked very closely
6 with DCDS (Health) and also the Surgeon General over
7 a number of health-related policies. You can't
8 completely divorce health and medical issues from
9 other personnel areas. So inevitably there are
10 overlaps. But we managed those overlaps, I would like
11 to think, fairly effectively.
12 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I would just comment that
13 certainly in my time DCDS (Health) was a member of the
14 Service Personnel Board, so he was probably involved in
15 all of these discussions.
16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was that your ...
17 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: That's correct, and when,
18 earlier this year, the DCDS (Health) post was abolished,
19 the Surgeon General took his place on the Service
20 Personnel Board. So, as both Air Marshal Pocock and
21 General Mans have said, there is that continuity and
22 that work across the boundaries between the health and
23 other areas of personnel policy.
24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: My final question is: how regularly did
25 you provide advice to ministers, and to which ministers

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1 did you report?
2 LT GEN MARK MANS: I certainly, in terms of being the Deputy
3 Adjutant General, I had very little, if any, contact
4 with ministers. That was dealt with through the PPO, in
5 terms of the Adjutant General. From my recollection, he
6 probably met with ministers once a month or once every
7 two months, really on a variety of issues, not as opposed
8 to any sort of general engagement on a raft of policy
9 issues; it was more on the specific.
10 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Yes, please.
11 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: In my time, the responsibilities
12 were split -- it might be slightly different now --
13 between the ministers. The minister I saw most of was
14 the Undersecretary of State and the Minister for
15 Veterans. I would say not a day would go by when his
16 office and mine weren't in touch on something. In fact,
17 more than once or twice a day. I would probably see the
18 minister a few times a week.
19 The Minister Armed Forces, I had the lead on two
20 issues at the time that were his particular
21 responsibility, the post -- the Blake Report, Deepcut
22 and the like, and also EOC work, how the armed forces
23 discriminated against women and the like. That was led
24 by Minister of Armed Forces. I dealt with that quite
25 a lot.

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1 Pay issues fell to the Secretary of State and his
2 office and, again, we dealt with them quite a lot. The
3 Secretary of State I would see -- it is hard to put
4 a figure -- when it was busy -- a few times in a week in
5 a particular period. Other times, I wouldn't see him
6 for a long period of time. But his office was always
7 on --
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: That pattern has continued,
9 and certainly the outer offices speak on a daily basis.
10 I still work directly for the Minister for Personnel,
11 the Undersecretary of State, who had these various
12 titles throughout the years and, again, there is not
13 a complete and clear boundary between the various
14 ministerial responsibilities, though I'm in no doubt
15 that he is my lead minister.
16 Submissions are put up on an as required basis on
17 a range of policy issues, and I probably speak with the
18 minister face-to-face once every two weeks.
19 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.
20 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll turn to Sir Lawrence Freedman now.
21 Lawrence?
22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just following on that, during the
23 times we were discussing, perhaps particularly the
24 middle of the decade, there was quite a lot of general
25 political interest in the issues we are discussing this

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1 afternoon. So I wonder, did your -- perhaps this is
2 a question for the Vice Admiral and the Air Marshal --
3 particularly the Air Marshal. Did your dealings go
4 beyond the Ministry of Defence to Downing Street, for
5 example?
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Prepared briefs for them. In
7 fact, I was explaining to the Secretary that I brought
8 along today, only because it was a very comprehensive
9 summary that the Prime Minister had asked for on what we
10 were doing for our people. It is not contentious or
11 anything like that, but it was the best we could produce
12 at the time.
13 The queries from Number 10, would usually go into
14 the Secretary of State's office. They would come from
15 there to me and we would put the information back.
16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This was a time when there was a lot
17 of discussion about military covenants, and we are going
18 to talk about that in detail later. So I won't go into
19 that now, but I'm concerned about the general level of
20 support for the armed forces and we have had a lot
21 speaking to veterans about some particular concerns of
22 theirs.
23 Perhaps you would just like to say something about
24 the general support package, welfare support package,
25 that you had for military personnel and how satisfactory

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1 do you think it was working?
2 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: That is a very big question.
3 I will need to split it down into different components.
4 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I was hoping you would.
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: There was a package for personnel
6 on deployed operations which consisted of help to
7 communicate back to the UK, be it via email or
8 telephones. That was an evolving package. It grew over
9 time and, however many minutes you gave people, they
10 would always want more. We had no difficulty in them
11 having more, but certainly initially they were bound
12 with constraints, there were often only so many lines
13 and we also had to pay for it.
14 A theme, which perhaps we will cover at some stage,
15 is whether we had sufficient money for what we were
16 doing. Money was always an issue, always an issue.
17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to -- we will go through all
18 the others, but just on that one -- so this was,
19 I think, the increase in the telephone allowance from
20 20 minutes to 30 minutes.
21 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I have got a big list here and
22 I could go through the whole lot.
23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This was one that attracted a lot of
24 concern from --
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: There was also and -- there was

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1 also -- which I'm sure you are going to want to talk
2 about, the R&R package. There were things like we set
3 up -- and we also set up things like the NAAFI, laundry
4 facilities. There were entertainment packages that went
5 out, acts of various kinds, all of this -- we called it
6 welfare, but it was feel-good-type things.
7 I have to say that it wasn't always welcomed. I had
8 one interesting conversation with -- I think it was
9 a marine, an RSM -- if you get RSMs in the Marines --
10 who, when I was in discussion with one informal group
11 and they were telling me the other things they wanted,
12 he said to me, "I don't want them to have this. They
13 are here to fight. I don't want them distracted by
14 telephone calls home and the like". That was unusual.
15 But I just make the point that not everybody thought
16 that more was better.
17 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, it was certainly the view of
18 the troops themselves?
19 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes, I think we had a bottomless
20 pit there.
21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just on that very particular theme,
22 we have mentioned the telephone allowance and given some
23 reasons why that might have been restrained and them
24 perhaps bound with -- perhaps for money, kept back and
25 then they had improved.

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1 The free post service as well, can you perhaps give
2 us a bit of background to that policy? Because it seems
3 to have only operated intermittently up to 2007 and then
4 it was made permanent.
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I don't recall that, that it was
6 intermittent. My colleague has got the piece of paper
7 that I was looking for, which lists all of the
8 individual items. He will perhaps give it to you
9 afterwards.
10 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that would be very
11 helpful --
12 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: -- (overspeaking) and how they
13 changed over the years.
14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: -- rather than go through everything
15 in detail --
16 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that would be the
17 best way of doing this, sir. You can easily put the
18 welfare package into six discrete component parts: mail,
19 Internet, telephones, entertainment and fitness
20 equipment, entitlement and allowances, and I think they
21 were incrementally improved throughout the period in
22 question, but if we haven't provided you with this note,
23 then that may be the way to cover it off, sir --
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I think that would be very helpful.
25 There is one particular issue and then perhaps a more

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1 general one. I'll start with the more general. What
2 were the drivers for the improvement? Was this demand
3 from the troops themselves, the availability of
4 resources, political concern that they were getting
5 complaints? What tended to move the system along?
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The driver was PJHQ. They were
7 their people, they knew what they were doing, they knew
8 what they wanted, and they would come back to us with
9 particular items and we would try to get it for them.
10 The other drivers were visits. There were an awful lot
11 of visits to theatre by -- well, everyone from the
12 Prime Minister down, and people would say then what they
13 wanted and we would see if it was sensible. I mean,
14 there is no point in -- if it was physically not
15 possible to get any more bandwidth into a particular
16 area, then we couldn't give more telephones.
17 From the likes of ourselves, we would go out, we
18 would speak informally to the troops and we would come
19 back with a shopping list.
20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: On these trips, did you feel you
21 were able to get a reasonable cross-section of opinion?
22 Were you chatting at all levels?
23 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes. I might be contradicted by
24 my colleagues, but because of previous jobs I had done
25 working with the armed forces pay review body, I was

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1 well-used to speaking to junior personnel in groups with
2 no -- none of their officers present, and I doubt if
3 many people, by the time I was in my appointment, had
4 spoken to a wider cross-section of personnel across the
5 three services.
6 So I think I had a pretty good idea of what they
7 wanted. Always changing, of course, in the operational
8 theatre, as things developed and fresh people went out
9 there, but I did a number of visits out there to see for
10 myself.
11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just ask you then about one
12 specific thing, which is something we have heard quite
13 a lot about from veterans, which is the problems of
14 group transport between Iraq and the UK and the impact
15 on the actual period of leave they had?
16 First, how aware were you that this was affecting
17 morale, and was it a major issue with troops?
18 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The first time I went out to
19 Iraq, it was -- the subject was raised with me more
20 often than anything else and, when I came back,
21 I immediately went to see the Chief of the Air Staff,
22 and he was already aware of it, but I made plain to him
23 that, apart from it being a morale issue generally, it
24 was disastrous for the reputation of the
25 Royal Air Force. He understood completely.

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1 But when -- when I knew I was going to have to come
2 here and talk to you today, I tried to do some
3 background research. The R&R package was broadly in
4 place when I arrived in appointment but, as far as I can
5 tell, there was never a careful policy discussion about
6 what we were going to do and why. It started off as
7 a means of getting the troops away from particular areas
8 of danger, hardship. They could have a break, clean up,
9 a rest and go back again, and then it gradually evolved
10 from moving back from the actual areas of fighting to
11 perhaps out of the country, and I can't remember exactly
12 where it was, but it was a number of locations around
13 Iraq.
14 Then -- and again, I am afraid I couldn't, with the
15 information available to me, no longer in the ministry,
16 find out when we started bringing people back to the UK,
17 but it was never actually, so far as I could tell
18 a formal policy. Like Topsy, it grew. I don't think
19 anybody ever actually sat down and thought "Is this
20 a good thing?" in the early stages, and I say that for
21 two reasons.
22 We instigated some work, which wasn't welcome
23 everywhere, about whether it was a good idea to bring
24 people back from theatre. There was a view, one of the
25 things that I picked up, I was aware from Peter and

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1 myself attended OPCOS once a week, so we had a very good
2 understanding of the operational picture, what was
3 happening on the ground out there. We knew the
4 difficulty of moving people around in theatre. We knew
5 the demand that was making. We couldn't deliver
6 a satisfactory air bridge back. So something that was
7 meant to make people happy wasn't. There was the
8 question of, if you were taking people out of theatre,
9 could you conduct the operations with fewer, and we had
10 a paper to look at this.
11 Perhaps we should have shorter tours, say
12 a five-month tour with no mid-tour R&R. It was
13 difficult to progress that work and the status quo
14 prevailed -- sorry, that was a very long answer, but
15 that's my recollection.
16 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: No, it is very helpful.
17 So were you able then to do anything to get the air
18 bridge improved?
19 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: That did not fall to the
20 personnel area, but I can assure that you the problems
21 with the air bridge were very well-known. They were
22 regularly brought up in the Chiefs of Staff meetings
23 and, if there had been a solution, it would have been
24 implemented. I read some of your earlier evidence and
25 I know you have asked people much more qualified than me

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1 and my colleagues about what was done about that.
2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One suggestion that has been made to
3 us was that maybe the personnel could have their leave
4 time started from when they get back, rather than when
5 they arrive at the air bridge.
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes, but --
7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I can see the problems, but you
8 might want to --
9 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes, that was discussed and it
10 was completely ruled out, both in theatre by the
11 operational commanders who wanted to know when their
12 people -- they were need for the task -- and by PJHQ.
13 That was discussed and it was purely on operational
14 grounds, it was a nonstarter.
15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.
16 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Could I just add one thing to
17 this? Because it was something which came up slightly
18 later when we started paying particular attention to
19 what we called post-operational-tour decompression and
20 we were worried about people's reaction when they came
21 back to the UK. There was some work done on whether
22 that was increased risk-taking and the like.
23 I mean, we were concerned that we were going to an
24 awful lot of trouble at the end of people's tours to
25 make sure that they were properly counselled and

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1 decompressed as they moved from an operational
2 environment back to the UK.
3 But, if somebody was coming back from R&R, they
4 might be four or even five months into their tour, and
5 they would just go straight from the operational theatre
6 on an aeroplane back into the UK.
7 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What conclusion did you draw from
8 that?
9 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: We accepted there was paradox
10 there.
11 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: To some questions, there aren't
12 easy solutions.
13 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Although it would seem that
14 we were treating people at the end of a tour differently
15 from those who had perhaps undergone some intense parts
16 of their operational tour differently, it was accepted
17 that, in the context of R&R, we needed to get people
18 away from the front line and back for some rest. It was
19 understood that they weren't going to get a complete
20 decompression package, as was brought in a bit later on.
21 That said, they were given briefings at the
22 embarkation point in theatre before they returned home
23 for their R&R period.
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just going back to one of the things
25 that was said earlier, does this -- in normal

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1 circumstances -- if we understand that any operation is
2 normal -- you would actually still prefer the R&R to be
3 not home but in the theatre?
4 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The policy is still there,
5 sir. The policy has been for decades -- for decades,
6 has been that the purpose of R&R is to just get people
7 out of the front line.
8 As the Air Marshal quite rightly stated, at some
9 stage at the start of the campaign, policy and practice
10 began to diverge, and so the assumption became that R&R
11 meant returning to the UK.
12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Is that the case in Afghanistan?
13 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: That's the case, sir.
14 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: In fact, one of the first things
15 that PJHQ wanted to do was make sure that the same R&R
16 package that was then in place in Iraq was put into
17 place in Afghanistan.
18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was that because the troops prefer
19 it?
20 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: It would have been impossible to
21 explain why there was a difference.
22 Can I just go back to one quick thing
23 on decompression, in case you think we were casual in
24 ignoring that?
25 The best medical advice we had at the time was that

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1 decompression actually made no difference, but it was
2 a sensible thing to do.
3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I was going to say I want to move on
4 to the post tour support, including the rehabilitation.
5 I think it would be helpful if you could describe
6 the level of support that is available to personnel and
7 their families when they return from operational
8 deployment?
9 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Thank you. Decompression,
10 I know previous witnesses have talked to you about
11 decompression. Do we need to go through that package
12 again?
13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Not necessarily. Tell me what other
14 support you provide.
15 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Okay. Other support, in
16 terms of a programme when a deploying unit returns to
17 its home base, there is a -- obviously a period of
18 leave. There is a structured programme of debriefings.
19 There is a programme of assessments and discussions so
20 that -- recently returned troops have the opportunity to
21 discuss any issues with their chain of command, whether
22 it is on a professional or a personal basis and there
23 are opportunities made to families to have similar
24 discussions as well with either welfare and visiting
25 officers of the unit or through the chain of command.

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1 So it is very much a pull system, though, rather
2 than a push system. The opportunities are made
3 available, people are made aware of those opportunities,
4 but it is then up to them if they wish to come forward.
5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So this is all done centrally?
6 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: This is done on
7 a unit-by-unit basis.
8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So there is a distinction in what
9 you make available centrally to individuals and what
10 they receive from their units in terms of what they get
11 from the regiments and squadrons. What's the balance in
12 terms of what's provided centrally and what's provided
13 by units?
14 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes, the Air Marshal has just
15 pointed out that perhaps a way to describe it is that
16 the centre, the MoD lays down the policy, what should be
17 put in place, and I was referring to the delivery, which
18 is done on a single-service basis and then down through
19 the units.
20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But in our conversations with the
21 families and those who returned, is there -- the
22 provision for support is highly dependent and varies on
23 individual units, and it is particularly acute for those
24 who are deployed in small numbers or individually. Are
25 you aware of these problems?

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1 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think, yes. Certainly,
2 when we started the campaign, we were much more adept at
3 looking after the large, formed units than we were on
4 those individuals who had either gone out as single
5 staff or on an augmentee basis.
6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So what's the sort of cause of these
7 inconsistencies and what have you done to deal with
8 these variations?
9 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think, as we have gained
10 greater experience of the operation and of the likely
11 pressures on the troops, then we have become more adept
12 and more proactive at looking after their likely needs.
13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Okay.
14 LT GEN MARK MANS: Would it be helpful if I said one or two
15 words on this whole subject?
16 First of all, I did send through some documents
17 beforehand. I don't know if people have those. One was
18 the personnel annex from the mounting instruction for
19 Iraq, which actually explains quite a lot of the
20 background to what we have already talked about, so
21 I won't repeat that.
22 I think, though, in terms of how the army approach
23 this, it is very much a chain of command issue. Clearly
24 there are differences between those in the regular army
25 and the Territorial Army who were mobilised and, indeed,

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1 regular reservists, and I'm quite happy to go on to that
2 later, if you wish, but I think in the whole question of
3 the Iraq campaign there was probably a step change which
4 occurred round about 2006, because of the additional
5 deployments to Afghanistan. So, frankly, the system
6 that was working in Iraq came under more pressure and
7 that was understandable in terms of dealing with that.
8 Therefore, I think in terms of where we could do
9 better, we weren't complacent before
10 2006. The system was under pressure, but it was
11 working, and I have reminded my own team that we have
12 had a brigade deployed on operations now -- at least
13 a brigade -- for almost 20 years. So these were tried
14 and tested systems but, when they are put under
15 pressure -- and, of course, you never quite know how
16 that pressure is going to be exerted and to what
17 degree -- then the systems had to be looked at and
18 reviewed.
19 That's exactly what happened in terms of various
20 enhancements that were made to deliver betterment for,
21 not only the soldiers in terms of the army that were
22 deployed, but, of course, their families back home.
23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you have taken steps to make sure
24 that there is not so much inconsistency as there was
25 before? You say there has been improvement?

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1 LT GEN MARK MANS: Absolutely.
2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I move on to looking at the
3 differences between the support provided for regulars
4 and reservists? Because Bob Ainsworth sort of talked
5 about difficulties of providing support. People don't
6 have what he call the safety of a wrap-around contact.
7 I mean, can -- how do you ensure that appropriate
8 support is given to people, who are reserves, as opposed
9 to regulars?
10 LT GEN MARK MANS: Would it be easier if I answered that?
11 Because, clearly, the vast majority of reservists come
12 from the army.
13 Just to perhaps remind you, there are two sorts of
14 reservists. One of those are those individuals who have
15 served in the Territorial Army and those who are also
16 regular reservists; in other words, those who have
17 served in the regular army, but then have a reserve
18 liability after they have left the regular army, and
19 they are very much mobilised as individuals.
20 The issue with reservists across the board, and
21 certainly in the way that the Territorial Army, in
22 particular, has been used in support of operations in
23 Iraq, they were more often than not mobilised as
24 individuals to support regular army units. Sometimes
25 they were mobilised in teams of 10 to 20, but that was

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1 quite unusual. So they were mobilised as individuals
2 to make up the strength of a regular unit, and
3 I referred to, earlier, one of the activities that
4 dominated our lives was manning the regular army. We
5 were short within the regular army and, therefore, we
6 relied on the Territorial Army to, frankly, fill the
7 gaps that existed on an individual basis.
8 As far as the support to the territorial army, when
9 they were mobilised, they got exactly the same as the
10 regulars. So there was no distinction whatsoever. As
11 far as support to their families, the same applied, but
12 of course, it is more difficult, because the families of
13 Territorial soldiers are spread far and wide and they
14 don't have a focus, shall we say, as a regular unit
15 would have, but when they are mobilised, the soldiers do
16 support a regular unit of one form or another and,
17 therefore, it is incumbent upon that regular unit, and
18 particularly the rear party back at the home base, to
19 make sure that those individuals within the TA, and
20 their families, are appropriately looked after in terms
21 of maintaining contact, and also making sure they are
22 aware of all the support and sustenance they can
23 achieve.
24 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What support is available to
25 individuals who leave the armed forces following their

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1 deployment?
2 LT GEN MARK MANS: In terms -- once they are demobilised,
3 they will go back, if they are in the territorial army,
4 back to their TA unit and, therefore, there is a change
5 of command and the support they get as they would as
6 normal Territorial soldiers.
7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Even if they leave?
8 LT GEN MARK MANS: If they leave the Territorial Army, then
9 they are actually administered by the Service Personnel
10 and Veterans Agency. So it is outwith of the army's
11 network, shall we say, and that's the same for regular
12 soldiers as well. So it is a tri-service linkage, which
13 then is brought about.
14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were any changes made in this area
15 between 2005 to the end of the Iraq campaign on dealing
16 with individuals who left after deployment?
17 LT GEN MARK MANS: I'm quite happy to pick that up, but --
18 it is a tri-service issue and, therefore, in terms of
19 policy, it rested within DCDS (Pers)'s remit --
20 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes, screening programmes were
21 set up by the single services to try to identify
22 individuals who were particularly vulnerable and might
23 need help, but also, all the service personnel who left
24 were given leaflets and advice and briefings on the role
25 of the Veterans Agency at Blackpool. Anybody could go

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1 to them for help, and we ran into all sorts of silly
2 difficulties, for instance, the Data Protection Act
3 prevented us from providing names and addresses to the
4 welfare organisations and the like, which I don't know
5 if we ever managed to overcome.
6 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Slowly.
7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Slightly.
8 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: But we basically improved
9 significantly the transfer of responsibility from the
10 services to the Veterans Agency, and that's one reason
11 why we actually merged what was previously an agency
12 looking after current personnel with the one that was
13 looking after veterans. We merged it into one, with the
14 hope that it would be a seamless transfer of
15 responsibility.
16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can I move on to talk about the
17 Trauma Risk Management, and that's known as TRiM.
18 Could you explain the background of the introduction of
19 this approach and the impact this had had on the
20 returning personnel?
21 LT GEN MARK MANS: TRiM, as it is known, was -- has been
22 used by the Royal Marines for a number of years and they
23 had quite a degree of success in terms of its use.
24 Perhaps I'll explain what it is. It is really a device
25 in terms of if some individual soldier or Royal Marine

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1 has gone through a traumatic event, obviously on
2 operations, it is a way of his peers or her peers getting
3 together and talking through the issues. But there are
4 trained TRiM individuals who use a process to get people
5 to talk about their experiences and so on and then also
6 to monitor them within the unit while they are still on
7 operations, just in case signs of PTSD, Post-Traumatic
8 Stress Disorder, are actually seen.
9 So it is very much an in-unit peer-delivered
10 process, and as I said, the Royal Marines had some
11 considerable success using it and, based on that, the
12 army adopted it as well and it is now adopted across all
13 three services.
14 So it is a very successful thing, but it is only
15 one element to dealing with post-operational stress
16 management, which is a much bigger subject, which I'm
17 quite happy to go into.
18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you say a bit more about that?
19 LT GEN MARK MANS: Post-operational stress management --
20 there is a policy on it which is followed by all
21 three services and it is, broadly speaking, broken down
22 into four stages.
23 Stage 1 is decompression. It is when people leave
24 an operational theatre, they need to unwind. And I use
25 an example: there is a decompression facility in Cyprus.

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1 So troops coming back from Afghanistan, as obviously now
2 deployed, they will spend somewhere between 24 and
3 48 hours in Cyprus really simply unwinding, playing
4 sport, just getting the operational issues off their
5 chest. That's stage 1.
6 Stage 2 is called normalisation and that's a period
7 of time once they are back in their home base where they
8 spend up to a week, really, getting used to living back
9 in a barracks, doing routine administration but,
10 importantly, talking amongst themselves, getting used to
11 being in a family environment for those who are married:
12 children and wives and spouses can actually get to know
13 the soldiers that have deployed. They will then go on
14 post-operational leave and that really is sort of the
15 end of stage 2.
16 Stage 3 then covers really the rest of the time an
17 individual is serving in the military and there is
18 a raft of support available to individuals, particularly
19 those who perhaps feel they are suffering from mental
20 health problems, and again I'm quite happy to go into
21 a bit more detail on that, but it covers the
22 individual's career.
23 Stage 4 is when the individual actually leaves the
24 army, and indeed the other services, and that support
25 then is provided, as you have heard, through the Service

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1 Personnel and Veterans Agency.
2 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: From what I hear, there has been
3 quite a bit of improvement in kind of re-integrating
4 back people who have been injured into the service,
5 which is obviously a good thing, but what are the
6 challenges that poses in terms of re-integrating people
7 who have been injured?
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes, we are coping with them,
9 but you are quite right there are challenges, because,
10 as a nation, and as a military, we have never dealt with
11 this number of severely injured young men, essentially,
12 before. Only a few years ago, they would have died.
13 As it is, the dramatic interventions that we can now
14 make on the battlefield mean that a number are now
15 surviving, but with multiple injuries. So it has been
16 a real challenge to make sure that they reintegrate with
17 their unit, that we help them regain fitness where
18 possible, that they return to duty where possible but,
19 if that isn't going to be the appropriate outcome, then
20 I think we have learned the need to again help them and
21 aid them transition out into a successful and fulfilling
22 civilian life, and there are a number of well-known and
23 extremely badly-injured young men, there are also
24 a number of young soldiers with a lower level of injury
25 but whose injuries are going to be with them for the

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1 next 50 or 60 years, and I think we have learned a lot
2 and have improved our ability to look after them as they
3 make the transition into civilian life.
4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. I would like to move on
5 the question of Inquests and Inquiries now, if I may.
6 The Coroner's Inquest and Boards of Inquiry, we have
7 heard from families of those killed in Iraq that there
8 were significant delays with the timing of inquests.
9 Some of the families had to wait about four years.
10 Perhaps, Air Marshal, you could tell me what caused the
11 delay?
12 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: My recollection is that
13 essentially it was down to the staffing of the
14 Coroner's Office, and obviously the families were
15 understandably putting pressure through the visiting
16 officers and through the services and service ministers
17 generally, and there was also a lot of correspondence
18 and meetings between the MoD Ministers and the
19 Department of Justice Ministers about resourcing.
20 I think, essentially, it came down to resourcing of
21 the Coroner's --
22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So steps were taken to have meetings
23 between the ministers of the Ministry of Justice and the
24 MoD?
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: They were, and I have seen the

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1 minutes of some of those meetings and they took it
2 pretty seriously, as you would hope and expect.
3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did that make any difference? Did
4 any action follow?
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Eventually, yes, but it was
6 a slow process. I think it is fair to say it took some
7 time to resolve.
8 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps if I can just explain, the
9 system -- because it goes back to what I said earlier
10 about the system being under pressure. The system,
11 broadly speaking, in terms of inquests, was that they
12 were carried out by the Wiltshire Coroner, because
13 that's, frankly, where the aircraft lands, at Lyneham,
14 and, therefore, where it touches down, it is that
15 coroner's responsibility in terms of bringing back the
16 repatriation of the dead.
17 The pressure -- that system has worked well, but the
18 numbers, sadly, of fatalities obviously grew and that
19 system came under a degree of pressure. Extra corners
20 were then employed to relieve that pressure. They
21 needed to be educated and trained -- and I mean that in
22 the nicest way -- in terms of the military life and the
23 military systems and what have you. So there was a bit
24 of delay in terms of just bringing them up to speed and
25 what have you.

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1 All the while, a backlog was appearing and, again,
2 comes back to the intensity of operations, really from
3 2006 onwards, brought about by the additional
4 deployments to Afghanistan. Clearly the system was
5 under significant pressure in that respect.
6 But a lot has been done now. The army formed
7 a project called Project AJAX to look at this and to see
8 what more could be done, and that eventually transformed
9 into the Defence Inquest Unit. So that a far more
10 co-ordinated response can be delivered and now, as
11 I speak, as I understand -- and DCDS (Pers) can correct
12 me -- there is no backlog of inquests.
13 Clearly, some do take time to ascertain the
14 circumstances of an individual's death, but the system
15 can certainly cope with the numbers -- the high numbers,
16 sadly -- of fatalities that we are currently suffering.
17 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was some delay caused because the
18 MoD Boards of Inquiry or the investigations were taking
19 time to complete? Was that a factor in delays?
20 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes, I think that's fair to say.
21 Certainly Boards of Inquiry, as they were then known,
22 because the rules changed in 2008, they are now
23 Service Inquiries, but, broadly speaking, there was
24 a need for an Inquiry into a death driven by military
25 police investigations and because of the numbers of

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1 Inquiries that needed to be conducted, there was
2 a shortage of military police assets to do all of these,
3 frankly, at once. So this again added to the
4 backlog.
5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Anything you want to add?
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: No.
7 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I just put in a point? What about
8 witness availability, when you have got intense
9 operations going on in two main theatres, it must be
10 quite hard sometimes just to lay hands on a witness at
11 an appropriate time.
12 LT GEN MARK MANS: You are absolutely right, and that is
13 a very good example of some of the difficulties that the
14 military police have and, indeed, trying to explain this
15 to others in terms of an operational situation where you
16 have a fatality, and yet you need to interview sometimes
17 the local civilian population, who are probably
18 unwilling to be interviewed anyway, to absolutely
19 accurately ascertain the facts, even if you can get back
20 to the location where the individual was killed, is
21 incredibly difficult.
22 So, therefore, sometimes it is just not possible, as
23 you would conduct an Inquiry in this country, you just
24 physically cannot do it in an operational theatre. But
25 it takes time and it is not something we skimp over, we

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1 try our level best, but we accept the limitations of the
2 operations sometimes dictate otherwise.
3 THE CHAIRMAN: Could I have a second one? I think there
4 was -- and I don't know whether there still is --
5 a difference between the three armed services in
6 investigating, particularly a fatality. I think in the
7 case of the army, am I right, the Royal Military Police
8 do an investigation before a Board of Inquiry sits.
9 I have a feeling that, at least in the past, in the
10 Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, the Board of Inquiry
11 sits and they decide whether there is something needing
12 further investigation. Is that difference still in
13 being?
14 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The gap was closed
15 substantially by the introduction of the Service Inquiry
16 system in 2008, as General Mans has already mentioned
17 and it was specifically designed to bring together those
18 individual service differences, so that actually, as
19 troops from all three services are often fighting
20 together in the same incident, but actually they would
21 be investigated in just one tri-service way, rather
22 than, as you say, peculiarities that had grown up
23 through the single services methods of operation.
24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: One of the things that a number of

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1 families said to us when we met them -- they expressed
2 concern that the lessons which had been identified in
3 Inquiries that followed one fatality were not learned
4 and applied in order to prevent others.
5 Is there a system in place where you learn the
6 lessons, and which bit of the MoD is responsible for
7 that?
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes, there are, and it is
9 very much down the operational chain of command that is
10 responsible for ensuring the learning account and the
11 lessons learned.
12 This, of course, is historically the reason why one
13 held a Board of Inquiry, to understand either
14 operational, technical equipment reasons for
15 a particular incident and to make sure, whilst not
16 attributing blame, that procedures, new equipment, were
17 put in place to ensure that that same incident couldn't
18 happen again.
19 So I think, over the years, we have again improved
20 our method of taking account of past experiences to try
21 to ensure that they don't happen a second time.
22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Are you confident this is proving to
23 be effective?
24 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes, I am.
25 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps I can add to that. The best way

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1 of explaining, as far as lessons are concerned --
2 I think probably there are three levels. One is the
3 Service Inquiry, which we have heard, and is the primary
4 reason for the Service Inquiry is to learn the lessons.
5 There is then a level below that, which DCDS (Pers)
6 has just touched on, and that's learning accounts, and
7 you open a learning account to do exactly what it says,
8 to learn from a particular incident, and that can be
9 a very high-level issue or a very low level.
10 Then right at the low level, the tactical level, we
11 have something called "after action reviews", where you
12 review your action, whether it was an operational
13 situation or something not dissimilar, to review other
14 lessons.
15 So there are various feeds in which you can actually
16 identify lessons. Within Land Forces now, we have the
17 Lessons Exploitation Centre, which not only picks up on
18 operational lessons, but also the personnel lessons,
19 which is what I have been talking about, and they are
20 fed into this centre now so that two things can happen.
21 One, that current policy can be looked at to be
22 amended and, therefore, implemented and also that
23 training -- the training of individuals in whatever
24 discipline is suitably amended or enhanced to conform to
25 that particular lesson learned.

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1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: The other thing mentioned to us was
2 how confusing it is to have so many different Inquiries
3 and investigations. This is quite confusing for the
4 families. What have you done to address that issue of
5 making it less confusing, because, you know, people are
6 quite traumatised?
7 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think the introduction of
8 the Service Inquiry, I hope, has made that much clearer
9 than it was. I think we have realised that the support
10 the families need, the information they want as the
11 Inquiry is ongoing, I think we have addressed that
12 particular topic. I think --
13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But you also created the Defence
14 Inquest Unit in 2008.
15 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Indeed.
16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Is that helping? How is that
17 working?
18 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: General Mans has already
19 mentioned that; that that has certainly proved to be
20 a very helpful single point of contact within the
21 Ministry of Defence for both coroners and families to
22 make sure that there is a much improved level of
23 co-ordination and information. I think that has been
24 successful.
25 Visiting officers' and notification officers'

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1 training has been improved, and I know that
2 Mr Ainsworth, when he was giving evidence to you, also
3 mentioned two conferences that had been held for
4 bereaved families, and some of the actions that had
5 arisen out of those conferences, which again, I think,
6 have all helped to make sure that we provide families
7 with appropriate information at the appropriate time and
8 try hard not to confuse them with conflicting accounts.
9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.
10 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps I could just add one very
11 quickly. I think it was in 2006, the army formed the
12 Army Investigations and Aftercare Support Cell, a bit of
13 a mouthful but it does exactly what it says, for just
14 these reasons: we needed to have a more co-ordinated
15 approach. In other words, a one-stop shop where
16 families could get one source of advice --
17 either because of a bereavement, in terms of a fatality
18 or, indeed, injured soldiers, --
19 that has produced a lot of valuable information and is
20 certainly working very well at the moment.
21 THE CHAIRMAN: Does that help to address a problem we hear
22 quite a lot about -- a bit in evidence, but also from
23 families -- the turnover of the visiting officers would
24 sometimes be extremely rapid and someone who had no
25 experience of the family's situation would suddenly turn

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1 up at the door and next week at someone else?
2 LT GEN MARK MANS: I think that was probably fair comment,
3 again, previously. Certainly it is not the case now.
4 We spend a lot of time and energy -- because it is not
5 only the casualty visiting officers, it is the casualty
6 notification officers as well. They are the individuals
7 who actually will tell the emergency contact that an
8 individual, sadly, has been -- their relative has sadly
9 been killed, or indeed badly injured, but very quickly
10 then, the casualty visiting officer then hands over --
11 takes over that responsibility, and throughout the
12 country now we have quite large numbers of casualty
13 visiting officers trained, and the training is very
14 comprehensive for obvious reasons, and, therefore, they
15 are poised and ready.
16 So we now do far less handovers of casualty visiting
17 officers and, indeed, they would normally be designated
18 to an individual family. Certainly up until the inquest
19 in terms of a fatality.
20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
21 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Before we leave welfare -- if we
22 are leaving welfare --
23 THE CHAIRMAN: Not really. But did you want to put
24 something in?
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The point I was going to make was

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1 there was no lack of desire on the part of either the
2 centre or the services to give the best welfare services
3 we possibly could and, to that end, because we were
4 getting a fair bit of criticism for our efforts, we held
5 a conference in April 2007 at which we invited just
6 about everyone who possibly had an interest in welfare
7 along to it. I can't remember how many people were
8 present, but it was a very large audience.
9 Now, I chaired the open forum -- I have got the
10 minutes here. I chaired the open forum session of that
11 and I asked the audience a question: are we essentially
12 doing the right things and just need to do them better,
13 or are we missing something significant?
14 The conclusion -- and we had all of the players and
15 the welfare -- was basically: you are broadly on the
16 right track. I'm not saying we were, but that was the
17 best advice we were getting from all the people who were
18 actually delivering welfare.
19 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne
20 now.
21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to follow through a little
22 further on the way that you deal with the families who
23 have been bereaved. Essentially, the delivery is at
24 unit level, I think you were saying earlier. The
25 casualty visiting officers, you talked about,

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1 General Mans, these are the family liaison officers,
2 who -- there aren't two different kinds of people we are
3 talking about here?
4 LT GEN MARK MANS: I'm not quite sure what you mean by
5 "family liaison officer". There is the casualty
6 visiting officer, which remains in contact with the
7 family who have been bereaved, and the time is not laid
8 down. It can get -- certainly it probably would go up
9 until the inquest, sometimes beyond that, depending
10 family circumstances.
11 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So this would act as the point of contact
12 for the family --
13 LT GEN MARK MANS: Absolutely.
14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- more or less indefinitely until such
15 time as they don't need it?
16 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes. You do have to sort of draw a line
17 at some stage and, indeed, it is part of the grieving
18 process. Each family is different and, of course,
19 families, sadly, nowadays, are very disparate in terms
20 of what we might call a family and, therefore, some of
21 the issues are quite complex in terms of whether there
22 are children involved, step-children or whatever.
23 So each case is judged differently, but we don't
24 pull our visiting officer off unless we are absolutely
25 clear that the family no longer need that point of

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1 contact.
2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So you are not drawing a line at a fixed
3 point?
4 LT GEN MARK MANS: No.
5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Each situation is dealt with on its own
6 merits and these are people who have been trained, your
7 visiting officers?
8 LT GEN MARK MANS: Absolutely. They have a fairly
9 comprehensive training programme in order to deal with
10 a number of issues that are obvious and, indeed, as
11 individuals, they need to be looked after as well
12 because, if you are a visiting officer, you can have
13 a pretty traumatic time. Throughout a period of a tour
14 of duty, you might be looking after one or two or three
15 families one after the next, and they need to be
16 monitored for stress and what have you, and we have
17 a process in place to do just that.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, in the meetings that we have had
19 with families, one issue that has been raised with us
20 quite emphatically is the attitude of the MoD, rather
21 than the unit, which many families have described as
22 dismissive or rather defensive. Is that a view that you
23 have had, for example, in the conferences that you have
24 held, Air Marshal Pocock?
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I have not heard that view and,

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1 if that view has been conveyed, I'm really sorry,
2 because that is not how we think of the families of our
3 service personnel who have been killed in action.
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Erm --
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The last thing we want to do is
6 not make every effort to meet their needs and wishes.
7 I'm absolutely certain I'm speaking for my colleagues on
8 this.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I think the particular frustration we
10 heard was about getting information. One of you just
11 now talked about appropriate information at the
12 appropriate time. I think it was Admiral Wilkinson.
13 The families, a number of families told us that they
14 had had great difficulty in getting access to
15 information about the circumstances in which their
16 relative died, that they found MoD not to be transparent
17 over this. In some cases, and particularly over Boards
18 of Inquiry, sometimes information had been produced at
19 inquests that previously had not been revealed to them.
20 There are no doubt reasons for this. Could you comment?
21 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps if I can come in, because this is
22 an area that we are absolutely focused on at the moment,
23 and perhaps it is best described as a sort of a Catch-22
24 situation whereby clearly we would want to tell the
25 families or give them as much information as possible

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about the circumstances in which their loved one has been killed. The problem is we don't have all the accurate information immediately, and that's why we involve the military police to look at each case and we have heard about some of the problems of obtaining witnesses and what have you.

So what we are reluctant to do, unless it is an absolutely clear-cut case, to divulge information which we might then have to retract or contradict once the full investigation has taken place. But we are moving to help in one respect, in that we would like to release the military police report. They do an interim report which is normally done within 30 days, and sometimes we have had permission from the coroner -- because it is the coroner who actually dictates the release of this information -- and in certain circumstances the coroner has been happy for the military police report to be released earlier.

But that's not always possible simply because of the circumstances of that -- of the particular incident. Normally, it has to wait for the full report to come through, and that can be four to six months. Therefore, as far as the family is concerned, that period can be pretty terrible in terms of not knowing the circumstances.

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1 As I say, we are caught between two issues: one of
2 divulging information early, in order to counter hearsay
3 and what have you, but the other is to make sure it is
4 accurate and the accuracy takes time to produce.
5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Are there occasions when fear by MoD, or
6 concern that there could be legal action, would cause
7 the MoD to withhold information from families?
8 LT GEN MARK MANS: Certainly from my perspective that's not
9 the issue. We have never actually had that raised as an
10 issue in terms of fear of legal action, in terms of
11 a bereavement of somebody who is serving.
12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: One of our earlier witnesses has talked
13 about the effect of the compensation culture coming into
14 this country as something which MoD did have to think
15 about. Were you conscious of this?
16 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I don't think so. I think
17 our intent of working in the personnel, in the HR field,
18 has been to get as open and honest a picture of what
19 actually occurred to help the families through their
20 bereavement than any concern about likely legal
21 consequences or not.
22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, when there has been a friendly fire,
23 a blue-on-blue incident, can that affect the way in
24 which information is passed to families?
25 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that we are all aware

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1 that it is likely to be more sensitive and a more
2 difficult fatality to explain, but I think the moral
3 courage of the notification and the visiting officers,
4 the training they have now undergone, would probably
5 cover off that angle.
6 I think -- so it is perhaps just appropriate to say
7 that I suspect all three of us have learned through
8 bitter experience that it is the very first official
9 contact that a bereaved family has with the MoD or the
10 armed services that determines how the journey will go
11 from there. If that official notification is carried
12 out appropriately from all sides, then there is a chance
13 that we may be able to help the family as they go
14 through the grieving and bereavement process.
15 If, for whatever reason, that initial official
16 contact doesn't go well, then it is very hard to
17 recover. Sometimes we never do.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Just to conclude on the handling of
19 families, which is -- having met families -- obviously
20 a matter of real concern to us, from what you have told
21 us this afternoon, over the course of the six years of
22 the Iraq campaign, the services learned from experience,
23 improvements were made.
24 In the earlier stages, are you aware of times when
25 information was given that was less adequate than it

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1 should have been or in which, for example, there were
2 delays in informing families that the person concerned
3 had died as a result of friendly fire? Is this
4 something where you have had to make changes to your
5 procedures?
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: In, I think, it was 2004,
7 I picked up the pieces, so I'm not completely sure what
8 led to it, but there was clear dissatisfaction with the
9 notification procedures because, prior to that, it was
10 a single-service responsibility and we were required
11 very quickly to set up a joint casualty and compassionate
12 cell, which we did, which was my, and now Peter's,
13 direct responsibility, and that took over getting the
14 information from theatre, identifying a notification
15 officer and setting the whole notification procedure in
16 place and that started being done on a joint basis.
17 I think it became active in early 2005, but what the
18 specific things were that led to that unit being set up,
19 I don't know, but we did set it up very quickly.
20 THE CHAIRMAN: I have got one tail point, if I may and then
21 I think you have a different question you would like to
22 raise, and then we might have a break.
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In a minute.
24 THE CHAIRMAN: Mine was -- I read in the papers that,
25 particularly in 2005/2006, looking at coroners'

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1 evidence, or evidence to coroners, there was a genuine
2 problem of fairness, in that the coroner would have the
3 full report of the Board of Inquiry, as they then were,
4 with the names of third parties.
5 Now, Boards of Inquiry don't attribute blame, but
6 you can infer blame from circumstances and, certainly,
7 in a friendly fire incident, the family of a bereaved
8 soldier or member of the armed services may hanker very
9 much to know the identities of the others who were
10 involved or witnesses, but fairness means that you can't
11 actually make that information available.
12 That was a bone of contention that we picked up in
13 our meetings with families quite often. Has that been
14 resolved and, if so, how?
15 LT GEN MARK MANS: If I'm honest, I don't know. It
16 certainly is not something that I have been updated on
17 or indeed was raised with me, certainly over the last
18 year as the Adjutant General and I'm desperately trying
19 to remember back to when I was the Deputy, but it was
20 one of the reasons why the Army Inquests and Aftercare
21 Support Cell was set up, to try to overcome that.
22 I'm not -- it would be wrong of me to say exactly
23 what the correct policy is on release of others' names
24 in terms of a friendly fire incident.
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Lawrence?

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There is quite a divergence between
2 the sort of things we were hearing when we met families
3 and the confidence that you are showing in the way that
4 the system works now. Now, this may simply --
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Should work.
6 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: This may simply be questions of
7 timing, but perhaps these were reflecting problems which
8 had been overcome, but I would just like to get perhaps
9 a stronger sense of whether you were aware of the degree
10 of dissatisfaction being felt amongst the families as
11 you were perhaps coming into the current jobs that you
12 have?
13 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: In terms of information from
14 inquests and the like, I think the answer would be no,
15 because that wasn't a central staff responsibility. The
16 services were very firmly of the view that this was
17 a welfare issue for them and their personnel and that's
18 not something that would come to DCDS (Pers). I don't
19 think it has changed.
20 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that's where you get
21 back to the heart of the issue of the MoD setting the
22 policy of what should happen in these terms, and then it
23 being delivered at a lower level. The responsibility
24 down through the chain of command.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How, then, can you be sure that your

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1 guidelines are being followed? Are you just sort of
2 relying on them to do as they are told or are you
3 monitoring how well the policy guidelines are being
4 followed?
5 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: You are certainly monitoring
6 and you get feedback and I fear that the feedback that
7 you have received from bereaved families, although
8 I would hope that it is now somewhat -- yes,
9 out-of-date, reflected their lack of -- the lack of
10 information that was perhaps being passed to them in the
11 early days of the campaign.
12 The bereaved families' conference that Mr Ainsworth
13 referred to in his evidence to you -- and I think we
14 have held two of these now -- certainly have been both
15 hugely productive for the families, I would like to
16 think, and for the central policy staffs, in that they
17 have reinforced that, actually, the families have two
18 very simple objectives: they want to know what happened
19 to their loved one; and they want to do their level best
20 to make sure that it doesn't happen again.
21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just to conclude on this, the
22 issue -- what you are suggesting is that, at some point,
23 2007, say, there was a conference with bereaved
24 families. Was this the first time, as far as you are
25 aware, that there was direct communication with the

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1 families to get their sense of how well the system had
2 been working on their behalf?
3 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps I can come in here and help.
4 First of all, certainly in my guise as the deputy
5 Adjutant General towards the end of 2005 -- and I had
6 spent most the 2005 in Iraq myself anyway, I think, as
7 you are probably aware -- I was acutely aware and were
8 all my staff, of the disquiet amongst some of bereaved
9 families, in terms -- and it was some, it wasn't all,
10 but we were acutely aware that the system -- we needed
11 to improve in terms of how we dealt with bereavements
12 and, as I referred to earlier, that's why we started
13 Project AJAX, to get in amongst the detail and see where
14 we could do better.
15 In doing that, we then had a very fruitful dialogue
16 with DCDS (Pers) in terms of changing the policy and
17 what have you, securing the additional resources to
18 deliver that betterment.
19 Sadly, you can't do this overnight, and it takes
20 time, but I wouldn't wish you to take away that we
21 weren't acutely aware of this and that we needed to
22 improve things, because we were.
23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I guess I'm just sort of interested
24 in the relationship between the services, from your
25 perspective, and the centre, and whether the centre had

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1 the means of monitoring what the services were doing.
2 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: In my time, we didn't try. There
3 is absolutely no reason whatsoever for the services not
4 to try to do their very best in this area. I have no
5 doubt at all of their desire to do so. It was something
6 which was left to them to do and certainly, in my time,
7 we didn't monitor it.
8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Although you said that you had a very
9 wide range of meetings across the services with service
10 personnel without their officers present. So you were
11 able to monitor what the people in service were doing,
12 but you didn't see it as part of your job to do
13 a similar monitoring among bereaved families and,
14 therefore, the sort of concerns that General Mans talked
15 about, which had obviously built up over four years,
16 which is quite a long period, before things started
17 changing, you weren't personally having fed back to you?
18 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The only thing I can say to that
19 is fair point. It is a very fair point.
20 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that is correct in
21 formal feedback. I think, again, all of us will have
22 had informal discussions, whether it is with
23 representatives of the War Widows' Associations, whether
24 it is a range of military charities, the
25 Family Federations or through other involvement; for

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1 example, both the Air Marshal and myself were trustees
2 of the National Armed Forces Memorial, where we have met
3 bereaved families on a number of occasions. So I think
4 there were a range of informal contacts, but I think the
5 welfare conference that the Air Marshal referred to
6 earlier, happening in 2007, for the professionals
7 involved in this, and then the bereaved families'
8 conference in the summer of 2008, were the first
9 official contacts of that sort, if that helps, sir.
10 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: There is quite an interesting
11 side avenue there. I noticed one of your questions was
12 the relationship between the centre and the single
13 services.
14 You are treading on some quite difficult turf here,
15 issues at the time: what was the responsibility of the
16 centre? What was the responsibility of the single
17 services? There were tensions, but I don't think that
18 they would have impacted on the particular issue that
19 you raised there.
20 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Let's take a break now, for about
21 ten minutes and we will come back and turn to other
22 aspects of these issues, thank you.
23 (4.15 pm)
24 (Short break)
25 (4.28 pm)

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's restart. I would like to ask a few
2 questions about recognition for those who were killed on
3 operations and, to begin with, I think I'm right in
4 saying it was in July last year, a year ago, that the
5 Elizabeth Cross was introduced as a new medal, I think
6 for -- to honour all those killed on operations since
7 the end of the Second World War.
8 Could you perhaps say something about the background
9 to the formation of the Elizabeth Cross?
10 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Indeed, and I think it
11 probably goes back to the armed forces memorial that we
12 mentioned earlier and a greater desire for recognition,
13 and you are aware, from all areas of the press and
14 media, that there are often calls for recognition of
15 certain groups whether they are Arctic convoy veterans,
16 bomber command and, indeed, it was at the end of the
17 Northern Ireland operations that there were calls for
18 recognition for people who had been killed during
19 Operation Banner, and I think you then look at the armed
20 forces memorial as a national memorial of that, but
21 still a requirement for individual recognition, and that
22 has been brought out in the Elizabeth Cross, which, as
23 you say, was launched last year.
24 THE CHAIRMAN: I imagine that the Ministry of Defence or the
25 armed services went to considerable lengths to take

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1 opinion from within the armed services and families and
2 the surround. Was there a consensus, both for the
3 memorial, on the one hand, and the award of the Cross,
4 on the other, or are opinions still somewhat divided?
5 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Let me just talk about the
6 Cross first and then perhaps hand over to the
7 Air Marshal, who was in post as the Armed Forces
8 Memorial Project began, but certainly the Chiefs of
9 Staff were very much involved in the decision-making on
10 the Elizabeth Cross, and there was unanimity amongst
11 them that it was appropriate to recognise the sacrifice
12 that bereaved families had made.
13 They not only took soundings from current personnel
14 but also from families themselves, from military
15 charities, and from other nations, as to how they
16 recognised the sacrifice that families had made and the
17 Elizabeth Cross was the outcome of those discussions.
18 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Air Marshal Pocock, can you say
19 something about the memorial?
20 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes. Oddly enough, I understand
21 you normally give witnesses the opportunity to say
22 something at the end and --
23 THE CHAIRMAN: We shall do again today.
24 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: -- I was going to use the armed
25 forces memorial as an example. I was going to raise it

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1 in a slightly different context. I noticed from some of
2 your previous witnesses you have asked about the
3 difficulty of translating intent into action, and this
4 was an example I was going to use.
5 Now, the armed forces memorial was, as the Admiral
6 has just mentioned decided upon by the then Secretary of
7 State and I think it was a fairly unilateral decision.
8 We decided that we would have one, it was handed over to
9 the --
10 THE CHAIRMAN: For the record, which Secretary of State?
11 There has been a succession. Was this John Reid?
12 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Mr Hoon, yes. I think it has
13 turned out -- I would say that, because I was
14 involved -- I think it has turned out to be remarkably
15 successful. We were able to convert a vision into
16 a practicality, and we had imagined children going along
17 there and saying "That's my father's name" and we have
18 seen exactly that sort of thing on television, but it
19 certainly wasn't easy to turn it into practice.
20 The political intent was very clear: have
21 a memorial. The first thing we had to do was set up
22 a small team to identify whose names should be on it.
23 I won't go into the detail of that, but it was a fairly
24 complex and lengthy procedure, but it was funding it.
25 Although the political intent was perfectly clear,

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1 we were also told there was going to be no public money
2 for it. We were hoping to get some money from the
3 Lottery. We did eventually, after some strong support
4 from newspapers caused the Lottery to change the rules.
5 We got to the stage where we had the designs which were
6 agreed by the trustees, which included Jenny Green,
7 whose name we mentioned earlier.
8 We had the designs, it was in the Queen's diary to
9 come and open it. We actually had to let the contract
10 but we didn't have the money, and it wasn't from lack of
11 effort, either on my part or on the part of the small
12 team. The Admiral will probably remember, but
13 I remember going round embassies with a begging bowl and
14 all sorts of things, but the money just wasn't
15 forthcoming.
16 The difficulty we had in getting the guarantee from
17 the department was immense. We eventually did. We were
18 able to build it. But in the process, people started
19 asking questions like "Why are we paying for this small
20 team? We should stop paying for them, throw them out
21 the building and make the Trusts themselves pay for it".
22 So you had a very clear political intent. You have
23 got something which I think the nation is generally
24 proud of, but, boy oh boy, how difficult it was to turn
25 that into practice.

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. You may want to return to this at
2 the time in your reflections, but Admiral?
3 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The Air Marshal's final
4 remarks there, the overriding success of the memorial
5 since it has been built, the link it provides with the
6 work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission whose
7 work finished in 1947, where the memorial takes up.
8 The focus for recognition and remembrance that it
9 has provided and the source of comfort to a number of
10 bereaved families, it really is quite remarkable,
11 perhaps, that, as a nation, we didn't have one before
12 2007.
13 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm grateful to all three of you. It is good
14 to have this on the record in front of this Inquiry.
15 There are two more particular questions I would like
16 to ask in the context of recognition. I think we have
17 good reason to suppose that when someone -- a member of
18 the armed services dies in theatre, the ramp ceremony at
19 the start of the repatriation process does have
20 a significant value for the fallen -- the comrades of
21 the fallen.
22 What about the repatriation ceremony back into the
23 UK? Is this something that is driven essentially by the
24 will and wish of families or by other considerations?
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I think we are still in the

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1 business of this is the military bringing back their
2 dead and handing them over to the families. I don't
3 know if we ever put it into that form of words, but
4 that's certainly the impression in my mind. It is the
5 military bringing their own home. The families are
6 present and, I suppose, it is handing them over -- I'm
7 probably not expressing myself very well.
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think the Air Marshal is
9 absolutely correct. It is certainly considered by the
10 military to be a very appropriate tribute to their
11 recently fallen and is then seen as separate from the
12 later funeral or memorial service, which, dependent on
13 the family's wishes, may be a full military service or
14 a very small and private one.
15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That's helpful. I think this
16 Inquiry will -- all of us will remember our meetings
17 with the bereaved families. They are, as you all know,
18 very intense experiences. Emotions not only run deep,
19 but also run in different directions in the course of
20 bereavement.
21 I just wonder whether there has been any feedback
22 from families about the repatriation ceremony here at
23 home, as to whether it creates an additional burden or,
24 for some, something almost unendurable, or is it
25 generally welcomed. Do we know?

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1 LT GEN MARK MANS: I think perhaps if I -- having been to
2 one or two ceremonies and so on, and certainly keeping
3 one's ear to the ground, I have never picked up on any
4 push-back at all. In fact, quite the opposite. It does
5 help the bereaved family to start closure on the whole
6 process of losing a loved one and that has been the
7 overriding feedback that we have got, and it is starting
8 that process, which is so important in coming to terms
9 with a loss.
10 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Thank you. I'll move on now and
11 I think Sir Roderic, you have got a question you wanted
12 to pick up.
13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Another painful subject. In 2004 and
14 2005, a number of allegations of abuse and other serious
15 offences were made against British servicemen in Iraq
16 and were covered extensively in the worldwide media.
17 I don't want to discuss these in detail. We will come
18 back to the subject, in any case, in later hearings, but
19 I would just like to ask one or two questions about the
20 policy aspects, and perhaps I can start with you,
21 General Mans.
22 As Deputy Adjutant General, what responsibility did
23 you have to ensure that servicemen and women acted in
24 accordance with international humanitarian law and with
25 the values and standards of the army?

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1 LT GEN MARK MANS: The simple answer, I had no direct
2 responsibilities, because those servicemen and women who
3 were on operations were under the command of their own
4 operational commanders in theatre and, ultimately, to
5 the Permanent Joint Headquarters back here in the UK.
6 However, I was responsible for policy in terms of
7 individual training, not so much in terms of training to
8 go on the operation, but the general training that
9 individuals had through their career.
10 So on those occasions where individuals are trained
11 in terms of operational law, the Geneva Convention and
12 the like, the European Court of Human Rights and the new
13 legislation that was coming through, that would have
14 been picked up through their normal career development
15 training. So in that respect, I did have responsibility
16 but it was rather indirect.
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How are the relevant principles of
18 international law embedded in the training of our
19 servicemen?
20 LT GEN MARK MANS: Each serviceman -- I can only talk for
21 the army, but I'm pretty convinced that the same process
22 applies to the other two services. Each soldier has to
23 undergo mandated annual training, and that covers a raft
24 of disciplines ranging from fitness, shooting and so on,
25 but also includes the operational law aspects and what

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1 is right and proper and how to conduct yourself on
2 operations. That's an annual mandated package which
3 they do, delivered within a unit, ultimately for the
4 commanding officer to actually make sure it is
5 implemented.
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: It would be fair to say that no soldier,
7 sailor, airman or marine should be in any doubt as to
8 what is not permitted where the borderline is?
9 LT GEN MARK MANS: It would be wrong of me to say that it
10 was so clear-cut in that respect, because it is quite
11 clear, from some of the issues that were running in Iraq
12 in 2003 and 2004, that there probably was a lack of
13 clarity in terms of what individual soldiers thought was
14 right or, indeed, wrong in terms of how they applied the
15 law in terms of that.
16 I can't actually speak about that period, though.
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can any of you comment on this possible
18 lack of clarity and what might have been done to make
19 sure that it didn't continue to be unclear in any
20 respect?
21 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I can't, I am afraid, no.
22 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I can just remember it as part of
23 the follow-up actions. I think -- my memory might well
24 be at fault on this, but I think it was a direction from
25 the Chiefs of Staff to make sure that the subjects you

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1 have just covered were included in the staff college
2 syllabus and the basic training, but more than that, my
3 memory doesn't enable me to say.
4 SIR RODERIC LYNE: What impact do you feel that these highly
5 publicised allegations had on the reputation of our
6 forces?
7 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Well, they obviously had
8 an impact and they fed through into recruiting, because
9 we had information from the polling that was done that it
10 was actually holding back what were called
11 "gatekeepers" -- careers officers, parents and that --
12 from wanting their children to join the armed forces.
13 So it had a direct impact.
14 LT GEN MARK MANS: I think we wouldn't want to overstate
15 that in terms of the recruiting. Perhaps I could come
16 back to that. I think we need to remember that, I think
17 the figure is about 120,000 servicemen and women served
18 in Iraq between 2003 and 2009 and, therefore, the vast
19 majority of servicemen and women, you know, behaved just
20 as we would want them to.
21 However, one aspect of ill-discipline is one too
22 many, as far as we were concerned. So although it did
23 damage our reputation, we did go to great pains to make
24 sure that, when an incident did occur, it was properly
25 investigated and, also, to see if it was on a wide scale

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1 or not, which it was not. There was various research
2 that was done, to the best of my memory, in 2006,
3 looking back to 2003/2004, to make sure that that was
4 the case.
5 But clearly one incident is one too many.
6 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I completely support what the
7 General said.
8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I want to come back to recruiting more
9 generally a bit later on.
10 As you rightly say, out of 120,000, we are not
11 talking about a widespread practice or a large number of
12 people. Nevertheless, when this happens in the way that
13 it does, when soldiers in the field are hearing from
14 home that this is running around in the newspapers and
15 so on, obviously that must have a rather damaging effect
16 on morale.
17 Do you feel that what you then were able to do,
18 including by investigating these incidents and taking
19 action over them, dealt with that issue? How much of
20 a knock was it to the morale of the forces?
21 LT GEN MARK MANS: I don't think it was a knock to the
22 morale of the forces in conducting operations in Iraq at
23 the time. Clearly, it has an effect, but it wasn't
24 marked, in my opinion. I think the biggest effect was
25 back here in the UK in terms of the reputation of the

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1 armed forces and the army in particular.
2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.
3 THE CHAIRMAN: Okay, I'll turn to Sir Lawrence Freedman,
4 now. Lawrence?
5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes. I want to look at the question
6 of stretch and overstretch. We have heard a certain
7 amount about the Harmony guidelines, which cover the
8 time spent on tour, the intervals between tours.
9 In general, these seem to have been honoured more in
10 the breach than in the observance. Was there any real
11 sense that these guidelines could actually govern policy
12 or was the amount of effort that we were having to put
13 into Iraq and then Afghanistan bound to overwhelm them?
14 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Can I start from a slightly
15 different angle? In preparation for today, I have gone
16 through the various NAO reports, HCDC, public accounts
17 reports and the like on retention and they all major
18 on Harmony guidelines and the fact that they were being
19 broken.
20 What none of them ever did was look at where they
21 came from and whether they were set correctly. The
22 only -- the only indication that they were valid was in
23 the House of Commons Defence Committee report, I think
24 in 2008, where there is an aside that one of the --
25 Professor Dandeker had said that we had got them right

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because, if we exceeded that level, then post-traumatic stress started to rise.

That was the first time I had ever seen that. We looked really -- in fact, I was much more interested in how much time could people spend on operations before PTSD and the like started to come along.

Now, I was in a completely different appointment in about 2000 -- 1999, 2000 -- when the Harmony guidelines were first being developed, I think as something that arose from SDR 1998. The way I remember them being done -- and I may well be wrong -- was: what operations have we got? How many people have we got? Oh, that means that they can spend this long away.

In fact, I did question the Harmony guidelines in the first SPB -- shortly after I took up post, because we were attaching so much importance to them, we were almost setting ourselves up, "This is how much time we are going to send you away from home" and we were sending them away for longer. So we were raising expectations we couldn't meet.

So we did exceed them. How valid they were as a -- I don't know. But one of the many studies that were taken into people's attitudes and influences to stay and leave showed that about 70 per cent of the personnel felt that they were spending about the right amount of

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1 time on operations.
2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The time between tours?
3 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: The time between tours is quite
4 interesting, and maybe we will come to this when we
5 start talking about remuneration and why we did things
6 the way we did. People on operations were generally
7 pretty happy. Now, I accept completely the families had
8 a different perspective. Our research showed that. But
9 morale was high and actually climbed, according to a lot
10 of the surveys we did, when people were on operations.
11 But when they came back, things weren't so good, for all
12 sorts of reasons.
13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Such as?
14 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Well, one that was raised to me
15 on many occasions was housing. "Why have I got better
16 housing in Iraq than when I come back to the UK?" and
17 that was one that was very difficult to answer.
18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One we have taken evidence on.
19 I suppose one of the questions is as to stretch, at
20 what point it becomes overstretch. Do you have, from
21 what you have said, a concept of overstretch, at what
22 point it really has become too much and the system can't
23 cope?
24 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: This is a subject where it is
25 easy to let the heart rule the mind. If we are going to

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1 be completely objective about it, I would say there are
2 two things. There was one: can we retain our people?
3 And the second one is: are we doing them long-term harm?
4 The first one, for virtually the whole period of the
5 2000s, certainly up to 2007, retention was virtually
6 static. The services were short of people, yes, but
7 that was largely down to recruitment issues. The pinch
8 points -- you know, we could talk about separately, but
9 in the headline figures.
10 On the subject of, "Were we doing our people harm?"
11 we didn't know, but we were looking really hard and not
12 just in this country as well. There was an
13 international conference, an annual international
14 conference of our opposite numbers with the
15 United States, the Canadian, New Zealanders, Australians
16 and there is another nation which eludes me at the
17 moment, and this was a question we made the focus of one
18 of them.
19 The Canadians were perhaps ahead of everybody else
20 and we took what we could from them and we also started
21 studies, which I assume -- the outcome was after my
22 time -- is where Professor Dandeker was able to make
23 a statement on.
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I should say that he's colleague of
25 mine, but perhaps you would like to --

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1 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think the Air Marshal's
2 recollections are basically correct, but certainly
3 Harmony guidelines were developed coming out of the
4 1997/1998 defence review, and then, as the operation in
5 Iraq and subsequently the overlap of Afghanistan
6 manifested itself, then we were operating beyond the
7 defence planning assumptions and, therefore, were almost
8 inevitably going to breach those guidelines.
9 I think they still have a use and a purpose in being
10 an objective means by which, as you say, sir, stretch or
11 overstretch can be measured. They reflect the different
12 way the services operate and deploy. We have looked on
13 more than one occasion at whether or not we can have
14 a tri-service Harmony guideline, but actually, that
15 would probably lose some utility if we did so.
16 Were we setting ourselves up to fail? I don't think
17 so. I think they were a very good check on the
18 department to make sure they understood, perhaps better
19 than before, what actually they were asking of their
20 people.
21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, their status was as
22 guidelines.
23 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Guidelines rather than rules.
24 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: They did become sort of totemic
25 as well, though.

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: That's what I was about to ask: what
2 expectations were there?
3 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: One of the other difficulties
4 I had with the Harmony guidelines was I just couldn't
5 conceive that one size would fit all and the amount of
6 separation that an 18- or 19-year-old would be prepared
7 to accept -- in fact, many of those in our service said
8 they weren't deploying often enough -- and that of, say,
9 a 35-year-old with a family of young children, I always
10 thought was quite different.
11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was there, amongst different
12 specialisms, as well as different services, areas that
13 seemed particularly prone to these concerns?
14 You have given one indication, people at a certain
15 age with family responsibilities and so on have
16 a different view to those who have none of those things,
17 but what about different professional specialisms?
18 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps I can answer this. I think in
19 terms of -- if I can just backtrack slightly --
20 overstretch and really what we mean by that. It is
21 a function probably of two things. One is undermanning
22 and it is not only what I would call global
23 undermanning -- ie, the army was -- during this period,
24 I think, about 2007/2008, the army was about 4,000
25 soldiers short -- there was also a function of

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1 undermanning in some critical trades and employment
2 qualifications and we had a phrase "operational pinch
3 points" which really were where we identified
4 significant undermanning and, perhaps to give you an
5 example, some of our bomb disposal experts, some of our
6 avionic technicians, resources specialists, linguists,
7 it is those sorts of areas where we are dramatically
8 undermanned and, therefore, they are still needed on
9 operations and, therefore, the frequency of their tours
10 clearly goes up because of the shortage of individuals
11 with that particular skill set. So it is quite complex
12 in that respect.
13 The other issue is, in terms of individual Harmony
14 guidelines, which we talked about -- and it is separated
15 service -- that doesn't only relate to operational
16 tours, it is the -- frankly, the phrase we use
17 is "nights out of bed", in terms of the amount of time
18 an individual soldier is away from their barracks or,
19 indeed, if they are married, away from their family, and
20 that's a separate sort of guideline that we use as well.
21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How is that developed and how is
22 that applied?
23 LT GEN MARK MANS: It is a guideline, and this is the
24 difference as opposed to the tour interval, a six-month
25 tour with a 24-month tour interval. That is an

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1 assumption and it is a planning assumption. The
2 individual harmony guideline is just that, where you seek
3 to make sure people don't breach the levels that we have
4 set in place.
5 But it is more a measure of, if the trend is getting
6 worse in terms of more and more people are breaching the
7 guideline, then you have to change your policy or change
8 your approach to the way you are using your people.
9 Over the period in question, as far as the army was
10 concerned, the numbers of people breaching army
11 guidelines gradually came down. So the trend was moving
12 in the right direction.
13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Was this despite Afghanistan?
14 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes, it was.
15 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So -- that was interesting. You are
16 suggesting that Afghanistan did not add a further burden
17 to the -- on meeting the guidelines?
18 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes, these are individuals. This is the
19 amount of time you spend away from your barracks,
20 because it could be on training, it could be on
21 operations, it could be anything. Therefore, the trend
22 was gradually downwards from where it started.
23 I might say, though, the quality of the data was
24 somewhat questionable in terms of how the data was put
25 in on some of our IT systems and subsequently used. But

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1 those were the indications we were getting.
2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I mean, can I just be clear, so we
3 have concurrent campaigns going in Afghanistan and in
4 Iraq. One would assume from everything we have heard,
5 this is adding to the stresses and strains on the
6 forces. You are suggesting that it was not?
7 LT GEN MARK MANS: No, no, I think you have probably
8 misunderstood me. Individual Harmony guidelines measure
9 everything when an individual is away from a unit.
10 Quite the reverse, as far as Afghanistan was concerned.
11 In 2006, when we had a major deployment there, and
12 have continued since, clearly this was breaching our --
13 what we called our defence planning assumptions, where
14 there is quite clear planning assumptions that dictate
15 the frequency and the degree of deployments overseas and
16 we were operating quite far in excess of that.
17 So in terms of the overstretch and so on, clearly it
18 got worse.
19 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: One area which we have mitigated
20 to some extent is we got an awful lot better at sharing
21 the burden out, of finding out what tasks had to be
22 performed by individuals and sharing them out between
23 the services. So one service wasn't doing everything in
24 a particular theatre. If we had officers from one of
25 the other services that could fulfil jobs at

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1 headquarters in Iraq or Afghanistan, they would go.
2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I once remember hearing a definition
3 of overstretch in terms of a loss of elasticity, that it
4 is hard to get back to where you should be, and one of
5 the ways that might be reflected is in things like
6 training and so on. There would be other things that
7 you need to do to keep your forces ready for future
8 contingencies as opposed to the immediate operations may
9 be sacrificed. Did you get a sense that this was going
10 on?
11 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: No, but I'm not necessarily sure
12 that I would have.
13 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps I can answer that.
14 No, I don't think so. It would only happen in terms
15 of this phrase "overstretch" which probably, like you,
16 I don't particularly like. It is more overcommitment.
17 You can have understretch in certain areas as well. So
18 it is quite a coarse sort of measure.
19 It is only if it goes on, if you have this
20 overcommitment that goes on for a prolonged period,
21 a matter of years, because that then does start to eat
22 away at the training levels, the foundation that you
23 need to actually build upon for all deployed operations.
24 In this particular case, clearly with the ending of
25 Iraq, the overlap, with the increased troops that were

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1 sent to Afghanistan, was not that great in the grand
2 scheme of things and, therefore, was manageable.
3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was a temporary thing?
4 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes.
5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.
6 THE CHAIRMAN: I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne again. Rod?
7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: I just want to go a bit more into
8 recruitment and retention. Was this a matter that all
9 of you held responsibility for during your respective
10 periods in office?
11 LT GEN MARK MANS: I did.
12 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The DCDS (Pers) sets the
13 high-level policy, which is then devolved down to the
14 single services to deliver. So, yes --
15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So overall manning levels and how we are
16 doing to meet them, certainly come within your purview.
17 What was the overall effect of Iraq on recruitment?
18 Clearly there was pressure to be as close to full
19 strength as one could be. You have spoken, Air Marshal,
20 about the fact that many people in the services enjoy
21 being out on operations. It can be a positive factor.
22 At the same time, it was a war that became increasingly
23 unpopular in the media. Maybe that was a negative
24 factor. What did you find the Iraq effect was on
25 recruitment?

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1 LT GEN MARK MANS: Do you want me to answer that?
2 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I think so.
3 LT GEN MARK MANS: I have thought about it and, again, when
4 I was the Deputy Adjutant General in late 2005, and 2006
5 and 2007, on balance, I think the result was positive,
6 in that what tends to happen is that, when we are on
7 operations, young men and women do feel they want to
8 take part. So it tends to be sort of positive in that
9 respect.
10 A good example, if my memory serves me right, was,
11 back in 1983, the year after the Falklands campaign,
12 recruiting in the army was very good on the back of that
13 because people saw that the army was being used in
14 operations.
15 However, recruiting is quite a complex area, so
16 although I'm saying, on balance, I think Iraq was
17 positive, there were some other issues which made
18 recruiting more difficult. At this stage, the economy
19 in the country was doing very well and, therefore,
20 unemployment was comparatively low. Therefore, we were
21 competing for recruits in quite a difficult market in
22 that respect.
23 There were other issues associated with the phrase
24 that has been used before, "gatekeepers", parents and
25 teachers. Were they actually going to encourage either

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1 their children or their pupils to join the military?
2 Well, on balance, they probably weren't, in terms of
3 that sort of overall perception.
4 So overall, you had to take into consideration all
5 these other rather complex factors, because the army was
6 underrecruited during the period in question. Of
7 course, quite the reverse now, where we are actually
8 fully manned.
9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you make a distinction between Iraq
10 and Afghanistan when we are talking about recruitment?
11 LT GEN MARK MANS: No, I don't think we can. It is
12 difficult in terms of the numbers of young men and women
13 who wish to join the army. Clearly the numbers are
14 absolutely -- there is a large number who want to, but
15 that's predominantly based on the economic situation in
16 this country with high unemployment as a direct
17 correlation to people's propensity to join the army.
18 SIR RODERIC LYNE: On retention, you said, Air Marshal, that
19 the retention was static for a period up to 2007.
20 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Broadly. I have -- and I'm
21 working from DASA and NAO statistics, which are
22 sort of ex cathedra, aren't they?
23 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So the prospect of serving in Iraq was
24 not causing people to leave in droves?
25 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Oh, no. The opposite. As I said

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earlier, according to the terms of statistics -- again, I'm taking it from the NAO survey, so that's not one which the military did, and it says that 51 per cent think the number at the time between deployments is about right, 37 per cent thought they were too short. So that's 88 per cent were reasonably comfortable with the operations.

But we were discussing this over lunch. We are trying to -- we are not just trying to turn an art into a science. We are trying to turn alchemy into a science. There are all sorts of questions and conclusions here being drawn from surveys that had been put out. I remember, because this was sent out on a random basis, I got one and I was working in the office over the weekend to catch up and I was filling mine in at 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon when I was asking -- and I couldn't answer some of the questions.

So imagining how a young soldier would be, working out whether it was -- because his private life was being disrupted or because he was on operations, I don't know.

Again, I notice that the NAO's conclusions -- 76 per cent of the replies they got were from senior NCOs where we were most concerned about retention of our more junior people at the time.

So the point I'm trying to make is -- I'm not trying

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1 dissemble, but it is extremely difficult to work out
2 which individual factors impact more than anything else
3 on retention, and I think some of -- one of my
4 colleagues had it spot on earlier on when he said it is
5 the economy.
6 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that's absolutely
7 right, sir, if I may just say. Recruitment and
8 retention, I think the campaign in Iraq was broadly
9 neutral or just positive but, as both the Air Marshal
10 and the General have said, it is one of the ironies of
11 service personnel life that the biggest influence on our
12 ability to recruit and retain is actually that which is
13 outwith our control, the state of the nation's economy.
14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: The next obvious question --
15 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: May I just add one to that point?
16 Because we appear to be a bit callous and we are missing
17 an important thing here.
18 When I was also looking at this research, somebody
19 who was much closer to it than me made a point that,
20 whilst the service personnel might have been happy,
21 their families weren't, and one telling statistic is
22 that, prior to Iraq, service personnel were saying
23 that -- only 1 in 10 service personnel were saying that
24 their families were urging them to leave. In the middle
25 of this it rose to one in three.

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1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: How big a factor in recruitment and
2 retention, particularly retention, was pay and
3 allowances? I think perhaps I'm looking for an
4 evidence-based answer, because nobody in the forces is
5 ever going to admit that they are paid enough.
6 But what evidence is there that pay and operational
7 allowances played a significant part in whether or not
8 somebody, above all, chose to stay in the forces.
9 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: If I may start, I'm sure my
10 colleagues will want to join in or either agree or
11 disagree, but it goes back to the number of factors that
12 influence somebody's decision to either stay in the
13 military or leave and there is a mixture -- and one is
14 more important than another at any one stage.
15 I think we worked closely with the Armed Forces Pay
16 Review Body, the AFPRB, to make sure that our service
17 people were given an appropriate salary, an appropriate
18 number of allowances to compensate them for their
19 lifestyle and perhaps our overall intention was to make
20 sure that pay was not the prime issue if they chose to
21 leave.
22 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You succeeded in that?
23 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think the pay awards over
24 the latter half of the decade were appropriate
25 recognitions for the commitments we were asking of our

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1 people and reflected the value that the nation placed
2 upon those.
3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Carefully chosen words, meaning clear,
4 yes.
5 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I have the NAO results here.
6 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes, the NAO result?
7 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Again, it is slightly difficult
8 to draw a conclusion. 43 per cent across the services
9 were dissatisfied at the level of pay, but when you look
10 at the factors that caused them to leave, pay doesn't
11 appear as an issue. Allowances are number 11.
12 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Obviously, as you have already explained,
13 you had a particular concern about pinch points, such as
14 linguists, and presumably, if you are an Arabist, you
15 would find yourself rather often in Iraq, or you did in
16 this period. Bomb disposal, where both Iraq and
17 Afghanistan were acutely running out of people.
18 Did the frequency of these deployments for the
19 much-needed specialisations cause you to lose
20 disproportionate numbers of people in those trades and,
21 therefore, make the stretch even worse? Did you have
22 a vicious circle developing, and what were you able to
23 do about easing this pressure? Because you can't turn
24 people into Arabic speakers or, indeed, bomb disposal
25 experts overnight.

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1 LT GEN MARK MANS: The trick in all of this is to predict if
2 people are going to leave in the pinch point areas and
3 we do have mechanisms to measure deficits, their
4 frequency of deployments and what have you.
5 The way you then overcome their propensity to leave
6 because of the frequency is, frankly, to give them
7 financial retention incentives. That's the major
8 mechanism that we use through the armed forces pay
9 review body, and quite a large number of the pinch
10 points trades which I have referred to would have or
11 have had a financial retention incentive attached to it,
12 really to encourage people to stay in.
13 The size of that incentive, broadly speaking, is
14 delivered in terms of the amount of training an
15 individual has to have and, indeed, the deficit within
16 that particular trade area.
17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: That's a sort of market forces approach.
18 Does that cause any resentment among those who aren't
19 getting these incentives?
20 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: Yes.
21 LT GEN MARK MANS: I might disagree in terms of the army.
22 Certainly, in my experience, that may have been the case
23 when we first introduced them, which, to the best of my
24 recollection, is probably about ten years ago or so.
25 But certainly now they are so commonplace, because,

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1 frankly, we have at the moment -- I think we have 24
2 pinch point trades on our register. They are not all
3 attracting a financial retention incentive because they
4 haven't breached certain thresholds. So it has become
5 more commonplace.
6 What we do watch quite carefully is the ability to
7 turn them off. When a pinch point trade is no longer
8 a pinch point, you then have to handle quite carefully
9 those individuals who thought they were going to be paid
10 a retention incentive, but because we are no longer
11 short in that particular area, it is turned off.
12 That needs careful handling but, again, we have been
13 doing this for some time now. This is not a new
14 process.
15 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Your experience was different?
16 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: But we are not actually
17 disagreeing over substance. The -- my experience -- and
18 it is also based upon probably the most intensive and
19 specialised HR research we ever did into a cadre, which
20 had taken place in about 2001/2002, was it is not
21 absolutes, it is relativities.
22 Service personnel tend to feel injustices hard, and
23 even very small differences in relativity is going to
24 become a grievance.
25 In my time -- and the General is quite right to

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1 point out that things have moved on -- FRIs were still
2 still relatively rare, and there were two reasons why we
3 couldn't use them more. Finance -- we haven't really
4 talked about this, but the personnel side was under
5 enormous pressure not to spend money, but also because
6 we were concerned that it would become the norm and
7 spread dissatisfaction elsewhere.
8 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you collectively feel that in the
9 areas for which you were responsible, dealing with
10 recruitment and retention and given, as you say, there
11 were financial constraints, that you had the resources,
12 you had the tools that you needed to achieve the
13 targets?
14 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps if I can start by answering that.
15 You have to make the case if you need additional
16 resources to retain personnel, and a good example in
17 this particular area -- we talked about pay and
18 allowances -- it is the allowances area, particularly
19 those allowances that are applicable to operations -- if
20 you make the case strongly enough and you have got the
21 evidence to back it up, ultimately you can, with a bit
22 of hard work, secure the resources. It might not be all
23 that you want, but they can be secured
24 in this case, because we are talking operations, through
25 the contingency fund, controlled by the Treasury.

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1 So you have got to make the case though, and
2 certainly, in my experience, sometimes it is very
3 difficult and sometimes you win and sometimes you lose
4 on how hard you can drive that forward.
5 SIR RODERIC LYNE: In Iraq, as indeed in Afghanistan, the
6 army has had to bear a particularly heavy load, which is
7 not in any sense disparaging the personnel of the other
8 forces who have taken part in these theatres. Do you
9 feel that there is a specific army point of view on
10 these issues, General, or is this something that is
11 pretty common across all the services?
12 LT GEN MARK MANS: With regard to retention?
13 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Retention and obviously Iraq, which is
14 the subject of our Inquiry. Is there something in the
15 army's experience there that is a distinguishing
16 feature?
17 LT GEN MARK MANS: No, I don't think so. I think clearly
18 all three services are used in different ways, but
19 I wouldn't have said -- and certainly in the dialogue
20 when I was the Deputy Adjutant General, but also now in
21 my capacity as the Adjutant General, there is nothing
22 that I have identified to say that the three services
23 are not in the same boat in this respect.
24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Thank you.
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, I think back to Sir Lawrence.

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1 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Me again. Reserves. We have said
2 a few things already about the differential of
3 experience of reserves and we have had mention also of
4 the review of reserve forces carried out in 2007,
5 I think it was. Could you just take us through again
6 what were the key findings of that review?
7 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes. There were, I think, to the best of
8 my recollections, 86 recommendations --
9 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just the key points.
10 LT GEN MARK MANS: -- covering a whole array of issues from
11 how individual reservists are employed, the structure
12 and, indeed then, how they are supported through
13 infrastructure in their estate.
14 I think the best way of answering it, to keep it
15 short, is that, again, probably about half the
16 recommendations are being met. Some of the major
17 ones -- and perhaps I will keep my remarks to the
18 Territorial Army -- will be pursued in the context of
19 the defence review that we are now embarked upon and,
20 therefore, really, that is still to run its course. So
21 those outstanding recommendations will be pursued, as
22 I say, in the context of the defence review.
23 Perhaps, if I may ask, was there anything specific
24 that you wished me to answer upon?
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Well, I think -- I think one of the

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1 issues that we are concerned about is, for example, the
2 careers of reserve personnel who -- perhaps who have
3 their life disrupted on quite short notice. Is that one
4 particular theme that you might --
5 LT GEN MARK MANS: That's a very fair point. Some of the
6 support structures we put in place to support
7 reservists, particularly those in the TA when they are
8 mobilised -- we have an individual -- a unit employer
9 support officer, so that if a number of TA soldiers are
10 mobilised from the unit, that individual is specially
11 appointed to deal with the employer concerns for those
12 that are mobilised, and that has produced -- proved to
13 be very fruitful in terms of explaining the dynamics to
14 an employer as to why the individual is being mobilised,
15 but also in making sure that, as far as legislation is
16 concerned, that the job is still available for when the
17 TA soldier comes back.
18 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Has there been much evidence taken
19 on how well employers respond to these demands?
20 LT GEN MARK MANS: It is patchy, if I'm honest. The bigger
21 employers, for instance British Telecom and some of the
22 others, they are very well informed because they do have
23 quite large numbers of their employees as TA soldiers.
24 Some of the smaller companies spread across the land
25 perhaps might only be employing 50 or 60 personnel, one

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1 of whom might be in the TA. It is only when that
2 individual is mobilised does it become an issue because
3 that particular firm clearly has not been too well
4 informed or engaged on TA matters, unless the individual
5 has actually passed on the relevant information, which
6 is not all always the case.
7 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Indeed it may well be that in
8 a small company the first time an employer knows that
9 one of their employees is a reservist is when he goes to
10 his boss with his notice of mobilisation.
11 However, we have, sir, a number of organisations
12 that provide information and advice to both reservists
13 and employers, and I'm thinking here of such
14 organisations as the National Employers' Advisory Board,
15 the Support for Britain's Reservists and Employers,
16 the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, all of which
17 have a wealth of experience and knowledge in how to
18 manage this slightly problematic interface between an
19 employer and a reservist about to be deployed.
20 We think the information is out there and we think
21 people have a much greater understanding now of the
22 system and the benefits that they as an employer might
23 well receive from having a reservist on their books.
24 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you feel you have got a reliable
25 way or semi-reliable way of monitoring the actual

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1 experience of reservists, that they are not
2 discriminated against, that they don't lose their jobs?
3 LT GEN MARK MANS: Yes, we have a sophisticated way of doing
4 that and we have a legal recourse as well.
5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Do you see changes over time?
6 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think we have had to resort
7 to legal action on very few occasions. Most employers
8 are generous in the time that they give to reservists,
9 understanding of their commitment, and find a business
10 benefit there as well.
11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Another issue which we have already
12 touched upon is the extra support that the reservists
13 may need because they don't have the broader support of
14 their unit when they return to their civilian life,
15 which can be quite abrupt, and I think there is some
16 evidence that the mental health issues for reservists
17 have been quite difficult. What measures have you taken
18 to improve support in this area?
19 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps if I can come on, as far as
20 mental health issues are concerned, I think now I know
21 the situation is a lot better than it was. There was
22 evidence -- I think it goes back to before 2005, so
23 again before my time -- that mental health issues
24 associated with reservists who had been mobilised and
25 then demobilised -- there wasn't a process to make sure

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1 that those individuals were given appropriate advice and
2 indeed aftercare.
3 There is now a cell that has been established at the
4 Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre, through which
5 all reservists are mobilised and demobilised, and they
6 are all briefed in some detail about issues to do with
7 mental health, but more importantly the support that's
8 available to them once they are demobilised, and that
9 cell essentially keeps frequent contact with those and
10 if they then need support, they engage with the local --
11 the NHS authorities in order to ensure it is delivered.
12 So it is a lot better in that respect.
13 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would you like to add anything at
14 all?
15 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think the General is quite
16 right. The Reserves' Mental Health Programme, that was
17 introduced in 2006, has put on a much more highly
18 co-ordinated basis the links between the Defence Medical
19 Services and the NHS, through initially 15 departments
20 of community health, to make sure that reservists are
21 much more aware of what they can do if they have any
22 concerns or worries or, more importantly, if an initial
23 assessment has been carried out and the need for
24 appropriate follow-up is maintained.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: There has obviously been a much

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1 greater use of reservists over the past decades -- and
2 we will have to see what the defence review suggests --
3 but it doesn't look likely that this is going to
4 diminish. What do you think are the main consequences
5 of this shift in the balance between the regulars and
6 the reserves on operations?
7 LT GEN MARK MANS: Perhaps again I'll pick this one up. I
8 think it has been very positive. We have been talking
9 for many years about, as far as the army is concerned,
10 one army, ie about 100,000 regulars and about 40,000
11 territorials -- and increasingly now we talk of an army
12 of 140,000 -- because of the way in which territorial
13 soldiers, in particular, are integrated on operations
14 with their regular counterparts, and their utility in
15 terms of certain skill sets that they have from their
16 civilian employment, as well as their military skill
17 sets, are a significant asset, and certainly for the
18 future we want to promote this and perhaps make sure
19 some of our structures enable this more effectively than
20 they do at present.
21 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think that's the case for
22 the other two services as well, that on operations it is
23 frequently not possible to distinguish between a reserve
24 and a regular.
25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just finally one of the issues that

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1 has been raised -- suggested is that the reserves could
2 play quite an important role in integrating the armed
3 forces with the wider society. Do you see that taking
4 place?
5 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes.
6 LT GEN MARK MANS: Because really again it does come back to
7 the Territorial Army simply because it is by far the
8 biggest reserve element across all three services.
9 This connection with the nation is important. The
10 issue is how connected and where, and clearly numbers
11 relate to this in terms of the size of the Territorial
12 Army, and it is something that will be played out in the
13 defence review. But we don't underestimate the
14 importance of having what we call some sort of footprint
15 throughout the nation that's delivered by the
16 Territorial Army. It is a question of, frankly, how big
17 that footprint needs to be.
18 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: That was the answer I would
19 have given, sir.
20 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you very much.
21 THE CHAIRMAN: Right. Baroness Prashar?
22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you. Could one of you
23 describe the concept of military covenant, please?
24 LT GEN MARK MANS: I'm quite happy to do that because
25 a military covenant is something that the army has

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1 adopted. The other two services do not articulate it
2 quite as such in their doctrine.
3 It has been in the army's doctrine, to the best of
4 my knowledge, for at least ten years, when there was
5 a doctrinal publication published, entitled "Soldier",
6 which tried to bring out what we meant by the military
7 covenant. In simple terms it is that bond between the
8 nation, the armed forces, and indeed the individual
9 soldier in the case of the army, where that individual
10 soldier is willing to give up certain rights and
11 freedoms, and indeed ultimately give up their own life,
12 and in return the individual would want respect, fair
13 treatment and fair conditions. It is that bond that is
14 important.
15 I think in terms of the Iraq campaign, the military
16 covenant, we felt, needed to be given more visibility
17 back in 2005 and 2006 because of the pressure that
18 I have referred to earlier that the armed forces were
19 under, particularly the army, because we just felt that
20 perhaps -- and the phrase we used at the time -- it was
21 beginning to come out of balance. It certainly wasn't
22 broken, as some of the press will have reported --
23 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It wasn't as effective?
24 LT GEN MARK MANS: It was coming out of balance. In other
25 words, we were probably seeking too much of the

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1 individuals, as opposed to supporting them, to bring
2 that covenant back into balance, and a lot of policies
3 in the personnel area that were implemented in 2006 and
4 2007 did just that, in that it rebalanced that, so that
5 that bond was retained, which is so important.
6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Was this also because of Iraq or
7 subsequent actions in Afghanistan, which also would have
8 placed more burdens on the military service and the
9 armed forces?
10 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think it put more burden
11 but it also offered greater recognition by the public as
12 to what actually our servicemen and women were doing as
13 the operations changed in their emphasis. So I think
14 you are quite right, and as the General has said, in
15 about 2006 and 2007, when we began to understand the
16 importance of the Afghanistan deployment, that, yes, the
17 nation started to understand a bit more about its
18 responsibilities to service people.
19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, the campaign in Iraq
20 resulted in about 179 deaths of personnel and injuries
21 of many more. What impact did these deaths and injuries
22 have upon the military?
23 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Every single one deeply
24 regrettable but the determination to continue the
25 deployment, the operation, undiminished. But, as the

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1 General has also said, with the military covenant for
2 the army moving slightly out of phase or out of balance,
3 then a number of policies put back into place to try to
4 redress that balance, so that it was seen to be much
5 more of an equal bargain between the service person and
6 the nation.
7 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: And what research have you done to
8 establish what the military needs to do or can do to
9 broaden the public support for the military?
10 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The research has been --
11 there is continuing research done by the
12 Ministry of Defence into how it is perceived by the
13 public and I'm sure that is available to you.
14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Yes.
15 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: There is also research done
16 by all three services, co-ordinated by the MoD, as to
17 the attitudes of serving individuals and their families
18 on a regular basis.
19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: As a result, did you take steps to
20 make sure that you retained that support, and what steps
21 did you take to ensure that you sustained that support
22 from the public?
23 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think there were two
24 important steps, which come towards the end of the Iraq
25 campaign. The first is the National Recognition Study

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1 conducted by Quentin Davies, and the second is the
2 Service Personnel Command paper, of which I know
3 Mr Ainsworth -- you talked with him, sir, at
4 considerable length.
5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: If I can move to that, I mean, the
6 command paper, is it the one called the Cross-Government
7 Support for Armed Forces?
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: That's correct.
9 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Why did you feel the need to produce
10 that document?
11 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think it was again all part
12 of the increasing profile of service personnel across
13 the country, driven by the intensity of the Afghanistan
14 campaign, driven by a 24-hour news culture, and driven
15 by a number of high profile injuries that all were
16 leading towards a perception that there needed to be
17 a much greater understanding between the nation and the
18 armed forces as to what each should expect of the other.
19 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I mean, Bob Ainsworth did say to us
20 there were two things he wanted to achieve through this
21 document. One was there was no discrimination and
22 another one was to recognise that there was special
23 treatment needed. What were the challenges that these
24 changes posed for you in terms of delivering those
25 changes?

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1 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: The challenges were that
2 there was very little new money attached to the
3 proposals and therefore, to gain the support of other
4 government departments was very difficult, and I think
5 the second challenge was to make the gains made
6 enduring. I think we have achieved both of those, in
7 that other government departments were made to change
8 their plans and programmes to take account of the
9 command paper, and, through making the reference group
10 that was in being to set up the paper an enduring
11 commitment, chaired by the Cabinet Office in its
12 government co-ordination role, has ensured that we have
13 continued to make progress on the commitments and form
14 a group that has monitored that progress, including,
15 importantly, with the devolved administrations.
16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So from your point of view you are
17 saying that cross-government responsibility has worked;
18 it is something that has been effective on the ground?
19 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think it has been
20 effective. Certainly there is a time lag between the
21 policy statements in the centre and delivery at local
22 level, but we are now seeing that and, yes, I believe it
23 is still -- although a work in progress, we have made,
24 yes, considerable steps forward.
25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you identify some practical

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1 impact that has had? What changes have resulted as
2 a result of this paper?
3 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes. There are, I mean, such
4 diverse examples as, within the military, making sure
5 that people aren't moved from one posting to another
6 during -- if their wife is undergoing a course of IVF
7 treatment; between the military and the local community,
8 such as making sure there is an understanding, as
9 somebody moves from perhaps a married quarter to a -- to
10 local authority housing, that there doesn't need to have
11 been the local connection that used to have to be
12 established beforehand, somebody, for example, based in
13 Colchester who wants to live in Manchester -- we have
14 made advances there.
15 So I think there are some very practical measures
16 that have been put in place to enhance service
17 personnel, their families' and veterans' lives.
18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Anything you want to add?
19 LT GEN MARK MANS: Exactly that. I think, in terms of that
20 particular initiative, it has created a momentum which
21 has been really very useful. We need to keep that
22 momentum going and to make sure that across government
23 individual department's awareness is raised and what
24 have you, whether it is on health issues, on education,
25 whatever, to support families of the military.

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1 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: And the new government has
2 indicated its wish to maintain that momentum already.
3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Because resources will remain
4 a strain anyway?
5 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Yes.
6 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.
7 THE CHAIRMAN: Over to Sir Martin Gilbert. Martin?
8 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: General Mans, you spoke in a specific
9 context a moment ago about the trick of predicting.
10 I wonder if I could ask each of you to go back over the
11 whole area of personnel issues. To what extent do you
12 think MoD policy-making was about reacting to mistakes,
13 as opposed to proactively trying to foresee problems,
14 and what areas do you yourself make proactive policy
15 changes in advance of problems arising?
16 LT GEN MARK MANS: It is a very fair question. It relates
17 to my -- what I talked about earlier, about the pressure
18 that builds up and therefore trying to predict when that
19 pressure gets too much. Clearly, when we had additional
20 deployments of troops to Afghanistan, that was, to
21 a degree, predictable. But, of course, that decision
22 was not taken over a significant period of time and
23 therefore the ability to react, not only to the
24 deployment, but also then to supporting soldiers and
25 their families takes more time. But that's why you

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1 see -- and indeed a number of the issues we talked about
2 today in terms of new policies did occur around about
3 2006 and 2007, in recognition of that pressure.
4 But it is very difficult to predict it, because, as
5 we keep coming back to, it is always a matter of
6 resources. To secure additional resources, you have to
7 have the evidence to say, "This is what is going to
8 happen, I need to put something in place to prevent it."
9 This tends to be very difficult to do until the problem
10 has actually arisen. But all three services do
11 have our own departments that try to look into the
12 future and to overcome some of the more obvious problems
13 that were being looked at.
14 Perhaps if I can give you one example, going back to
15 a couple of years, we did identify, because of the
16 increasing numbers of injuries that soldiers were
17 suffering, that we had to put in place what we now call
18 the Army Recovery Capability, with the support of
19 various charities, but also the support of money through
20 the MoD.
21 So that was predictable. It has taken a bit of time
22 to start to deliver it but that was something that we
23 knew would happen and we sought to get ahead of the
24 game.
25 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I think General Mans has

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1 certainly drawn out the key points there, sir, of your
2 question: that it is very difficult to be proactive; one
3 tends to be reactive. And, of course, service
4 personnel's aspirations and expectations continue to
5 move up and to the right, and so every improvement in
6 their terms and conditions of service are soon accepted
7 as a new baseline and then you have to move on from
8 there. They expect their quality of life to increase in
9 the way that we do as a nation.
10 Perhaps my example of one area where we are
11 currently being proactive is, as the economy improves,
12 then we expect outflow from the services to return to
13 normal levels, and a number of, certainly, soldiers
14 leaving the army at that stage will perhaps only have
15 been in the army for less than four years or less than
16 six years. We are looking at how we can help their
17 transition out to civilian life in a perhaps more
18 sophisticated or coordinated way than we have done
19 before. We are anticipating a problem and we are trying
20 to get ahead of it.
21 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Air Marshal?
22 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I don't have a lot to add to what
23 General Mans said. I think he perhaps slightly
24 undersold the ability of the services to identify
25 emerging problems, although not necessarily to provide

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1 the hard evidence. I mean, a lot of this is down to
2 judgment, and some of the people in this field have been
3 doing it quite a while, so they have got a pretty good
4 idea of what is going to happen, but then converting
5 that into an investment appraisal that will satisfy the
6 bean counters is sometimes extremely difficult.
7 In 2005, and I think more particularly in 2006, the
8 services knew fairly well that certain pinch point
9 groups -- additional pinch point groups were going to
10 come on stream and that others needed urgent action, but
11 we could only get financial authority for a certain
12 number of financial retention incentives, nowhere near
13 as many as the services would have liked or as the
14 operators, who were actually using these people, would
15 have liked.
16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.
17 THE CHAIRMAN: I think we are coming to the end of this
18 session and I would like to finish with your reflections
19 on the impact of the Iraq campaign and lessons to be
20 learned from it. I don't know which order you would
21 like to offer reflections in.
22 Admiral, over to you first.
23 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Reflections on the Iraq
24 campaign, sir?
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Principally in your own sphere of

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1 responsibility.
2 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Thank you. I think I only
3 have just two points, if I may. And perhaps an area
4 that we haven't managed to draw out is the way how in
5 the personnel world the single services and the MoD work
6 closely together. In our current appointments
7 General Mans and I speak frequently, we meet frequently,
8 as I do with the Second Sea Lord and the Air Member for
9 Personnel. We have a deep and close understanding of
10 each other's problems and issues. We work together to
11 achieve the best results for service personnel in the
12 round. Single service ethos, standards and values are
13 undoubtedly important but we are all extremely conscious
14 of the ultimate objective, to achieve operational
15 capability and success on current operations.
16 My only other point I would like to make, sir, is
17 just reflecting back on the discussion we had on
18 remuneration and financial retention incentives, and
19 again I'm not quite sure if we have managed to get the
20 point across that they are extremely effective. They
21 are very flexible, they allow us to react quickly and,
22 importantly, they buy us time to sort out a deeper
23 underlying problem.
24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.
25 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: Thank you, sir.

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: The general point you make about the
2 cooperation between the Ministry of Defence and the
3 unity of the armed forces and the separate armed
4 services, is this the completion of the Mountbatten
5 vision? We heard evidence last week on a different
6 point that it had taken since then but it has now
7 happened.
8 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON: I couldn't possibly comment
9 that far back, but certainly Mountbatten, Heseltine,
10 Sir Michael Bett -- it has been a long journey of
11 understanding that actually we are going to fight
12 together and therefore it is entirely appropriate that
13 we understand how each other live and work together as
14 well.
15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. General Mans, and then finishing
16 with the Air Marshal.
17 LT GEN MARK MANS: If I could just pick up on that last
18 point and then perhaps touch on a couple of points of my
19 own, I think in the personnel area this relationship
20 between the single services and the central staff
21 represented by DCDS (Pers) is very strong, and I think,
22 if I'm honest, other parts of the department might learn
23 from it. It is a strong bond. We do liaise frequently
24 on some very complex issues and we know that we can't
25 always win the day but at least we are together in those

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issues that we want to -- where we need to improve the lot for our people.

Just a couple of points, if I may. I think, in terms of operations, we don't want to lose sight that the operational situation, ie what was going on in Iraq at the time, does dictate, to a greater or lesser extent, what you can and cannot do with the soldiers who are deployed, and sometimes we perhaps forget that -- certainly we were talking earlier about the operational welfare package and the huge support the soldiers get, but when you are in a pretty austere location, you just aren't going to get it and therefore handling that if you are a family back home expecting a phone call and it doesn't come through is difficult, and we need to make sure that that awareness is appropriate and sometimes -- it is certainly my own experience that people feel that one size fits all. Categorically, it doesn't because it is completely dependent upon the operational situation at the time.

I think the second area just sort of relates to that. Again in my experience -- I have been involved now in the personnel area since the tail end of 2005 -- the support that we actually give to our families, you know, is significant and has really built on that support that was previously given. But we can never do

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1 enough and we are constantly striving within sort of the
2 resource envelope that we have to work to do better.
3 But that support is very good.
4 Perhaps if I can just say why I feel that. I served
5 with the American army in 2005 in Iraq and it was quite
6 interesting drawing parallels to the way we support our
7 soldiers and their families with theirs, and, of course,
8 they certainly have more resources than we have but
9 I couldn't really find any areas where we were doing any
10 worse than the Americans, and indeed in certain areas we
11 were doing better, and that's purely from my own
12 personal experience.
13 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, general. Air Marshal?
14 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK: I always found it an immensely
15 humbling experience going to visit theatre and seeing
16 what very young men and women were doing in very
17 difficult circumstances. A lot of my staff had served
18 in operational theatres or were going to operational
19 theatres and there was absolutely no lack of desire on
20 our part to do the very best we could for the service
21 personnel and their families. But I have to say making
22 progress in the Ministry of Defence is extremely
23 difficult and that's one reason why I decided to leave
24 a year early.
25 THE CHAIRMAN: Right.

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1 I would like to thank our witnesses this afternoon.
2 It has been a valuable and informative session. Thank
3 you very much.
4 Tomorrow we resume at 10 o'clock in the morning,
5 when we will be hearing from
6 Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller, who was Director
7 General of the Security Service from 2002 to 2007.
8 With that, I'll close the session.
9 (5.45 pm)
10 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)
11
12 AIR MARSHAL DAVID POCOCK 1
13 VICE ADMIRAL PETER WILKINSON 1
14 LT GEN MARK MANS 1
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