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Wednesday, 21 July 2010

(10.00 am)

STEPHEN WHITE

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning and welcome.

STEPHEN WHITE: Good morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll open the first session of the morning.

Our witness is Stephen White and you were the Director of Law and Order and the Senior Police Adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Basra between July 2003 and January 2004, I think.

STEPHEN WHITE: That's correct, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are also aware of your long subsequent service in Baghdad as the head of the European Union Rule of Law Mission.

Now, this session will look at the approach taken to police reform in Iraq, including the development of strategy and the resources available.

I say on each occasion, I recognise that witnesses give evidence based on their recollection of events. We, of course, check what we hear against the papers to which we have access and which we are still receiving.

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

1 With those preliminaries, I'll ask Baroness Prashar
2 to open the questions.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much indeed. Thank
4 you for your statement, which we have read very
5 carefully, but there are a couple of points I want to
6 clarify in this particular area of questioning.

7 Prior to the invasion, were you aware of any
8 planning for policing or wider law and order issues in
9 post-invasion Iraq?

10 STEPHEN WHITE: No, I was not aware either professionally or
11 personally, in the sense that, of course, I was watching
12 the news and realising that there was going to be
13 an aftermath, but in terms of my role, it was very much
14 focused on Northern Ireland, so I had no involvement at
15 all beforehand.

16 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did that surprise you, that there
17 was no kind of planning?

18 STEPHEN WHITE: It does indeed It is one of my main
19 recommendations about - if I jump to lessons learned, that
20 there must be pre-planning, and it must be comprehensive
21 pre-planning with contingency plans.

22 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Can you just tell me, who were the
23 bodies involved in your deployment, because there were a
24 number of agencies, and how did they work with each
25 other, how did they interact?

1 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. Initially, it was very much driven by
2 ACPO, in the sense that an advertisement went out to
3 Chief Constables and senior officers. So I made my
4 application to Chief Constable Paul Kernaghan, who, as
5 you know holds the international portfolio.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, could you slow down, please?

7 STEPHEN WHITE: Sorry, I'll start again, if I may.

8 ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers,
9 produced an advertisement asking for senior officers who
10 were prepared to go to Iraq, so I made my application to
11 Chief Constable Kernaghan. ACPO, the organisation,
12 I think, shortlisted four of us, and I was called to an
13 interview at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
14 During the interview, I was involved with two junior FCO
15 officials and one police officer who was on secondment
16 to the FCO in the International Policing Unit.

17 I was then involved in a number of meetings
18 involving the MDP - the Ministry of Defence Police - ACPO,
19 the Home Office, the FCO and a representative from the
20 IPU, the Iraq Policy Unit.

21 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was the purpose of these
22 meetings? Were you having them individually with these
23 organisations or were they meeting you together? What
24 was the purpose of these meetings?

25 STEPHEN WHITE: I think the purpose of the meetings was

1 basically to give as wide a briefing as possible,
2 despite the fact that there were many gaps in terms of
3 information, in terms of my prospective role and, indeed,
4 in terms of what would be the expectations from me in
5 terms of reporting.

6 I was left in no doubt that the one individual
7 I would be reporting to -- and the name was redacted
8 from my statement -- would be a person in the FCO's UND,
9 United Nations Department.

10 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We will come to that, but in relation
11 to these meetings, what did you understand your role would
12 be in Basra?

13 STEPHEN WHITE: If I go back to the interview, after the
14 interview, I was asked, would I be prepared to take
15 either of the two posts which were now being discussed.
16 One was the strategic adviser in Baghdad and the other
17 was the operational command of that time, a unit which
18 was being discussed, called the International Police
19 Monitoring Force, and I chose the latter.

20 So my expectation was, and indeed the expectations
21 of those at the meetings were, that an international
22 senior police officer would be taking command of 1,500
23 international police officers, who would be working in
24 Basra - and whether it was Basra City or Basra province
25 or the south, which includes four provinces, was not yet

1 decided. But it was very much about telling me what the
2 ground was like, the situation was like, and whom
3 I would be working with and to.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you chose the one role, they
5 expected you to do both, but you decided to do one and
6 that was in Basra.

7 STEPHEN WHITE: No, originally the advert, as I remember it,
8 was for one senior police officer. However, when I went
9 to do the interview, it was clear there were going to be
10 two separate posts: a UK chief officer in Baghdad and
11 a UK chief officer in the south. I chose the
12 operational --

13 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: To do the one in Basra.

14 STEPHEN WHITE: -- post, yes.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: In your statement you also talk
16 about the reporting lines, you were reporting to the
17 CPA South and an official from the FCO and
18 Bernard Kerik, is it?

19 STEPHEN WHITE: Kerik

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did this work in practice? Was
21 it complex? What difficulties did this impose?

22 STEPHEN WHITE: It was extremely complex. I think I could
23 spend a long time talking about this, but I have tried
24 to shorten it.--

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We have a lot to get through, so if

1 you could be brief.

2 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. The bottom line is that Kerik, for the
3 few months up to September before he left, was the
4 acting interim Minister of Interior with responsibility
5 for policing. So ultimately, he was the top person
6 in-country dealing with policing. So, clearly there would
7 be an expectation that I would report to him.

8 Sir Hilary, who became my line manager, as the
9 regional coordinator for southern Iraq, saw me as one of
10 the heads of his pillars - law and order - and I was also
11 reporting to him. I was also asked later, as well as
12 the FCO person I was reporting to, to report to the IPU,
13 the Iraq Policy Unit.

14 So there were at least four people and, indeed, one
15 could argue, other stakeholders would have expected me to copy
16 them into things, not least ACPO, the Association of
17 Chief Police Officers.

18 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: How did that work in practice?

19 STEPHEN WHITE: I think, like most people, you tend to
20 interface with the person you see most, and in my case,
21 from August, that was Sir Hilary. So I would have seen
22 him every day. We had meetings at 8.00 am with other
23 directors of the various pillars and then I would have
24 many one-to-one meetings with him. However, almost
25 everything that I did on paper, I copied to all the

1 individuals and all the organisations that I have just
2 mentioned.

3 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: When you got there, what sort of
4 briefing did you receive on the strategy for police
5 reform in Iraq? Did you receive any briefing strategy?

6 STEPHEN WHITE: As my statement says, there were a number of
7 information sessions as opposed to serious briefings.
8 The most serious and most informative briefing was from
9 a major who was the number 2 in charge of the
10 Royal Military Police division that was operating in
11 southern Iraq, with Powerpoints and so on.

12 Other briefings that I got included from
13 Bernard Kerik, for one hour, in Baghdad; from
14 Janet Rogan, who was the number 2 in charge of CPA South
15 when I arrived; the GOC's Chief of Staff; and, indeed,
16 other individuals in the very small team that were in
17 the CPA South when I arrived.

18 In terms of policing strategy, I was hearing mixed
19 messages. "There isn't one yet. There will be one
20 soon", but it was clear to me -- and this is one of the
21 points I want to refer to -- that there was a military
22 policing strategy. The GOC and the military forces in
23 the south had a clear strategy, which involved their
24 withdrawal and the taking over of their duties by
25 international police, but in terms of an overall police

1 strategy, not until I think it was 29 August in Baghdad,
2 I was shown a plan which was called the 60-day/90-day
3 plan, which is not a strategic plan, but at least it was
4 a set of objectives.

5 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It was objectives as opposed to
6 a strategy?

7 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

8 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about briefing the situation in
9 Basra when you got there? Did they give you a breakdown
10 of what was happening in Basra, what the state of
11 affairs was?

12 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes, I picked it up pretty quickly. The
13 brigadier there, who was a gentleman called Bill Moore,
14 he invited me, within my first week, to attend
15 a security co-ordinating meetings, and I had access to G2 and
16 J2 intelligence briefings, which I cannot say too much
17 about, but clearly I was able to get an overview in
18 terms of the threat and how it was being minimised in
19 terms of deployments and movements and so on.

20 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Did you sense they had an accurate
21 assessment of the situation?

22 STEPHEN WHITE: I believe the military had. The Danish
23 Ambassador, who was in charge of CPA South at the time,
24 left very soon after my arrival. So I really can't say how much
25 he and his immediate team had sight of that.

1 The most important thing I think I need to say is
2 that, in terms of my briefings or my introductions, it
3 was clear within day one that what I was being asked to
4 do, be a police adviser -- and by that I mean what I was
5 being asked to do in London -- to go and be a police
6 adviser and work as a British police adviser with
7 a British agenda, was very different from what those in
8 the military and the CPA expected.

9 They saw me as a Director of Law and Order dealing
10 with things which were not within my gift or experience,
11 like the fire brigade, Customs, border, prisons and so
12 on. So the briefing -- there was a big disconnect in
13 terms of what was expected of me.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What about the briefing on the state
15 of the Iraqi police service? Did you get any briefing
16 on what the state of the police service was?

17 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes, I did. I got that from a number of
18 sources. The military police -- I want to make it clear
19 that I am very complimentary about what the military
20 police -- the Royal Military Police -- were doing in
21 southern Iraq. They were visiting police stations.
22 There had been the terrible tragedy of six killed, you
23 know, just before I was deployed, but they were visiting
24 police stations. They were monitoring activities of
25 police. They were trying to support and mentor the

1 police.

2 So they were able to tell me quite clearly what some
3 of the problems were from infrastructural, lack of
4 buildings, lack of equipment, lack of uniforms and
5 weapons, to the clear issue around militias being
6 formed, leadership being very sectarian and tribal, no
7 professionalism, corruption, breach of human rights.

8 The dire need for someone or something to get a grip
9 of the Iraqi police service in the south of Iraq was
10 made very clear to me.

11 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So the objectives you had been given
12 in terms of what they expected you to do there, did that
13 have any connection with the kind of analysis of what
14 they had done for the Iraqi police service? I mean, did
15 it hang together?

16 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. One of the things which was happening,
17 almost a hybrid between policing and military activity,
18 was that the British army -- and the Royal Military Police
19 division within the army -- were using TA officers, who were
20 police officers back in the UK, to support policing
21 developments and they were a great source of information
22 for me and a great, shall we say, outlying plan of some
23 of the things that they were doing that perhaps needed
24 to be built on and carried on.

25 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Lawrence, over to you.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It follows on directly from the
3 previous questions. To start with, UK and US are
4 occupying powers under international law in the UN
5 Security Council Resolution 1483. That provides
6 obligations to secure public order and safety.

7 Did you think this was explicitly recognised by
8 those operating in southern Iraq?

9 STEPHEN WHITE: I think within the military there was
10 a clear understanding, and I think, perhaps, within the
11 civil side there was a clear aspirations, but
12 aspirations, as we know, that is not strategy. So in
13 terms of what the military were doing, I think they were
14 clearly working to that resolution. They were trying to
15 provide the Iraqi police with everything from weapons to
16 various tactics to deal with public disorder, but how it
17 was described to me is that what you were -- what I'm
18 going to find will be Iraqi police officers who have no
19 range of tactics for dealing with public disorder. They
20 will either shoot lead bullets or run away.

21 That was a dreadful dilemma for any police
22 commander, indeed any international support. So really
23 what needed for that resolution to be put into place
24 properly was public order training and all the mentoring
25 and oversight that would have gone with it. So there

1 was an understanding but it was not happening.

2 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I am going to come on to the reform

3 of the police in a second. Just what other

4 nationalities were around you in terms of providing

5 support?

6 STEPHEN WHITE: I think it is important to say that in some

7 people's minds, I think they thought I was working for

8 the British and only dealing with British issues, but

9 there were at least eight nationalities working within

10 the CPA South, which was a very small group, and within

11 the total AOR we had Australians, we had Dutch soldiers

12 and military police officers in Al-Muthanna province.

13 In the Dhi Qar province, we had the Italians but also

14 supported by the GNR, the Portuguese Guarda Nacional

15 Republicana. We had --

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, slow down.

17 STEPHEN WHITE: Okay. So I go back, in Al-Muthanna

18 province, we had Australians and Dutch. In Dhi Qar

19 province, we had Italians and Portuguese, and I know

20 there were many other nationalities providing troops,

21 including military police officers, like the

22 Czech Republic, for example.

23 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: How were they sort of being brought

24 together when you arrived, and perhaps after you had

25 arrived as well?

1 STEPHEN WHITE: Can I clarify, Sir Lawrence, you are talking
2 about the police or the military?

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All these different groups
4 responsible for law and order.

5 STEPHEN WHITE: The people I worked closely to, or closely
6 with, was a small Danish complement which arrived a few
7 weeks after I did, and that in itself is a story, that
8 they were sending a senior police officer with a brief
9 not unlike mine, but from a Danish perspective, but in
10 terms of who I was tapping into, who I was trying to
11 support, I went and visited the Italians, for example,
12 I spent three days on patrol with the Italian
13 Carabinieri in the Dhi Qar province and looked at how
14 they were trying to improve custodial conditions.
15 I went to Al-Muthanna and spent time with the troops
16 there and their military police officers.

17 To be honest, when I reflect on that, what I was
18 trying to do for those people, even though in some cases
19 they had contingents in the hundreds, I was one man
20 coming along and saying, "I'm the Director of Law and
21 Order. How can I help you?" Of course, that just
22 raised expectations, other than giving them some
23 support, some moral and physical support and some
24 professional guidance. So I interfaced with a lot of
25 them and I went on patrol with them, and all I could say

1 is that a lot of them were doing very good jobs but they
2 were military men trying to do civilian policing jobs.

3 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If we turn now to the Iraqi
4 police -- and you have described very vividly the state
5 of the police when you arrived. Was there any start
6 being made on their reform or training?

7 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes, there was and, indeed, some of the
8 people that I interfaced with on the Iraqi side were
9 very courageous and very well-motivated people. If
10 I take, for example, the chief of police for Basra City
11 and province, Brigadier Aklo. He had been a Naval
12 man, he had a PhD in shipping engineering or ship
13 design, he had fought against the Iranians in command
14 of a ship. Because he spoke some English, and because
15 he had a military background, he was appointed, before
16 I arrived, by the British, as the chief of police.

17 Now, I spent a lot of the time with that gentleman,
18 both in my office and outside, mentoring everything from
19 financial management to trying to explain community
20 policing, which was not a thing very well-known in Iraq.

21 So there were people like him who were trying to do
22 a good job, Brigadier General Sadiq, who had been
23 appointed, again before my arrival, as the person in
24 charge of training, with eight staff, none of whom had
25 any experience of training. He was an honourable,

1 decent, professional man. But when we looked further,
2 when we go down to the captains and lieutenants and the
3 warrant officers and indeed the Shirte, the ordinary
4 police officers, it was not a happy picture.

5 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: One of the problems, as you made
6 clear in your statement, is the hiring of extra police,
7 and you quote the Governor saying that the coalition had
8 rehired the bad people and now the good police are
9 scared.

10 Was there much that could be done about the process.
11 Why had it gone wrong?

12 STEPHEN WHITE: It is difficult to say what I would have
13 done, had I been there and, therefore, I do not want to
14 sound clever with hindsight but, clearly, reforming the
15 police is not just about hiring lots of people, putting
16 them in uniform, giving them guns and putting them on
17 the streets, particularly with the sectarian history,
18 with the tribalism, with the nepotism and with all the
19 corruption that was already endemic in what was
20 a 16-tier police service, of which only one was a sort
21 of uniformed interface with the public.

22 Most of the police in Basra and beyond were
23 intelligence-gathering, surveillance-type of units, which were
24 keeping people subjugated. So there is no history of
25 community policing or policing service, as we would know

1 it. So the cultural change -- it had to come from the
2 top. So the idea of giving someone training, whether it
3 be three weeks or four weeks, and I think it eventually
4 went up to eight weeks, giving them a gun and some basic
5 survival techniques: how to make an arrest, how to use
6 a set of handcuffs. It needed much more comprehensive
7 cultural approaches as well as the basic things.

8 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Of course, it would also need to be
9 part of a wider security sector reform. Did you get
10 a sense of how policing was -- could fit in, was fitting
11 in with these other initiatives?

12 STEPHEN WHITE: It is difficult for me to answer that
13 question, having just spent five years working with
14 Iraqis, because how it was then and how it is now, I think, is
15 different.

16 But you're absolutely right, policing is only one
17 part of rule of law, it is only one part of community
18 reconciliation or political development or whatever way
19 you want to look at it and, in terms of what was their
20 strategy -- if I use that term bluntly -- it was very
21 much about policing.

22 I had one member of staff, a young, very young,
23 lawyer, who was the only member of my staff during the
24 six months I was there who was dealing with judicial
25 reform and, of course, the investigative -- sorry, the

1 inquisitorial system, which is the judicial system in
2 Iraq, involves investigating judges, examining
3 magistrates, and police officers working together from
4 the moment a complaint is made or a crime scene is
5 discovered right through to the prosecution.

6 So to only train the police, let's say, in scene
7 preservation, to try to move away from confession-based
8 evidence and not train the judges who were going to
9 adjudicate or oversee an investigation was a big
10 mistake.

11 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: So it was very difficult or very
12 little was being done to reform the wider criminal
13 justice system. Just finally -- this goes back a bit on
14 what we have discussed before -- the general sense one
15 gets from a lot of the commentary we have received about
16 how Basra was perceived and MND South East as against
17 Baghdad was a much more stable setting, much quieter.
18 How would you describe the security situation as you
19 arrived?

20 STEPHEN WHITE: It was bad and it was getting worse. There
21 had been tragedies. If we are talking about the city,
22 there was no accurate data of how many people were being
23 killed, but there were many people being killed. Old
24 scores were being settled. Bodies were being found in
25 the Shatt-Al-Arab river and in the parks and so on.

1 So within the community, there was a lot of
2 violence. In terms of the threat against the coalition
3 forces, it was also rising. It was getting very
4 serious. Three people I worked with, as you know, were
5 killed en route to collect me in late August. There
6 were threats coming in about car bombs and other types
7 of attack that were going to take place in the city.

8 So it was very serious but, having come from working
9 in Northern Ireland for 30 years, it was not, in my
10 opinion, any worse. I say that very respectfully,
11 because we have had lots of victims and lots of people
12 have died in both countries, but in my opinion, at that
13 time, there was an opportunity for police and civilians
14 to work within Basra, provided there was a military
15 framework in the same way that we have deployed forces
16 in Northern Ireland, but it was a very serious -- there
17 was also widescale public disorder.

18 You know, the building we slept in, not only was
19 subject to rifle fire, gunfire, it was also subject to
20 demonstrations and violence outside. The British Army
21 had fired plastic baton rounds, you know, there was the
22 fear that things would get worse. So there was an
23 all-pervading fear that the threat, albeit serious, may
24 escalate and, indeed, I think it did go that way.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: We'll move on to talk about that.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Over to Sir Martin Gilbert.

2 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In your statement you say that you were
3 initially led to believe that your role would be one of
4 operational command in the international police force
5 but, upon arrival, you became Director of Law and Order,
6 and you touched on this briefly with Baroness Prashar.

7 Can you tell us what the change in role encompassed,
8 what it --

9 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. With hindsight, maybe I should have
10 objected, but when you come to a situation where people
11 are desperate and desperately in need of help, it is
12 very easy to give your best, and that's what I was
13 trying to do.

14 So in terms of taking this role on board, so far as
15 I was concerned, I had a clear brief. I was a police
16 officer: be the police adviser, but you were there to
17 make the south successful. Therefore, when a British
18 diplomat tells me and, indeed, the British Army showed
19 me on an organogram that you are the CPA's Director of
20 Law and Order, I accepted that role but, as I said,
21 policing then became only one pillar of the activities
22 I was expected to oversee and contribute to.

23 So there was judicial reform, there was penitentiary
24 reform, there were things like Customs and border issues
25 and even the fire service. So it became a much wider

1 role and it was clear to me -- CPA South Director of Law
2 and Order, not Basra police adviser -- and it is very
3 important because I think some of the other witnesses
4 that will follow were the British police adviser
5 focusing on Basra. I was taking the four provinces and
6 the wide remit that I thought --

7 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How were you able to prioritise these
8 many needs?

9 STEPHEN WHITE: If I am being very blunt about it, one can
10 only do so much with two staff members, neither of whom
11 are Constabulary police, you know, the Ministry of
12 Defence Police. So I found myself as the only police
13 officer there in the whole of the four provinces and,
14 therefore, there were very urgent needs in terms of
15 policing.

16 So in terms of trying to support the GOC or the
17 brigadier or the battle group commanders, who were
18 British in most cases, I focused on policing.

19 However, I did try to support the lawyer who was
20 working with me in her request to support the judges'
21 request for finance, rebuilding court houses, and I met
22 the judges. So I would say I was a willing amateur in
23 the other fields, but a very focused professional in the
24 police field, if that makes sense.

25 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: It does, but in the absence of a CPA

1 strategy coming from Baghdad, were you able yourself to
2 create, as it were, a strategy for MND South East?

3 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. I have been involved in strategic planning
4 for many years and to me I know or should know by now
5 the key elements of police reform and that doesn't mean
6 just the police service, it means those who hold the
7 police to account, those to whom the police are trying
8 to deal with, minority groups and so on.

9 So it was clear to me there were key things that had
10 to be dealt with in any policing strategy, wherever it
11 came from, whether I was articulating it or whether
12 eventually it would come from Baghdad. So things like
13 leadership training, accountability, human rights
14 training, leadership development, mentoring and
15 monitoring, all those things, and public order and, of
16 course, an investigative strategy. I mean, I think any
17 police department in the world would need those things
18 to be addressed, and that includes modern police
19 services.

20 So the Iraqis had some dire needs, some very obvious
21 needs and my view was, if I could get the resources to
22 come to me, I would be able to deploy them appropriately in
23 terms of advisers, mentors, trainers, et cetera.

24 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Was anyone else involved with you in
25 evolving the strategy?

1 STEPHEN WHITE: Not directly, other than my deputy who was
2 a superintendent from the Ministry of Defence Police,
3 who helped me put together a business case and so on,
4 but in terms of what it looked like and what I was
5 writing down to and sending back to the FCO, it was
6 based on my interfaces, my interviews, my research with
7 all those people I could make contact with and, at the
8 beginning, I was able to go out to all parts of southern
9 Iraq. So I met people like governors and time managers
10 or town committees in places like Nasiriyah.

11 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: How much was there an awareness, among
12 those to whom you were reporting and among those to whom
13 you were working, of the dual role of maintenance and
14 security and the evolution and effecting of a justice
15 system?

16 STEPHEN WHITE: I have reflected on this over the last
17 24 hours quite a lot. I can't remember a single
18 question ever being asked to me about other than --
19 about anything other than policing or anything other
20 than the British area of operations. Those two
21 provinces. So whether it was a case of -- and I'm
22 talking about people from the FCO or our own Iraqi
23 Policy Unit -- whether it was a case of "This is the
24 British contribution and we have got to focus on it, and
25 we have got a police officer, so let's get him working

1 on policing", so I think in London, if I could put it
2 bluntly, there was an understanding that I was a police
3 officer trying to do police reform. In Iraq -- especially
4 in the CPA -- there was an understanding that I was the
5 Director of Law and Order for four provinces. And, in
6 Baghdad, I sometimes wondered whether they even knew
7 what I was doing, because things were so
8 Baghdad-centric.

9 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Do you think, given these problems of
10 the lack of resources, that the Prime Minister's desire
11 that the south should be an exemplar was in any way
12 possible?

13 STEPHEN WHITE: I believe it could have been and should have
14 been. I think I'm a pragmatic man, not overly
15 optimistic, but I do believe that, with the resources,
16 with clear objectives, with the military and the police
17 complementing each other in their activities, we could
18 have done a lot more. However, as I have said many
19 times, there was a mismatch. The army were trying to
20 move away from policing duties. They wanted us to move
21 in and we weren't there.

22 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: On to Sir Roderic Lyne. Roderic?

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You said that in this early period you
25 were on your own, as the only civilian police officer in

1 this area and the south. In your report you describe
2 how there were proposals floating around from early on
3 to have 100 UK police officers. If I just take one
4 snapshot in paragraph 116 of your very useful account,
5 you quote FCO press guidelines of 10 September 2003
6 saying that:

7 "210 UK police volunteers had come forward and that
8 the intention is to establish an international team of
9 police experts, numbering some 5,700 in Iraq."

10 At an earlier stage the international figure had
11 been put at 6,500 of which 1,500 were supposed to come
12 down to your area in MND South East. By the time you
13 left in January 2004, how many additional civilian
14 police officers had come into your area to work with and
15 under you?

16 STEPHEN WHITE: There were 25 British police officers who
17 arrived in dribs and drabs, shall we say, from
18 12 December, so for exactly five months of my six months
19 there was only myself, two Ministry of Defence police
20 officers and the small Danish contingent, who did
21 a great job. The Danish contingent grew to 15 and the
22 police eventually, by Christmas of 2003, had 25, all of
23 whom were allocated to the police academy which I had
24 opened in As Zubayr, which is outside Basra. They were
25 not allowed to do any other duties or leave that

1 location. So, in terms of Basra, I was still very much
2 on my own. In terms of the whole of the south of Iraq,
3 I was very much on my own, but in the training academy
4 there were 25 police officers who arrived and were
5 deployed on 27 December. That's when we opened the
6 academy.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Why did the much more expansive plans
8 that I have quoted not materialise and why did it take
9 so long to get anybody out there to assist you?

10 STEPHEN WHITE: I think there are others who probably know
11 the exact detail of that. Sitting in Basra, when I was
12 asking exactly the same question, first of all a number
13 of explanations have been given to me.

14 One was that, first of all, the 210 was really 100,
15 who were going to be in a roulement, so there was never
16 going to be 200. So this goes back to the original plan
17 of 100 UK officers. My understanding is those 100 were
18 going to be part of a 1,500 international police task
19 force, monitoring force, coalition force, depending on
20 which report you read.

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: 1,500 in MND South East from the four
22 provinces?

23 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Yes.

25 STEPHEN WHITE: Again, quoting Bernard Kerik, from way back

1 when I first met him in July, his view would be there
2 would be 6,500. 5,000 he would take to Baghdad, 1,500
3 would be given to me in Basra. His view was it was
4 a city, I'm going to be the city commissioner, I'm
5 going to have these police officers with executive
6 powers.

7 But the plans kept changing. One minute it was in
8 vogue and the next minute it was out and, even the 100,
9 who I bid for 91 of those officers and had a plan to
10 deploy 91 of those officers in and around Basra, mostly
11 Basra City but also as advisers and liaison officers
12 with the military in the various other provinces, within
13 two days I was told to rein in and I bid for -- I think
14 it was 43 or 47, I can't remember exactly.

15 Then it became clear to me that there were only
16 trainers coming to me and that was a decision made
17 against my recommendations and very much against my
18 wishes, but I think there is a number of reasons.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Let's be clear, you were not against
20 having trainers, but you wanted people to assist with
21 public order outside the academy and you got zero?

22 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes, and if I had been asked to prioritise:
23 if you get 25 police officers from chief inspector
24 rank to, I think, sergeant or constable, where would you
25 deploy them? I certainly wouldn't have deployed them

1 all to the academy.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You must have been trying to find out why
3 the requirement was not being met. What understanding
4 did you get as to where the problem lay?

5 STEPHEN WHITE: There were a number of problems. For
6 example, I spoke into the Foreign Secretary when he came
7 to meet me in Basra. His view was that the conditions
8 were not appropriate to deploy. I say in my
9 statement -- I don't want to repeat too much -- but
10 basically, I think his view was that it is too
11 dangerous, there is no living accommodation, the police
12 academy is not ready. So I was arguing against that
13 case.

14 In relation to how I would have deployed people, my
15 view was that you can focus only on training; you are
16 missing lots of other issues that need to be addressed,
17 but the Baghdad -- the Bremer-led CPA strategy was to
18 focus on training and, as you know, on October 27, they
19 took the responsibility for police training to the
20 military side.

21 So the military had a clear focus. The CJTF7 had
22 a very clear focus that training recruitment and
23 training is our strategy. So there was a view that, you
24 know, "Anything else will happen later. Let's get boots
25 on the ground", to put it in the colloquial.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: You indeed quote your meeting with the
2 Foreign Secretary in November 2003 and the points he
3 made to you, which essentially reflected the brief he
4 had been given, you make clear did not at all correspond
5 to the reality of the situation on the ground.

6 How was it that he had been briefed so inaccurately?

7 STEPHEN WHITE: Well, I don't want to be personal, I don't
8 want to criticise any individual, but leadership means
9 being there, leadership means seeing things for yourself
10 and being seen, and I did not see people from the Home
11 Office or, indeed, other than one occasion, people from
12 ACPO coming to see and be seen in terms of what was
13 going on in Basra.

14 So if we are a risk-averse society, if we are afraid
15 of having police officers injured or killed, then
16 clearly you are going to err on the side of safety.
17 I was there and I was saying, "I am operating. Okay,
18 within limitations, within restrictions. But I think,
19 if I had some officers with me to accompany me, to give
20 some professional advice that I don't have, we could do
21 more".

22 So it was obvious to me that people were making
23 decisions perhaps -- or recommendations without seeing
24 the thing for any long period.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But they were still getting information

1 from you, you have told us and you say in your report
2 that you were copying your reports back to all the
3 different parties you were reporting to, which included
4 the UN Department and the Foreign Office, the Iraq
5 Policy Unit, the Consul General, Bernard Kerik in
6 Baghdad, ACPO, Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

7 The information, therefore, was going from you to
8 different parties in London. How was that information
9 not being fed into the policy and into the briefing
10 being given to the Foreign Secretary? I mean, who,
11 among all these parties, at least at the London end in
12 Whitehall, did you perceive as being in charge?

13 STEPHEN WHITE: Well, I think -- and I discussed this with
14 the Foreign Secretary -- the Home Office -- sorry, the
15 Foreign Office has to request from the Home Office, the
16 British police deployment. The Home Office can only act
17 on the recommendations of ACPO, and ACPO was obviously
18 getting recommendations from me about southern Iraq,
19 whilst they were also getting recommendations from my
20 counterpart in Baghdad, Mr Brand, who was working side
21 by side with the Americans.

22 So the Americans who, I think we can all say, is the
23 major partner, was saying "We want recruitment and we
24 want all your efforts into training recruits" and they
25 are getting that message from Baghdad, and I'm sitting

1 in the south with the clear brief to make the south the
2 best it can be, and I'm saying the only way I can make
3 the south a good example is if you give me resources,
4 albeit limited resources.

5 Someone was making a judgment back in London which
6 was not the one that I was making.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: To be clear about this, there were
8 essentially two sets of perhaps conflicting
9 recommendations, coming out of Iraq: one lot from you in
10 CPA South in Basra; another lot as part of a coalition
11 operation in Baghdad.

12 Then, in London, you have quoted the Foreign Office
13 relating to the Home Office, having in turn referred to
14 ACPO. So that's three different institutions. Were
15 they joined up on the same policy?

16 STEPHEN WHITE: They should be, but all I can say is that
17 a judgment call was obviously being made that, whether
18 we were listening to the Americans, or whether we were
19 listening to the military, or whether we were listening
20 to one ACPO officer as opposed to another, that all our
21 eggs should be in one basket, which is training and,
22 therefore, the 100 police officers who it was clearly
23 stated were going to be part of a support and monitoring
24 force, suddenly I read papers that they are going to
25 Jordan -- they are going to be training in a brand new

1 academy, purpose-built to recruit and train thousands
2 upon thousands of Iraqi police officers --

3 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Which is probably not a bad idea, but it
4 didn't meet all the other issues that were within your
5 area of responsibility.

6 Now, that, from what you say, was essentially
7 a decision driven by the head of the CPA, Jerry Bremer.
8 So at least he was in charge there. Whether or not you
9 agreed with his decision, there was somebody in charge
10 there. But who was in charge in Whitehall? We were the
11 coalition partner, we were joint occupying power. Who
12 was in the lead in Whitehall? Who was the lead
13 department and were they integrating their policies with
14 the coalition in Baghdad and, for that matter, with you?
15 Clearly they weren't with you.

16 STEPHEN WHITE: I wish I was there to observe all the things
17 that were going on at that time, but all I can say is,
18 looking at an old email from the FCO UN Department I had
19 an email saying "It is good that you are copying the IPU
20 into things, but they are responsible for security
21 sector reform, whereas we are responsible for police
22 reform".

23 So you have the Iraqi Policy Unit dealing with SSR,
24 which in my opinion includes police reform, security
25 sector reform, and whether or not there was a disconnect

1 or a mismatch, I honestly can't say, but from my
2 perspective, I, for five months, continually made
3 recommendations that I would have -- or the south would
4 have a bigger complement of civilian police and that
5 they would not all be focused on training, and that did
6 not happen until after I left.

7 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So now we have two departments within the
8 Foreign Office speaking with a different voice, the IPU
9 and the UN Department.

10 Now, you were recruited by the Foreign Office. Your
11 initial terms of reference came from the Foreign Office,
12 from the UN Department?

13 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

14 SIR RODERIC LYNE: So at least to start off with, they were
15 in the lead --

16 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: -- and then, when you got to Basra, you
18 talked to a Foreign Office official there, whom you
19 quote in your report, working in the CPA, Janet Rogan.

20 Did the terms of reference that she suggested to you
21 correspond with those which her colleagues in the
22 UN Department in London had suggested to you?

23 STEPHEN WHITE: No, as I say, I was recruited and briefed as
24 if I was going to be a police adviser or a police
25 commander. I understood I may have to just give advice

1 and do the training needs analysis initially, but
2 eventually I was going to have these 1,500 officers to
3 command.

4 However, on arrival, it was clear that the
5 expectation was that I was going to be a Director of Law
6 and Order and not an operational commander and much more
7 than a police adviser. So there was a completely
8 different brief within 24 hours of landing.

9 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Did you have the impression that there
10 was any connection between Ms Rogan in Baghdad and
11 whoever it was in the UN Department in London?

12 STEPHEN WHITE: Well, there should have been and that's
13 really all I can say about that, because the Iraqi
14 Policy Unit was still quite an unknown entity to me.
15 There was a Royal Naval captain who was at some of the
16 initial meetings I attended, and he is the one I quote
17 giving some briefings about the situation on the ground.

18 He was, I guess, replaced by an RAF group captain
19 but it is so obvious to me, then and now, that there was
20 no police officer in the Iraqi Policy Unit, yet they
21 were dealing with police issues. The Foreign Office
22 UN Department did have a middle management police
23 officer on board for some of the time.

24 SIR RODERIC LYNE: For some of the time? So there was
25 a police officer somewhere in the net?

1 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

2 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But the implication of all of this is

3 that nobody, at even a half senior level was clearly in

4 charge of this, and that there was very little civilian

5 police input, at least in the Foreign Office. The

6 Foreign Office was the lead department; you had an Air

7 Force Group Captain, a Naval Captain, civilian

8 Foreign Office officials, two different departments,

9 nobody at a senior level. You then meet the Foreign

10 Secretary. So you go from the desk officer to the

11 Foreign Secretary, and the picture he has is completely

12 different from the picture that you have been feeding

13 back to people at desk level.

14 So does this suggest that there is a very large hole

15 in the middle of the organisational arrangements in

16 Whitehall for trying to manage this important civilian

17 policing operation in Basra, or am I missing something?

18 STEPHEN WHITE: No, I don't think you are missing anything

19 at all. I'm just trying to be perhaps a little bit mild

20 in what I say because the last thing I want to do is --

21 SIR RODERIC LYNE: We are trying to understand what went

22 wrong here so that it goes right next time.

23 STEPHEN WHITE: The bottom line is -- and this is a man

24 I respect and worked with -- Chief Constable Kernaghan

25 was the link. He is the man in charge of ACPO's

1 international portfolio, but he is also a Chief
2 Constable of a force, he also has responsibility for
3 other international interventions.

4 So for him to carry all the weight and ensuring that
5 what, for example, Mr Brand was saying in Baghdad and
6 what I was saying in Basra, has to be decided. I think
7 there were many other people involved, but clearly there
8 were some disconnects in some respects, or, in fact,
9 a decision, and I can take orders. If the decision was
10 "We are going to only focus on training", then all I can
11 say is that the role and the brief I was given did not
12 match what I was then asked to do.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Back to Sir Lawrence Freedman. Lawrence?

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: If I can just -- again, following
15 the way Sir Roderic has handled, let me just start by
16 saying where we seem to be getting to here.

17 You were sent to be concerned about law and order?

18 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

19 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: For that you needed police officers?

20 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The police officers that you were
22 sent didn't arrive until later and then they were put on
23 training, the priority was training, which meant
24 presumably that little was being done about law and
25 order. So the law and order situation was deteriorating

1 for a variety of reasons that you have mentioned, which
2 made it more dangerous for police officers to be
3 deployed from the United Kingdom. So we can start to
4 see a sort of vicious cycle here.

5 You deal quite a bit in your statement about the
6 problems of force protection. So we don't need to go
7 into detail on that, but you may just want to say
8 something about the sort of protection that you were
9 given and how the risk assessments that you thought
10 might be sensible, prudent, matched those that were
11 being seen for police officers back in London.

12 STEPHEN WHITE: I think I said at the beginning, and I still
13 maintain this, that if the police were there in
14 sufficient numbers and were given sufficient support
15 from the army in terms of cover -- and I'll talk about
16 civilian protection teams in a second -- then I think
17 there was a very feasible method of operations.

18 I mean, you had the ridiculous situation where, as
19 a very senior chief police officer, I was flying on my own to
20 the scenes of murders. I mean, the chief of police of
21 Maysan province was assassinated coming out of the
22 mosque. I went to that scene on my own in the back of a
23 Chinook, literally on my own. Of course, the military
24 then picked me up and took me to the scene. If I had
25 had even two or three investigators, or those who were

1 involved in murder investigations who could have dealt
2 with either the forensics or the scene of crime, at
3 least which could have made some contribution.

4 To send someone like myself without any support to
5 very serious incidents which would have political
6 ramifications in the whole province, I think says
7 everything. I was going to the scene of an attack in
8 Basra City station with one person, a young sergeant who
9 was acting as my staff officer.

10 So it is clear to me that if we are going to make
11 any contributions, even checking the situation of the
12 evidence-gathering, or checking the rights of any
13 prisoners and so on in custody, there needs to be more
14 than one person.

15 I was interfacing perhaps with the chief of police
16 or interfacing with the military, in terms of -- I mean
17 the British military -- in terms of what we could do. So
18 as well as needing the extra police, we definitely
19 needed security to move around, and the model that
20 I have been used to most of my life is with the British
21 army.

22 However, the army, I think, like any organisation,
23 puts its resources to where it gets most effect and, if
24 they saw me or my two Ministry of Defence Police
25 officers as not contributing much, I guess they were

1 loath to continually just send me two Land Rovers with
2 infantrymen to go and visit police stations or to go to
3 talk to battle group commanders or whatever. It was,
4 again, a resource choice.

5 Therefore, the breakthrough, when the CP teams, the
6 close protection teams, were allocated to CPA staff
7 meant that we did have a certain amount of freedom of
8 movement but, with the greatest will in the world, two
9 armoured vehicles with perhaps four bodyguards is never
10 going to have the strength or give the support that
11 military resources will do.

12 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You were the subject of a BBC
13 documentary called "Basra Beat" and in the programme
14 made some comments about the willingness of the UK to
15 offer police support to Iraq and, after this programme
16 was aired, you said that you felt:

17 "... unsupported and isolated, but for the stark
18 exception of two people."

19 We know who those two people are from your
20 statement, but whom did you feel unsupported by?

21 STEPHEN WHITE: Unsupported by?

22 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Unsupported.

23 STEPHEN WHITE: I have evidence obviously of emails that
24 were sent. I have evidence of how I was perceived by
25 others. It was not complimentary. I'm an honest man,

1 and the FCO and my own force had given permission to
2 the media to follow me in this documentary.

3 I suppose what I was trying to say is not only was
4 I unsupported about the documentary, I felt unsupported
5 about the statement I made, which was, I felt
6 embarrassed, uncomfortable that I was here, as if
7 somehow I was expendable or my Ministry of Defence
8 colleagues were expendable or the men and women who were
9 working with me and dealing with schools or health and
10 other issues, or the Danish police -- somehow it was
11 okay for us to be there, but it was too dangerous for
12 other British police officers, and I was trying to
13 explain -- and of course, it went down extremely badly
14 and I regret making that statement now, but it is how
15 I felt at the time and the fact that -- you know, one
16 knows when you are getting slaps on the back and when
17 you are being avoided, and rather than go into details
18 of what I read and what I heard and so on, it is clear
19 to me that no one was rushing to my support, with the
20 exception of the people I mentioned.

21 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The overall sense you give is that
22 the job you were sent to do, which was helping with the
23 position within the whole southeast, particularly
24 looking at Basra, was a very low priority itself, that,
25 when we talk about the security situation deteriorating,

1 this tends to be in terms of threats to coalition
2 forces, but actually it was a bigger problem within
3 Basra itself and that really very little is going to be
4 done about it during this period because the resources
5 were not being put into that particular problem.

6 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. There is a difference between
7 firefighting and strategic change or planning for
8 strategic change. It is clear that a lot of people --
9 and I'm talking about the British army and those other
10 coalition forces -- were expending a huge amount of
11 energy trying to keep Basra calm. That included those
12 engineers working on infrastructure and fuel and all
13 those other things.

14 In terms of policing, I can only say the facts speak
15 for themselves. If you have only got one British police
16 officer and two Ministry of Defence police officers, for
17 five months, what does that say about the priority being
18 given to the situation? Despite the fact -- the
19 rhetoric was: the south must not fail, the south must be
20 a success. So that's why we were expending so much
21 energy trying look at ways in which, how could we use
22 100 people or, if we had 50, how could we use 50 and, if
23 we get 20, don't put them all in training, let's use
24 them in some other way.

25 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Finally, what support did you get

1 from your own service, the Police Service of
2 Northern Ireland? Could that have been better?

3 STEPHEN WHITE: I have no comments other than positive to
4 make. Sir Hugh and I go back long, long time and he was
5 happy to allow me to take the job. He knew that we
6 differed. In terms of my view, I thought that perhaps
7 some PSNI officers should have been allocated to the
8 provinces very quickly. His view changed
9 about November, I'm glad to say, and my first day back
10 in Belfast was actually interviewing and selecting five
11 police officers to, not replace me, but to go into some
12 of those key positions, and I have kept in touch with
13 the situation ever since¹. So there are no complaints.

14 SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Thank you.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: On to Sir Martin Gilbert again. Martin?

16 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I would like to turn briefly to the
17 Baghdad dimension. Your statement mentions difficult
18 meetings and frank exchanges, a view with CPA Baghdad.
19 Can you tell us how regular your contact with Baghdad
20 was and whether there were particular communication
21 problems and, essentially, what was the cause of the
22 tension?

23 STEPHEN WHITE: Well, I can't recall how many times,
24 although I have records -- to say how many times I went
25 to Baghdad, but it appears to me I went quite frequently

¹ After the hearing the witness clarified that he did not interview the officers in person during the selection process but selected them (with the Head of PSNI Human Resources) from a shortlist and then later briefed them face to face before their deployment.

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1 until the last one or two months whether it was once
2 a week or once a fortnight, but it was that type of
3 frequency.

4 I only met Bernard Kerik twice during that period
5 and I only met Steve Casteel, who was his replacement,
6 once in Baghdad during that period, and many times went
7 to the office and found that I could not meet anyone.
8 Doug Brand was focused on, first of all, Hungary and
9 then Jordan as a location for training, so any absences
10 were perfectly normal. But I never felt I could connect
11 with anyone of significance.

12 There was a man called -- I think his name was
13 Carr Trevillion, who was supposedly the writer of the
14 strategy, the 60-day/90-day plan. When I went to see
15 him, I was told that he was sick. I went back again
16 with the Danish police commander, because he was very
17 upset that nobody in Baghdad ever contacted him or ever
18 recognised that he was an Assistant Commissioner of the
19 Danish police, and we stood like little boys in a room
20 trying to get an audience with more senior people, while
21 no one seemed to take any interest.

22 We tried that on a number of occasions and he
23 refused to go back again, to be quite honest. There was
24 a bad atmosphere -- that's the only way I can describe
25 it -- an unprofessional atmosphere in the acting or

1 interim Ministry of Interior. Everything seemed to be
2 focused on Kerik while he was there and, if he wasn't
3 there, no one could do anything or say anything.

4 We got occasional explanations that "Guns are
5 coming", or "Don't do anything until we agree the
6 uniform", meanwhile we were getting tailors to make
7 uniforms, otherwise people were going to be shot running
8 around in civilian clothes with AK47s.

9 So there was never a very comfortable interchange,
10 except in the very first one, when I met Kerik and he
11 welcomed me.

12 I think that's maybe all I can say at this stage.

13 SIR MARTIN GILBERT: You mention in your statement -- and
14 I think you went out in July 2003 -- that it wasn't
15 until January 2004 that someone came from the CPA and
16 the NOI. You mentioned Steve Casteel, and this was the
17 first time that a senior figure had visited you. Did
18 you feel there was a lack of interest in the south?

19 STEPHEN WHITE: No, I don't, and that's why I'm very
20 hesitant to sound as if I'm complaining about
21 individuals. I imagine if I had been there in the same
22 situation and been given a brief to get alongside the
23 Americans, I may not have had so much time for people --
24 well, I hope I would have had, but, you know, I can
25 understand it, I just don't agree with it.

1 There needed to be an understanding within the
2 Ministry of the Interior, whether under Kerik's time or
3 under Casteel's time, that there were others, outside
4 Baghdad, very senior experienced people -- Kai Vittrup,
5 the Danish colleague, you know, he has written books on
6 public disorder, he has lectured around the world, he
7 has got great operational credibility, he has been the
8 commander of Kosovo and other places, so for him to
9 be --

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, slow down. Let's break for five
11 minutes.

12 (10.55 am)

13 (Short break)

14 (11.04 am)

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Let's resume after that very short break and
16 I'll turn to Sir Roderic Lyne. Roderic?

17 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Can you tell us briefly how you related
18 to the military in MND South East, please?

19 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes. Well, my initial point of contact was
20 the Royal Military Police. They had a colonel and
21 a major leading the police reforms in the two provinces
22 of Basra and Maysan and, within hours of my arrival, the
23 2-IC initially spent a lot of the time briefing me and,
24 being a Northern Ireland man also, we connected and
25 I found him a great support during the first few weeks.

1 He gave me a very comprehensive introduction to what
2 the British Army and, in particular, the RMP were doing
3 in terms of police reform and made sure that, with him
4 and some of his colleagues, I visited all sorts of
5 interventions such as weapon training, inspections of
6 police stations and so on.

7 So right from the start I was, in a sense, part of
8 the military team, or a partner to the military team.
9 I met the brigadier, who was in charge of the two
10 provinces, Bill Moore and he invited me to join, as
11 a permanent member, his security co-ordinating meeting,
12 which was held once a week, which I did for some time.

13 I also made a point of introducing myself to the
14 GOC -- initially his Chief of Staff -- and I did meet
15 Graeme Lamb, who was the GOC at that time, on a few
16 occasions -- not a lot, but a few -- and he agreed with
17 my proposals. I think he would have preferred me to
18 make more ambitious proposals for the number of British
19 police officers coming out, but he liked the idea of me
20 or one of my colleagues being permanently attached to
21 his headquarters up in Basra and we worked on that and
22 we put in place some ways in which, if I got more staff,
23 that would happen.

24 I also made a point of visiting the various battle
25 group commanders. I met the lieutenant colonel in

1 charge of the -- I think it was the QLR, the Queen's
2 Lancashire -- I can't remember the name, but there was
3 a regiment co-located. I spent some time with the
4 colonel. I met another Lieutenant Colonel Castle up in
5 Al Amarah, where they were dealing with some of the
6 problems in that area and I also met the Italian
7 counterparts and some of the Dutch in Al-Muthanna. So
8 I felt at the beginning I had a very good interaction
9 with them.

10 It became clear -- and this is not a criticism,
11 because the one man I would never criticise is
12 Sir Hilary Synnott. I think he did a tremendous job.
13 But he saw me as his staff, which I was, and therefore
14 my idea of me being co-located with the GOC was not to
15 his liking, which I understand. But there was
16 a physical distance -- the airport is 10 or 12 miles
17 outside Basra, so there was a physical distance between
18 those who were making policy and overseeing
19 implementation of programmes, in that the RMP and the
20 GOC were up in the airport and there was also, I think,
21 a time when, as I said before, the idea of donating
22 resources to me, dedicated RMP transport protection and
23 capabilities for moving, including helicopters, became
24 less frequent, but I think overall I had a good
25 engagement with the military.

1 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Were the RMP -- and no disrespect to them
2 for what they do -- the right people to be leading on
3 police reform? Did they have the right skill set for
4 that?

5 STEPHEN WHITE: Definitely not, in my opinion, and I know
6 this is a controversial issue because it can seem like
7 I'm somehow insulting or disregarding their excellent
8 efforts, but a military police officer is a military
9 police officer and they have certain skills which
10 certainly equate to the policing skills, whether it be
11 discipline, preparing uniforms, weapon handling, arrest
12 techniques and tactics, interviewing and so on.

13 So they have some skills which are transferable, but
14 if we are talking about the level of reform, the
15 comprehensive strategic needs to address a state which
16 was reconstructing, and its police service, which was
17 rotten to the core, if I can use those terms -- and
18 I say that not lightly -- if we needed to rebuild,
19 either reform the old or bring in the new, and put in
20 leadership and oversight, then I'm sorry to say that my
21 view is that the military police or no military officer
22 would have the same understanding or training that
23 a police officer would have. But they did the best they
24 could.

25 SIR RODERIC LYNE: Now, you note in your report that, while

1 you were there, the military took over responsibility
2 for police training and you say that this was something
3 that you felt was completely wrong. What was the
4 downside of the military delivering police training?

5 STEPHEN WHITE: The downside is that, if we are trying to
6 move away from a paramilitary police force to a more
7 community-based police service, an army or a division of
8 a military police contingent does not have that
9 overview.

10 However, if we are trying to firefight or to plug
11 a gap, it is better than nothing, but I saw it as very
12 regrettable that, as the clock was ticking and the
13 military were keen to leave -- and by that I mean leave
14 their policing duties to civilian police -- that
15 eventually it was almost a sign of failure -- and I took
16 it very personally -- that I had not been able to get
17 sufficient civilian police resources in place to prevent
18 that happening. In my area of responsibility.

19 SIR RODERIC LYNE: But many witnesses we have heard have
20 argued that the British model of community policing is
21 simply not applicable in the circumstances of Iraq. You
22 needed a more robust, paramilitary style of policing.

23 Now, what would your comment be on that?

24 STEPHEN WHITE: I disagree because I think -- and I have
25 discussed this around the world with many, many

1 people -- community policing, when done properly, is not
2 a soft option, it is about gathering intelligence, it is
3 about dealing with crime, it is about deterring
4 terrorism or, indeed, capturing terrorists or
5 insurgents, depending on the term you use.

6 However, all community police services, whether they
7 be in Northern Ireland or elsewhere, also need the law
8 enforcement wing as well. So dealing with public
9 disorder, whether it be riots or shots being fired, it
10 can still be done in a way which respects human rights,
11 it can still be done in a way which maintains community
12 support.

13 It may be that, in the interim, you have to plug
14 a gap, which is why I have no criticism about the fact
15 that a lot of the military were trying to stand up
16 public order units, Iraqi public order units that could
17 deal robustly with public disorder, but the vast
18 majority of law-abiding citizens, they want to see that.
19 It is how you do it.

20 So it is not some wishy-washy, liberal view of
21 policing that I'm proposing. It is actually hard-edged,
22 dealing with counter-terrorism as well as providing
23 a service that gains the respect of people.

24 If you go to a police station in Iraq -- I'm talking
25 about in 2003 -- and you try to make a complaint about

1 a crime, the likelihood is you first of all have to pay
2 for the officer to perhaps wake up and take your
3 complaint seriously. You probably have to write
4 it yourself because so many were illiterate. You will
5 probably have to bring witnesses yourself. This idea of
6 the police only being there to subjugate, not serve, the
7 people was rampant. So that's what I mean by
8 instilling, not just the military side or -- the law
9 enforcement side of this.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: We will come back to that in a moment at the
11 end, I think, but first, Usha.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: A couple of questions really. We
13 have heard very graphically the sort of difficulties you
14 were encountering, but perhaps you can tell us a little
15 bit about the progress you were able to make during your
16 six months in Iraq, particularly the other strands of
17 the criminal justice system.

18 STEPHEN WHITE: I would like to be able to give you a very
19 long list. I am afraid it is not the case. I do
20 believe that I made some inroads into presenting an
21 image of British policing or modern European policing.
22 I made some inroads in mentoring people. Sadly, one was
23 removed without my knowledge, another was shot dead -- the
24 two chiefs of police I was working with most closely.

25 I believe that I was able to make a good

1 relationship with the Chief Justice of the area,
2 Judge Laith, who has continued to be a friend for
3 many years, but in terms of what they needed in
4 delivery, either a rebuild of a police station, or the
5 rebuild of a courthouse, or the rebuild of a prison, all
6 I did was commence some things, make some relationships
7 and then hand over to others such as Gareth Davies, who
8 became my successor as the Director of Law and Order,
9 the former governor of Pentonville Prison. He took over
10 from me some the things that I had only sketchily been
11 involved in.

12 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You made progress on training and
13 mentoring as well?

14 STEPHEN WHITE: Very much.

15 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Very briefly --

16 STEPHEN WHITE: If we talk about policing. I'm very proud of
17 what my small team did. We discovered an old army camp,
18 a Mujahaddin camp. We refurbished it. I made the case
19 and got the money for it. We had it opened within two
20 months of work commencing. By the time I left, we had
21 20 functioning classrooms. We had engaged in
22 a relationship with the Italian Carabinieri, who gave me
23 ten officers, and there were the Royal Military Police, who
24 also gave me 10. So along with the British police
25 officers and the Danish police and these military

1 resources, we had a fully-functioning regional police
2 training academy.

3 Mentoring, I was able to get the Danish police to
4 move beyond their very discrete training programme to
5 assist the military, in one case in particular, in
6 Al Amarah, a Danish superintendent relieved me to give
7 some help in setting up a police committee and I think
8 that's probably the last thing I will say that
9 I assisted Rory Stewart, who was the deputy regional
10 coordinator up in Al Amarah, to install a police
11 committee which oversaw policing, including the
12 advertisement and selection of a replacement for the
13 chief of police who was murdered.

14 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: What was your assessment for the
15 future? Because problems of corruption were there in
16 2005. Did you see the seeds of that when you left?

17 I mean, just tell me, what was your assessment?

18 STEPHEN WHITE: I believe there is still corruption in Iraq.
19 So I'm not going to say it has disappeared. There are
20 still major problems. There are still major problems
21 around sectarianism, but things are much better. In the
22 period that I left, because so little mentoring or
23 monitoring was taking place, I believe that there was
24 potential for things to go worse before they would get
25 better.

1 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So you saw the signs of that, that
2 it would actually get worse before they got better?

3 STEPHEN WHITE: I did, yes.

4 BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: Turning to the issue of policing models and
6 essentially, of course, a complete justice system model,
7 the question that comes out of what you told us and,
8 indeed, from your statement, is there a choice between,
9 on the one hand, a military wrap-around to ensure basic
10 security and order within which a properly developed,
11 British-style community policing, reconstruction, can
12 take place, or is it arguable that, in a situation like
13 Iraq in the south, you actually need to go through
14 a series of phases with, first of all, a military
15 wrap-around to ensure basic security, then the
16 introduction of an armed and, not war-capable, but
17 militia -- anti-militia-capable police force, on the
18 back of which and, as it succeeds in establishing order,
19 then a hard-edged, community-style policing? Can you
20 see a sequence there or do you think it is a choice
21 between models?

22 STEPHEN WHITE: No, I agree with your description. I think
23 there has to be a transition or series of transitional
24 movements. To simply try to move to a British model,
25 which is probably inappropriate for cultural reasons, in

1 Iraq would be a big mistake, and I want to make clear
2 that anything I have said or am about to say, it is not
3 about pushing the British policing model -- or, indeed,
4 even the Northern Ireland policing model, which I know
5 most intimately -- there are key principles and key
6 philosophies about policing which I think apply in any
7 situation.

8 First of all, it is agreeing what type of police is
9 appropriate for that country at that time. Now, that
10 involves not British soldiers, British politicians or
11 British police officers dictating, that has to come from
12 Iraq, but if I have learned anything about Iraq, it is
13 not a homogenous society. What would work in Baghdad
14 would certainly not necessarily work in Kurdistan in
15 northern Iraq or indeed in Maysan where the Marsh Arabs
16 are trying to take some power back in, their own, part of
17 that country.

18 So there are -- there is a clear need for an
19 agreement with the local people about the style of
20 policing. Is it going to be devolved or is it going to
21 be Baghdad-centric or government-centric? But clearly,
22 if there is major terrorism, then even the equipment
23 that police officers need, the training that they need,
24 the leadership that they need is very different from
25 a terrorist-free society. So in terms of needing public

1 order units, in terms of needing a strong intelligence
2 team and investigators, then I think it really depends
3 on the situation one is going to find themselves, but
4 the idea of moving in with a plan already made with the
5 word "Iraq" written on it, and we'll take that from France
6 or we take this from what we did in Kosovo, or whatever,
7 it is not appropriate.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Looking back at the situation you found in
9 Iraq in mid-2003 and looking back into the British
10 Police Service and its characteristics, do you think it
11 was wise and even practicable, given the situation in
12 Iraq, for Britain to accept a responsibility for
13 building, not only a policing, but a complete justice
14 system in the south?

15 STEPHEN WHITE: Coalitions are difficult, and coalitions
16 even between police and military are difficult, cultural
17 issues and all sorts of things. So I don't know if it
18 was well-thought-out, but looking back, it appears to me
19 that we had an aspiration, as opposed to a plan, and is
20 it wise? You know, someone said, probably before me,
21 "change or hope is not a strategy -- hope for change is
22 not a strategy". You have got to have a plan in place,
23 you have got to have resources in place.

24 I think, if we look back, and the military were told
25 there will be no civilian police, other than some

1 trainers arriving nine months after the invasion begins,
2 then perhaps there would have been a more appropriate
3 military police support plan. The fact that there was
4 an aspiration that an international task force was
5 coming in and didn't, is unwise.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Given the way the British police system is
7 set up -- and I include Northern Ireland and Scotland in
8 this -- with a large number of essentially county-sized
9 or small region-sized forces, an absence of any central
10 power of direction, even the absence of a central power
11 to ensure that willing volunteers are made available, do
12 you think, without significant legislative change, it is
13 actually possible for the United Kingdom to offer
14 anything more than a very small-scale voluntary system
15 of advice and supervision, as opposed to a significant
16 component?

17 STEPHEN WHITE: No, I don't. The answer is clear to me that
18 in something of the scale of Iraq, we just don't have
19 the infrastructure and the mechanism, the systems to do
20 so, unless there was a national police service with
21 a contingent specifically set aside for international
22 deployments.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: That said, as your judgment -- and I think
24 you are not alone, you find comfort in not being alone
25 in that -- can you just, in conclusion, say something

1 about the nature of a valuable contribution that we can
2 make within with the realities of the British policing
3 system now in post-conflict situations?

4 STEPHEN WHITE: I think we have many officers of all ranks
5 who have skills, specialist skills, which are required
6 in all sorts of theatres around the world, whether it be
7 training or mentoring specifically dealing with things
8 like investigation or leadership developments. I think
9 we have a model which is respected round the world. We
10 still have international police leadership courses being
11 held not too far from here in the staff college. So we
12 do have definitely something which can be offered.

13 In terms of deployments, I think small is probably
14 the answer. As I said, the Danish contingent were an
15 object lesson in perhaps how an international
16 intervention, when you are the junior partner, should be
17 prepared: send a team with the right skills, with a set
18 of parameters in terms of their objectives, their time
19 limits and less aspirational objectives, deliver it and
20 move out and then go back and evaluate, maybe double it
21 or whatever, but the idea of a small, clinical
22 intervention seems to make sense to me.

23 If we are going to do a macro or strategic
24 intervention, then there are many models, like the UN or
25 like the European Union model, which I am aware of,

1 which can perhaps involve the British but use the
2 appropriate resources in a way which is appropriate to
3 their size and availability.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that. I think it is important
5 to establish that, in your judgment, and perhaps other
6 colleagues', it is not an all or nothing, it is --

7 STEPHEN WHITE: No.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: In the last few moments we have, are there
9 any other final reflections you would like to offer?
10 I know that there is a point concerning your handover
11 you wanted to make.

12 STEPHEN WHITE: Yes, if I may. Right from October, when
13 I decided it was not appropriate for me to stay, I was
14 involved about my succession planning -- or sorry, I was
15 concerned about succession planning, and I got myself
16 involved in that by putting forward a number of
17 proposals. I'm sad to read that the person who took
18 over from me as the police adviser -- not the Director of
19 Law and Order, because he was in place -- felt that he was
20 left without briefing notes, and annex C in the report
21 that I have provided was actually the briefing note for
22 that person, with statistics, with photographs, with all
23 sorts of timelines, showing what we had achieved and
24 what I hoped we would achieve -- "we" being the CPA
25 police contingent -- and that was left with a number of

1 people, not least Sir Hilary, the FCO, the IPU. Many
2 people who commented saw it as a very positive thing.

3 So I'm sad, but it almost illustrates to me the
4 disconnect of the problems that, here was a document
5 which, if I was becoming the new police adviser, would
6 be like gold dust, and he says he never saw it. That
7 I can't understand.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: It is important to have that on the record.
9 Thank you.

10 Any other final reflections.

11 STEPHEN WHITE: No, just to say that I'm very grateful for
12 the opportunity to speak to the Inquiry and I will never
13 forget the courage and support that I received out
14 there from my colleagues.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and again, thank you for your very
16 full statement which is a store of treasure and advice
17 which we will draw on.

18 With that, I'll close this session, we will start
19 again in about ten minutes' time with Mr Colin Smith.
20 Thank you.

21 (11.25 am)

22 (Short break)

23

24

25