

SIS4¹

THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon and welcome to [SIS4].

The purpose of this second hearing is to cover those issues we have not had time to cover in our previous meeting. We are very grateful to [SIS4], to you, for making time for this return visit.

I explained at the start of the previous hearing the information relating to the Inquiry's protocols and the procedure for checking the transcript after the hearing, and you will have seen this again before our meeting today. So I will not repeat it now. Instead we will do a running start, rather than a generated start.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [SIS4], I want to cover issues to do with what we knew about Iraq.

SIS4: About Iraq?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Iraq, yes. What is your personal assessment of the Government's pre-conflict knowledge of life in Iraq under Saddam on issues such as cultural and ethnic divisions, the state of the Iraqi civil infrastructure, political dynamics within Iraq?

SIS4: I think it's important to remember now, when so much has changed, that Iraq was a very, very tightly controlled society. Distribution of food in Iraq was in the hands of the Ba'ath Party. There were umpteen security and intelligence services, suffused with blood relationships to people at the top. It was a tightly run show.

I think it's important also to remember that Iraq has never had a stable political geography. In spite of its physical geography, Iraq has many, many times shifted its centre of power

¹ This witness is referred to as SIS4 throughout the Inquiry's documentation

across the land. So it's not like Egypt, the other great state in the Middle East, which has been much more stable.

I can't remember the details of our Government representation in Iraq, or the Americans', but there were gaps. When we had embassies there, they were not actually very serious embassies. I think one can say that without prejudice to the individuals who gave time and effort working there, good people. But it wasn't an inner circle embassy because business with the Iraqi authorities was so fraught, so difficult. So it can't be said that as a country we had deployed some of the best to Iraq, as one might have thought we ought to have done, given its enormous significance in the region.

What I conclude from all the above is that actually our knowledge of Iraq was very, very superficial. There were individuals who had a great love of Iraq and background on Iraq, but not many.

[REDACTED]

The last point I would make is that so often in the

Middle East regimes are mistaken for countries. When regimes, as they usually are in the Middle East, are highly personalised, people think about Iraq subliminally equals Saddam Hussein, and they don't enquire further about the deep emotions, the longer wavelength trends that underlie the life of a country, and actually the limitations all that imposes on the choices available to the regime.

So I think we had a superficial knowledge of Iraq.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: We made no effort? Because, if I remember, France had some presence there. What were the diplomats in the region? Would they have picked up issues in terms of what was going on?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: During 2001 and 2003, was the secret service² asked to provide more intelligence on these issues? What is your recollection; things changed after 9/11, this came on the agenda?

² ie the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)

SIS4:

³ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I knew customers wanted that, but the, if you like, constitutional structure of the Service's relations with its customers didn't give us a voice, didn't give us a medium for saying what we really thought more generally about the state of Iraq. If we had ventilated views on Iraq's political geography and the impact of its history on its today, people would have told us to shut up. Quite rightly in some ways.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: But is your recollection that you were being asked to provide more intelligence during this period of --

SIS4: On the topics that you touched on, the cultural, political and historical background of Iraq? These were probably not intelligence requirements.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: No, they were not. But what were you being asked to do between 2001 and 2003? What sort of information were you being asked on intelligence about Iraq?

SIS4: Well, [REDACTED]

³ The witness explained that customers were very interested in the context of SIS'

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I think that our requirements were narrowly focused on the operational needs of Government, the build-up to war, heavy emphasis from early 2002 on Iraqi WMD. Of course I knew about that, but I'm not sure that there was a widening of the lens. I can't say that I remember that.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So the focus was still narrow?

SIS4: The focus was very narrow and very -- the emphasis was on applicability. What are we going to do with this stuff? What helps our problems today? Rather than saying, "We are at war with this country, so let's stand back and take a much bigger look".

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So your recollection is that not very many resources were allocated to this subject?

SIS4: Well, you would have the figures, the AOE - allocation of operational effort - figures, available to you, which would set out the actual manpower. I've got them in front of me.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Looking at it, do you think they were enough, the forces allocated?

SIS4: I think hindsight is a problem here. The Service was oppressed by other very, very heavy tasks. Afghanistan; we were at war in Afghanistan. I was very, very anxious about the AQ Khan network, the proliferation problems, and I can't conceal that there were times when I thought Iraq really is not the main issue. So I don't know how critical I would have been of our own lack of build-up. The figures show that there was a fair allocation, but it didn't really take off until 2003.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: It's been suggested to us that intelligence about Iraqi civil infrastructure is not a natural intelligence target.

SIS4: Correct.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: So they would have said no; this is something you would agree? If you had been asked to provide information on that, you would have said no?

SIS4: Well, the Service is obedient to its requirements. It has to be. But within the requirements we have allocation of effort choices open to us, and I wouldn't have been keen to start running agents on what we now call Google Map.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Were you asked to provide intelligence on possible post-conflict scenarios in Iraq?

SIS4: Not that I recall. They would have been couched in terms of evidence of planning for post-conflict, political dispositions. We would never be asked to speculate, or guess at the future, because that wouldn't be intelligence.

What would be intelligence would be an agent with reassuring access to these things, telling us what's going on in his circles, what people are saying about it.

But of course the Iraqis themselves were in some denial about what was going on and what was likely to happen. They had seen us off so many times, and the lessons of the First Gulf War I don't think were properly integrated in the regime.

So I don't suppose there was a lot of post-conflict speculation going on, with one exception, which I regret very greatly, and that was the -- in Arabic it was called something like the Jerusalem forces, the Al Quds Force, which was a rifle for every able-bodied man who signed up, and a very, very clever tribal networking of communications amongst people spread

throughout the country, as what in the Cold War we would have called a stay-behind network. We didn't really get on to that, and that, I believe, was very significant in the post-conflict arrangements. We missed that, anthropologically and politically. Not an easy subject to pick up on, that.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a thing before Sir Martin comes in. There were various unofficial external potential sources of information about Iraq pre-2003, Ann Clwyd, Emma Nicholson, other travellers, academics. Who, if not SIS, should have been able to draw on and bring together that kind of real life experience of what Iraq was like in the decade before 2003? Was that an FCO responsibility, did SIS think, or was it DIS, or wasn't it your business to worry?

SIS4: I cannot but start at the list of possible sources of useful information. Ann Clwyd, George Galloway....

THE CHAIRMAN: Galloway, I missed him.

SIS4: There were, however, some good books printed, but surprisingly few. The fundamental texts about Iraq -- I remember telling somebody that you've got to bulk buy the 1946/1947, I think, Admiralty Naval Intelligence Handbook of Iraq. A magnificent volume like that (**indicates size**). The real thing. And later heard that MOD had been bulk buying it. There were one or two other books.

But this was something we were doing because we were fascinated by our work. Looked at from above, helicoptering above Government, I think it would be for the Foreign Office, DIS, to ask the questions. It's not the answers that were important. It's the questions you ask, and I didn't have a sense, I'm afraid, that the Foreign Office was taking

a coherent view of the problem of Iraq. Because inevitably at that time so many people were caught up with the technology of international relations, the techniques and structures, the UN, the various commissions. Standing back and taking a really innovative, off-the-wall free look at the problem of Iraq wasn't the mood. It wasn't the mood, and the Foreign Office was very understaffed on this topic as well. But people didn't come to us for Lonely Planet advice.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]?

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There's great traditional strength of Arabism in the Foreign Office. Was any of it transparent at this time or was it scattered?

SIS4: This is a deep memory. I started my time knowing by name, and probably by face, most of the people serving in the Middle East. It was like that, and the Arabic training school [REDACTED] gave us an enormous sense of esprit de corps, of knowing each other and being able to talk to each other on the phone and send each other off-line telegrams. That really had gone by the time we

get up into the 1990s.

I think the impact of the First Gulf War was instructive.

[REDACTED]

The FO hadn't had a good war in 1990/1991, and I think was rather on its back foot through the 1990s, dealing with, as I say, operational and quite technical issues like Southern Comfort, access for the RAF in Saudi Arabia, Oil for Food, dealing with the propaganda war, rather than bringing in any great depth of tribal memory.

You'll remember that a bunch of ambassadors rather naughtily wrote to the newspapers saying, "We don't agree with this". They were the quality. I don't know whether I agree with the letter they wrote or the content of it, but they were the people who had a deep sense of the region. There was a falloff on the front line in the Foreign Office, I think, in those years.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I'll turn to Sir Martin Gilbert now, if I may.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: If I could focus on UNMOVIC and the inspectors⁴ [REDACTED]

⁴ Sir Martin asked whether, in 2002, the witness believed the inspection process would fail.

[REDACTED]?

SIS4: I couldn't allow myself to be enthusiastic in that belief

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] One had to keep up some conviction that these efforts might be worthwhile, and Hans Blix, as I have told you before, was somebody I [REDACTED] admired.

But standing back from that attitude at the front, it seemed to me very unlikely that the Iraqis, who had played their hand very skilfully, were going suddenly to make a slip and fall over in the face of an UNMOVIC inspection. We weren't going to get the silver bullet, the evidence that we needed to present at the UN, without a lot of luck. UNMOVIC by itself wasn't going to make it. Also because we believed that what was out there was so little anyway. We must not lose sight of that. You had my comment about the back of a petrol lorry.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: What advice were you and other senior officials giving the Prime Minister or giving his advisers on the likelihood of a find?

SIS4: I don't recall being involved in deliberative discussions of quite that kind. The Chief may have been, and he would have given his own view, I think. But we weren't -- I wasn't -- I'm not able to remember being party to general conversations of that kind. And it would have been a bit strident to say, "Look, this UNMOVIC stuff is not going to work", because we were trying to make it work.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: In terms of the Chief's concern that the credibility of the Service would somehow be seriously at stake if UNMOVIC didn't find something, were you aware of that, of the impact of that on the search?

SIS4: This touches on what I think is a very fundamental

dimension of your Inquiry, which is people's understanding of what intelligence services are actually able to do and how they do it.

I never believed that the credibility of the Service was at stake because we hadn't promised anything, unlike others' observations, and it seemed to me it was going to be a near-run thing whether we got what was wanted.

Not producing what we couldn't produce wasn't a credibility issue for me. I don't believe that we had promised. I saw no evidence that we had promised that we were going to deliver a silver bullet. All I know was that we had been asked for one. I thought it was unrealistic as a challenge, but with the country going to war, all we could do was stand up and do our best. So that didn't touch on honour or integrity, credibility.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: ⁵ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [REDACTED]

SIS4: Because HMG was trying to run and Blix was trying to walk, insisted on walking.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]?

SIS4: I don't recall. I don't recall. There were some missile elements which technically demonstrated breach, but they weren't material in the atmosphere of those days. The fact that the Iraqis were extending 150-kilometre range missiles to go maybe 200 or 300 kilometres, this isn't "going to war" stuff.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Were there reasons other than the non-existence of WMD at a certain site which we were able to indicate to UNMOVIC? Were there reasons other than the non-existence of WMD which explained why it wasn't found at that site?

SIS4: Well, I think I just said, if I understand you correctly, that UNMOVIC had its own operational limitations.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So it was essentially the -- it might be concealment --

SIS4: The way the narrative unfolded, we were never able to be cat-like enough to get back to those investigations and check before the whole thing became muddled, the colours ran, and it became illegible. It was impossible to know what may or may not have been there. Sites were raided, looted, dry-cleaned. So we don't have an answer to that question.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

⁶ In the section that followed Sir Martin asked about and the witness explained the support given by the UK intelligence services to UNMOVIC.

stood at the bar of a much deeper, wider court, doing the right thing. Upholding good process was a sort of civilisational issue for him. "I'm that sort of man", he would say. But certainly, yes, he wasn't in anybody's pocket. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Can we turn now just to his final report, his final statement to the UN? Do you think it was an accurate representation of what the inspectors had found, and of the level of co-operation which they had received from the Iraqis?

SIS4: I'm afraid that I don't recall the text, but I would be happy to say blind that I would trust what Blix wrote. He's very, very -- have you met him? Have you had him in?

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: We are about to.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have met him, but we haven't yet.

SIS4: A remarkable person. You would trust him to tender good accounts.

THE CHAIRMAN: I don't think it's evidence yet, but there is a story that he was dismayed by particularly the American reaction to his first report in January. He felt that they had gone off the centre of the line of that report, and therefore in his second report he was anxious to rebalance it. Not that he would skew the judgments or the findings, but that he didn't want the language to be misused, and therefore he made it, if

you like, more cautious than he might have done but for the reception of his January earlier report.

SIS4: That would be quite sophisticated textual criticism that would be good to take up with him, but I can believe it. I can believe it. But that, I must emphasise, wouldn't be damage at cost to the truth.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Given the cautions in the final report, but also the grey areas, if you like, from an SIS perspective, did you feel, was there an argument for giving the inspectors more time with a view to finding something?

SIS4: Well, that's a decision which was -- that would have been a choice which would have to be taken, if taken properly, in a very dense context of other options and possibilities. My understanding at that time was that the tyres on the aeroplanes couldn't cope with the metallic runways of the aircraft carriers once the heat warmed up, that any question of bio or chemical kit was going to be even more difficult once the heat built up. And in the Middle East it's as though God jogs the lever of the climate. The days that you get in April can be hotter and feel hotter than anything you get later. Of course that's not technically true, but coming out of the winter, you suddenly get these shocks of heat, as you get into the summer, which are really debilitating. I knew about all that sort of thing. The idea that we could stay on clutch control until May, was fanciful.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: That's, in a sense, a political and military decision, but from the point of view of intelligence, was there an argument for having --

SIS4: If you are saying, was there a view in SIS or the

possibility of a view that we might have something to say which would weigh with those other considerations, the morale of the troops, the climate, I think the answer is no. What could we have said which would have justified engaging all those costs and difficulties, and possibly -- this would be for the soldiers to judge -- at cost of the success of the military operation? Given the Iraqi performance, given our own sense of what was out there to be found, given the difficulties Blix faced -- we had rather run out of tarmac in my view, and I felt that at the time.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: I suppose my final question is something that's been put to us by other witnesses. Given the role which the expectation of WMD had had in the previous months, was there a sense in which we had overpromised and underdelivered in the intelligence sphere?

SIS4: I react very badly to that remark by Sir David Omand. It was a deplorable thing to say. Leave that there.

What I think, with the benefit of hindsight, it's interesting to speculate on is whether the chosen vehicle of national will, national mission, national objectives - WMD -- had got slightly out of proportion and was being asked to carry more weight at the bar of history, and all this stuff, than it possibly could be expected to bear.

There was a sense, perhaps, in which the metaphor of WMD as a bloody good reason for doing in Saddam was wearing thin. But no one could, in view of the technical aspects of the diplomatic context, change tune. We were on the flypaper of WMD, whether we liked it or not.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: So it was a burden put on SIS, rather than an SIS-driven imperative?

SIS4: Absolutely. Absolutely.

SIR MARTIN GILBERT: Thank you very much. That's most helpful.

SIS4: I think that point -- well, I have repeated myself, twice -- I think that's a very, very important point.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's turn to Lawrence Freedman.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to mainly talk about post-war. Before I do so, there's an issue which related to something we talked about last time in connection with the use of intelligence in dossier-like publications. ⁷ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁷ Sir Lawrence asked about the plans for the release of further material into the public domain following the publication of the September 2002 dossier, in particular but not only Alastair Campbell's plans for a second dossier and the implications of this for SIS. He noted references in some evidence he had read that some in SIS seemed to have felt that this posed a range of challenges for the organisation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED] ?

SIS4: We were small animals in a dark wood with the wind getting up and changing direction the whole time. These were very, very difficult days. None of us had experience of our work being so critical to major policy dramas, and I venture in an ignorant kind of way to suggest you would have to go back to the Cuban missile crisis to find something similar.

THE CHAIRMAN: You were in the same position as Hans Blix.

SIS4: And that was interesting. But we also had to have regard -- and I remember myself having regard, worrying about this -- for the morale of the Service, the integrity of the Service, and so our performance. Spying, like many other field sports, is very dependent on good heart and good fitness. You can't do it off form. You can't do it in a hostile environment without a very strong sense of corporate collective will power

and mutual support. All these things were possibly being endangered by the situation we were finding ourselves moving into.

It was all multi-dimensional. I like those rather fundamental issues. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We couldn't see this. We could just take things as they came, and do our best to reassure the Service that we were trying to answer the requirements of Government as best we could.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: It was all very busy and it passed your mind. This is the difficulty historians have when we meet such promises in the documents.

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I want to come more in a moment to what actually you thought had happened.

Let's now move on to the war being over, and there was now a chance to sort out what had happened. You have explained why you didn't expect UNMOVIC to find very much, and you have given us a sense of the general problem, the petrol lorry point.

So what did you expect could be found when it was possible to move in more directly after the war?

SIS4: I was very worried about this. Firstly, for the proliferation issue. If I was an Iraqi BW scientist, I would be

looking for other work, and where would I find it? Not in Iraq. It seemed to me that we had to get a fire blanket over the proliferation hazards, and very quickly indeed. Those were clearly a priori what I've been saying, human hazards, people.

Secondly, while not expecting gleaming arrays of kit to be found, just curiosity meant that we longed to get in there and find out what we had been tinkering with.

Lastly, the Whitehall political question of, "Well, SIS, you have been party to this high tension pursuit of WMD. Where is it then?"

So the need to orchestrate immediate follow-up inside Iraq on all that we knew, all the leads, seemed to me to be very, very, very important. I was concerned that the lead on this was going to MOD and in America, and my anxieties were borne out by what happened. There were ammo dumps in Iraq covering square kilometres. You have had all this from others. It was a huge task, and it needed very, very skilful and dynamic generalship to run the follow-up. I'm afraid that didn't happen.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you have a plan, or did SIS have a plan, for how to go about the business of checking on all of this, securing what needed to be secured?

SIS4: I recognised that it wouldn't be up to us. We didn't have the staff. We didn't have the authority. But I did make the point repeatedly in conversations with people in Whitehall, particularly with the military, that this needed gripping. The plan needed to be written, and command and control put in place to make sure the plan was implemented.

THE CHAIRMAN: It had to be an American plan?

SIS4: As it turned out.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anyway, for scale; yes? Iraq, big place.

SIS4: But I think that's a constant theme throughout this whole story. People in London might do the thinking. Then the thinking stalls when people say it's up to the Americans, when actually, if we had been good allies, we would have been on the Americans' backs in Washington, [REDACTED] about this because it was going to matter. It was going to matter to them too.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: The ISG didn't get up and running until August. What were you doing? Was SIS able to do anything in the interim period?

SIS4: Movement inside Iraq was very tightly controlled by the military. People were being arrested. My memory is that we did try to get access, but it was very muddled. It was very muddled. We put people on the ground quite quickly to be there to follow things up, but I don't recall any good coming out of it. At this time, of course, the military were on the ground in Iraq. Force protection and military requirements, operational requirements took priority.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

But from what you told us earlier, you wouldn't have been that surprised by the lack of finds.

SIS4: No. The point was to find the bits that we⁸ -- the schedule of contents of the petrol tanker and to find out the dark corners of what these scientists were up to.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Did you feel it would have been better if SIS had been more directly involved with ISG?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]?

⁸ Witness clarified that he had intended to say "...that we knew about"

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SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: ¹⁰ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED].

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED].

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIS4: My earlier comments about a vehicle that was perhaps being made to carry too much, a line of argument which was wearing thin about WMD. I sensed quite quickly that once the fighting started in Iraq, and no WMD were used, that the subject

⁹ The witness explained the constraints on SIS resources
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started to fall away very quickly. Actually it was surprising how unconcerned people were about WMD after the military operations ended. Very surprising. Oh yes, institutionally, deployments remained, things were put in place, but they weren't being driven from the very top.

THE CHAIRMAN: Was there not great political concern, both in London and Washington, there should be a vindication of their rationale?

SIS4: I don't think that was their top priority. I think there may have been -- this is simply speculation -- a sort of recognition that the WMD thing had served its purpose, we had got in, we had done the war. Now let's worry about Iraq. There wasn't the rear mirror concern that you would have expected now, and I certainly expected at the time. It wasn't there.

¹¹ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

¹⁰ The witness was asked to describe SIS' view of David Kay
¹¹ The witness then set out the challenge posed by complexities and difficulties of the institutional arrangements on the ground for the search for WMD. He explained the tension between the search for WMD and other priorities once troops were on the ground.

[REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a couple of small points before we go on.

[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Can I just go on to your own beliefs about what had been going on? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: You assumed it was still there; that it was there, that the intelligence assessments, by and large, had been correct?

SIS4: Contents of the petrol tanker.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: I appreciate all of that.

SIS4: And a good deal of that was found. But of course it wasn't very -- in the aftermath it wasn't very noticeable. It didn't bear comparison with the emphasis put on the topic beforehand.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Now, in --

SIS4: What I was really hoping for was an Iraqi scientist who would sit down and tell us about binary use of VX and human experiments on plague and this sort of thing. Experiments on human plague; that would have been for me a settling down, a settling of the accounts.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: In everything I have seen here, your stress is always on the scientists themselves.

SIS4: (Witness nods) We didn't have any evidence that there was any volume of deployed weaponry. As I'm sure others have told you, one thing about WMD, bio and chemical, you don't want to keep too much of this stuff. It's very, very difficult to keep, and to keep in good repair, keep fresh. So break-out is more important than stocks, and the people who understand break-out are the scientists.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Just a couple more questions. [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

Did you still believe at that stage that WMD might be found in some shape or form, however small?

SIS4: I don't want to repeat myself too much, but I feel I'm not really communicating the important gloss that I think is needed on WMD. There was going to be no hard standing in a forest of rockets and launcher.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Yes, I understand that.

SIS4: ¹² [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I still believe that that story is not concluded, but it's not a matter of someone pushing a hammer through a plaster wall and finding something, probably.

¹² The witness set out the sort of leads he had hoped would be found.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: What were your views of the final report of Duelfer's?

SIS4: "Sunt lacrimae rerum",¹³ really.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: Would you like to elaborate?

SIS4: I think it says it all.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN: All right. We will stop there.

THE CHAIRMAN: "Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore."¹⁴
Shall we break for ten minutes?

SIS4: Yes, that would be lovely.

(A short break)

SIS4: Can I just say something? I don't think I quite got Baroness Prashar's question about infrastructure.

Illustrative of the problems we were facing at the time, and I want to say two things very quickly. [SIS13]¹⁵ has just very

¹³ Literally "These are the tears of things" - Virgil, Aeneid Book I, line 462

¹⁴ "Their hands outstretched in yearning for the other shore". Virgil, Aeneid Book VI, line 314

¹⁵ This officer is referred to as SIS13 in the Inquiry's documentation.

kindly given me an interpretation of the question I didn't understand.

From SIS, it wasn't possible to know, and don't forget that I was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] just handling the WMD bit.

I wasn't really aware of what questions were being asked and not being asked. Of course, somebody should have been looking at: what on earth are we going to find when we get there? Where are the petrol stations? You know, simple stuff. And I assumed that the logistics guys, and somebody out there north of the river, would be doing that.

That raises, I think, an interesting, and I think an important question, which I can only give you a very private personal view on. That is the sense of itself that the JIC had.

There was a time in my memory when the JIC provided assessments of the world which included secret¹⁶ intelligence, what's going on out there, for very senior customers. Somewhere along the line, I think -- this is my own impression -- that rather shifted to assessing secret intelligence and producing a report on what intelligence is telling us, and of course without context. They tried to put it in, in the papers.

I don't know if I told you last time, briefly, a story about

[REDACTED] We did a -- did I mention that?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: I don't recall you did.

SIS4: We had a discussion of whether [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and

I said, "Well, there's a book about this written by [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and explained the background, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Somebody said, "[SIS4], we

¹⁶ Witness subsequently clarified that he had meant "open/overt" rather than "secret".

haven't seen any intelligence on that". I said, "It's a book. It's in the public domain". They said, "We can't all be experts". And I thought this is a moment of inflexion for the JIC, because an intelligence report on whether [REDACTED] is only part of the picture.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Where is the context?

SIS4: Where is the context? And I think in my later years, when I used to go to the JIC quite frequently to represent the Service, I was very concerned about that. I did say at the JIC an invasion of Iraq will ignite shock waves of terrorism throughout the Islamic world and would be a justification for terrorist acts in unrelated places, including this country.

I did say that the military operation is not something to worry about. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were not asked to look at it either, were you?

SIS4: Not asking for it?

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: You were not asked by the FCO or Number 10?

SIS4: Not that I'm aware, absolutely not. So there was a JIC

¹⁷ The witness explained that he had expressed the opinion at the time that the real issue was the action that would need to be taken when the initial military conflict stopped.

problem there about context, and, I think, helping the intelligence process in the widest sense, Foreign Office, DIS, everybody in Government, by asking the right questions, because they were taking a broad view of the problem.

BARONESS USHA PRASHAR: Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I think we will turn now to Roderic Lyne.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: We talked last time about [the reporting of the new source on trial in September 2002] in some detail. I want not to go over that again, which was, I think, very adequately done, but to look at CURVE BALL [REDACTED]

In preamble to this, I think it's important to remind ourselves that in this Inquiry we are extremely wary of hindsight and are trying all the time to establish judgments on what was the evidence at the time.

We need to remember that CURVE BALL was not a British source.

The other thing we have to remember is that, certainly in the later stages of CURVE BALL, this was the period when, as we have established from many witnesses, SIS was under a lot of pressure to produce up-to-date evidence against the background of the data that had accumulated in the 1990s.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: So just to sum up, in terms of relativity of intelligence sources on Iraq, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes in the build-up to the conflict, how important does that make CURVE BALL?

SIS4: We had no powerful evidence, no good statement that we could trust, that the BCW effort in Iraq had been shut down and was over.

The momentum of all that we knew led us to suppose and believe that there was something going on out there with BCW. And BCW, to my mind, was the really critical issue. We knew the nuclear wasn't important, and the rockets -- well, everyone has got anti-rocket forces, Patriots and so on. BCW, very, very tricky and a serious proliferation threat.

¹⁹ [REDACTED]

¹⁹ The witness then explained why SIS had believed this line of reporting was important and how they had viewed the source. There was a discussion about the extent to which doubts had been raised within SIS about this line of reporting, which had not been under SIS' control.

[REDACTED]

With hindsight, we can say it was a curate's egg. Throw it away. At the time, because of the possibility of getting guidance for UNMOVIC which would have really done the business, it was important. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: ²⁰ [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

²⁰ Sir Roderic noted that he had seen evidence suggesting that there had been some doubts raised within SIS about this line of reporting which had not been under the control of SIS. The witness explained how this extremely complex issue would have been handled and why SIS would still have attached importance to this source despite the doubts. He also pointed out that the reporting would have been caveated.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And all this trailer transportable story was very pressing because [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Iraqi effort had been dispersed and was mobile, that it wasn't set in concrete in well-known UNMOVIC red sites.

So this was a very, very difficult intelligence problem, and it was right, in my view, to share our understanding, limited though it was, full of caveats, with other people. It wouldn't have been right simply to say this is not classical [SIS reports] from a well-tested, well-tried source, in those circumstances at the time.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Whatever the caveats, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] it is of such moment that it goes all the way through to Colin Powell's presentation to the UN, and certainly is reflected in JIC reports, clearly it's something that the readership and your clientele would be putting quite a lot of faith in.

SIS4: Not necessarily at all, if they read the caveats. And

don't forget that the [requirements] officer, [REDACTED] was in regular, probably daily, contact with his expert readers of [SIS reports] in DIS. They would have understood that this was a problem. This was a difficulty.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: If JIC had realised --

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: No, but when the JIC used this information in their assessments, at that point the caveats had dropped off it, except for the precise wording the JIC use, which is always carefully coded. So it has become a substantive part of the assessment.

SIS4: Some pointed questions are to be asked of the Assessment Staff on that point.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Right, okay. Thank you.

What would have been the procedures in a case like this, where you have obviously got a divided opinion within SIS between the case officer and the scientists, for trying to reconcile their differing points of view?

SIS4: ²¹ [REDACTED]

²¹ The witness explained how SIS would have reached a view in such a case and the balance that would have been accorded to different factors. He emphasised that there would have been a strong view that customers and the assessment staff would have an opportunity to view the material. SIS would not have hidden any concerns from customers.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Now, the trajectory of the intelligence once it left SIS is rather a different subject. But you are asking me about the internal processes which led to the issue of the report.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: But, as you said, there are questions here for the assessors, and obviously those should be put.

After the campaign, by certainly early 2004, we've taken evidence that the ISG, and indeed SIS [REDACTED] had by then significant doubts about the credibility of the CURVE BALL line of reporting, but it wasn't actually withdrawn until the following September, and indeed hadn't been withdrawn at the time of the Butler Committee, which did refer to it, had reported.

Do you know why it took so long to withdraw it?

SIS4: No. No, but it was no longer operationally politically sensitive. Policy no longer depended on CURVE BALL. Stuff hadn't been found. I think the site was visited. On balance, CURVE BALL was just too unreliable.

But this was, by that time, pathology lab stuff. Yes, it should be taken out of the record. We now know enough to set the record straight. It wasn't a matter of needing to supply the right steer and influence on action yet to be taken.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: There are other questions that I think arise from this case about the performance of the liaison service, but I think perhaps we can leave those to one side for the moment.

Just one other question really about CURVE BALL, and this is the question of the extent to which we had collateral.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: ²² [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ?

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] did we have any collateral sources on CURVE BALL that you can recall, or not?

SIS4: Not current. [REDACTED]

²² The witness outlined the background to other sources that others had suggested might have provided collateral.

[REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Was [another SIS source, deemed reliable] relevant on BW and CW? Was that his field of expertise?

SIS4: No. [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: Finally --

SIS4: I think he did report that there was no indication that the programmes had been shut down. Now, whether he would have known that or not -- that was what people like [REDACTED] thought.

SIR RODERIC LYNE: ²³ [REDACTED]

SIS4: [REDACTED]

SIR RODERIC LYNE: [REDACTED]

²³ Sir Roderic asked for the witness' views on certain other courses. The witness made it clear that they were reporting beyond their usual fields of expertise.

[REDACTED]

So, in that sense, the vehicle of WMD as an argument for the war was incapable of sustaining the weight put upon it, given that we didn't have all the answers and we didn't have the sources.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I don't know whether any of my colleagues have any final questions to ask?

I wonder whether our witness, SIS4, would like to offer any general reflections with all the advantages of hindsight.

SIS4: If you've got all night.

THE CHAIRMAN: For a few moments.

SIS4: I haven't rehearsed anything and I don't have very much to say, but I would like to say one or two words, just to put my mind at rest before leaving you.

I think that some people have written and spoken about this, but not enough. The shock in the world intelligence community of the first Soviet test, and the shock of the Ramadan war, certainly in America, meant that worst case was the point of departure.

There are all sorts of problems with that, which you will see quicker than I can, but I think the importance of the influence of worst case in all our work on Iraq from the beginning of 2002, when it was perfectly clear there was going to be a war, and perfectly clear, probably, that HMG was going to be involved in it, that worst case issue was important.

It was important individually and personally for us, in that -- saying to the military, "Don't pack the BW²⁵, no need to take the wonderful Porton Down Landrovers full of canaries and field mice and tremendously sophisticated filtering equipment, leave it all behind. It's not a problem"; who was going to say that? That's one area which on balance led to difficulties with critical analysis of what was going on.

The second difficulty, I think, was the very early sense that we had that we were heading towards a war. That was not something that anybody welcomed. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I want to emphasise that there was no thrust for war in SIS at all. Those of us who had been around [REDACTED]

²⁵ Witness clarification: ie the BW suits

[REDACTED] knew perfectly well what a disaster for countless people a war was going to be. So there was no appetite. But there was a strong sense that that's the way we were heading. We were quite good at reading the signs of the times.

The difficulty about all this was that the sort of legal clutch wasn't released until very shortly before the operations began, and so there was an extended period of tension. Part of the ingredients of that tension for people like me, living through it, was a certain lack of reality about it, because we weren't gearing up for war in a whole-hearted sense. There was still the Attorney General drama, Parliament, the UN, the Foreign Office standing on the brake. That didn't contribute to the kind of coherent team effort which most people would think would be appropriate to the run-in to a war.

I sense from some of your questions that we have had difficulty -- maybe I and other witnesses -- in getting across to you the very, very fragile and difficult to identify quality of the danger from WMD, how it's all in the cranium of just a few scientists, who we never did meet and we have been unable to meet ever since.

That remains a huge problem for the world because what these people know and what they can do -- break-out is very, very quick -- is a huge issue for our security, in my view, and it would be a terrible thing if generalisation and Magimix processing of the Iraq story left people thinking that WMD are a done and dusted threat. I'm thinking particularly BCW, which is the most dangerous -- particularly of BW -- most dangerous for populations and the most difficult to spot coming.

I'm very aware that our concern about that and our knowledge of it, our knowledge of the science, our knowledge of the

quality of this threat -- and we had seen it in Iraq before in the Iran/Iraq War -- may have made us rather tauter on this topic than events were able to justify. I don't think we were wrong to be worried about it. But it wouldn't be right to say that there was any overstating of the case because we weren't trying to make a case. We were trying to unearth very difficult secrets, and we didn't get much of a chance.

Lastly, I would say that there's something of the Cassandra in secret intelligence work, because what you have to say to the world isn't always welcome and sometimes it's overlooked because it's not politically convenient. This is the story of the continental services. Only history and the aftermath tells you whether your judgment was right.

I think my old Service, across the years, the Cold War and working all round the world, had developed a very good sense of the signs of the times and what really matters in the world, and that was the diet on which people like me were brought up.

As I left the Service [REDACTED] my main astonishment was how difficult it was for other people to understand the work that we do, and the way that we do it, and the ethos and spirit and temper of the Service. That became more difficult, paradoxically, the closer we got to the surface of policy, with intelligence requirements and reports which did actually have leverage on what people thought in Government.

I think I'll leave it there.

THE CHAIRMAN: I thank [SIS4], our witness. We have heard him with close attention in two sessions now.

You will know about the arrangements for reviewing the transcript, I think, [SIS4]?

SIS4: (Witness nods)

THE CHAIRMAN: With that, thanks again, I'll close the session.

SIS4: Thank you very much for having me.

(The hearing adjourned)

FINAL