

Friday, 14th January 2011

EMMA SKY

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I'll open this session with a welcome to Emma Sky, our witness, and thank you for coming. We have set out the arrangements for your appearance by letter, but it is probably worth my running through them at the start.

This session is being held in private and was not announced in advance, but we do intend to publish the transcript and the fact that you appear as a witness in due course, and we apply the protocol between the Inquiry and HM Government regarding documents and other written electronic information in considering whether and how evidence given in relation to classified documents and/or sensitive matters more widely can be drawn on and explained in public either in our report or where appropriate at an earlier stage.

Now, with emphasis, if other evidence is given during this hearing which neither relates to classified documents nor engages any of the categories set out in the protocol on sensitive information, that evidence would be capable of being published, subject to the procedures set out in the Inquiry's witness protocol.

We will be taking evidence from you today in your roles as Governorate Coordinator for Kirkuk, and then Governance Advisor to CPA North from 2003-4, and your subsequent role as an advisor to the US military, both General Odierno and General Petraeus, between 2007 and 10.

In 2007-10 you were working as an advisor to the US military. The Inquiry's Terms of Reference are to examine the UK's involvement in Iraq. So we will therefore focus our questions on your insights in relation to the UK.

We recognise that witnesses give evidence based on their

recollection of events and we, of course, check what we hear against the papers to which we have access and which we are still receiving, and I remind each witness on each occasion he or she will later be asked to sign a transcript of the evidence to the effect that the evidence given is truthful, fair and accurate.

With those preliminaries, I will turn to Baroness Prashar to open the questions.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Thank you very much indeed.

Can we start with some background information first? Can you describe how you were recruited to work for the CPA?

**MS EMMA SKY:** There was an e-mail that was sent round the Civil Service asking for people to volunteer to go and work for the CPA. It was going to be Brits and Americans administering the country. I wasn't in the Civil Service. I was in the British Council. The e-mail was forwarded to me. I expressed interest and became a secondee to the FCO and then on to the CPA.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And what briefing were you given before you went to Iraq?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I was not given a briefing. There was a phone call. It basically said, you know, "You've spent a lot of time in the Middle East. You will be fine. Turn up at RAF Brize Norton. As soon as you get to Basra, there will be somebody who meets you. You know, they will be standing there with a sign. There will be your name on it and they will take you to the nearest hotel".

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Just as a matter of interest what were you doing at the British Council? You do know a lot about the Middle East. What were you doing at the British Council? We are interested.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I had previously been working in West Bank, Gaza,

Jerusalem and Israel and had just gone back to work at the British Council in Manchester as a Governance Advisor, managing projects globally on governments, justice, access to security.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** But apart from a phone call were you given any information about the Security Council Resolution 1483 and its implications for serving in the CPA? What was the legal background going to be? Were you given any information?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I don't recall receiving any.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I know in the introduction the Chairman said what you were doing, but it would be helpful if you can just describe what your role and responsibilities were during your period at the CPA.

**MS EMMA SKY:** The CPA looked at the country as sort of fifteen provinces plus Kurdistan. So in each of the fifteen provinces they had a senior civilian, who was known as the Governor Coordinator, and in that role it was assuming the sort of role that a Governor would play. So responsible for the administration of the province, relations, I mean working with the military -- I was in a province which had US military -- but working with the Iraqis basically, finding local leaders, working out who could take what responsibilities, building up their capacity to govern the province themselves.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And what were your specific responsibilities? What were you tasked to do?

**MS EMMA SKY:** There was no job description. We weren't given outlines of what our jobs were. So I think anybody who turned up would do what they thought was the right thing to do. I don't recall receiving a job description, an outline of a job perhaps until maybe September. So up until then it was really how I interpreted what my role should be.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** And geographically this was the province centred on Kirkuk?

**MS EMMA SKY:** This was the Kirkuk province, yes. Some people call it Ta'min, but that means "nationalisation". So it quickly turned its name back to Kirkuk.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So you were stationed in Kirkuk itself?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Did you travel to other areas in the north?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I travelled all the way round the province. I travelled at times to Irbil, to Sulaymaniyah, to Mosul and to Diyala and Salahdin. We were always sharing ideas and experiences.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** What was the security situation when you arrived in Kirkuk? What sort -- in the north?

**MS EMMA SKY:** The security situation in Kirkuk was relatively stable when I arrived. The US military had gone into Kirkuk along with the Peshmerga, and when this had happened -- this was before I arrived -- Ba'ath Party members had fled. There had been some fighting with former regime people and some fighting with a few foreign fighters, but most of the fighting had died down.

What had happened since then was that in May the Arabs of Hawija felt the town was being given over to the Kurds. The Kurds were everywhere. So the Arabs of Hawija marched on Kirkuk. and there was fighting and violence which the US military had to come in and separate. So the instability was caused by the lack of political balance. So it was always trying to find out what that balance needed to be in the post-war period.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So you think the security was tied up with the political situation?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And was it what you expected it to be? I mean, were you given any understanding what the situation might be before you go there? How did that compare to what you were led to believe and what you found on the ground?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, I had so little briefing that I didn't really have any pre-conceived ideas of what Kirkuk would be like.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And did you travel to other parts of Iraq or were you mainly concentrated in --

**MS EMMA SKY:** Oh, I travelled to Baghdad. I didn't really go south of Baghdad. So everything north of Baghdad I travelled to.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** How did that compare to what it was like in Kirkuk, just to get a picture? Did it feel very different in Baghdad compared to what you find in Kirkuk?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Baghdad seems different because I suppose the coalition seemed much more cut off from the people. In Kirkuk I spent all day, every day with Kirkukis. So I didn't have a coalition world and then occasionally sort of go and see Kirkukis. I spent most of my days, hours upon hours, with Kirkukis.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Was it because it was relatively more peaceful than what it was in Baghdad or was Baghdad kind of cocooned in a green zone?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, at the beginning when I first arrived in Baghdad, which was in June 2003, people could go out and people were going out, but it's how people responded to violence. When the violence got worse, then the barriers went up more and more

and more. I mean, in Kirkuk I lived downtown at the beginning, but my house was destroyed and so I had to move on to an army base, but I would go out every single day.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Would you say that because the north had been relatively autonomous in the 1990s, had that had impact in the atmosphere you found in the north?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, Kirkuk wasn't part of that autonomous region. So Kirkuk had always been that city that had been contested right from -- you know, from the Ottoman period. So the Kurds had always been trying to make Kirkuk part of their region. So since it had not been part of an autonomous region, immediately the war took place the Kurds sought to extend to include Kirkuk in their autonomous region.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** As part of that there had been the Arabisation programme under Saddam. So were the tensions in Kirkuk actually enhanced by the existence of the autonomous region to the north and then the recent history with the movement of Arabs into Kirkuk?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Under the Arabisation programme an estimated quarter of a million Kurds and some Turcomen had been moved out of Kirkuk and you had had -- we don't know -- maybe an equivalent number, maybe 100,000, 200,000 -- we don't know -- Arabs had been moved up into Kirkuk.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Mainly Shia I think.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Mainly Shia, mainly from the south. You know, they were given 10,000 dinars. So there were some incentives, but they didn't really have that much choice in the movement.

So what happened immediately following the regime was the effort to turn the clock back. So you had a lot of population movement all across the north, Kurds moving back to claim their

land, and, of course, this land was contested. So Arabs were given the deeds. They didn't have deeds back in their provinces in the south because they had been torn up, and so the whole region right the way across the north you had this contest over land. So some people being moved forcibly, some people were waiting for a legal process, but there was this population movement.

Those who -- I mean, some saw which way the wind was going and just moved. Others really believed that they had a claim to stay and they stayed. So trying to mediate between all these land disputes was a huge amount of my time.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Can I just move on to the role of the CPA? Were you and your colleagues involved in the development of the CPA strategy or did you have a strategy?

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Exactly.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I could see your smile.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Trick question. Down in Baghdad obviously people did have strategies. It might have not been clear to others. In Kirkuk I developed with the military a strategy for Kirkuk and was engaging with CPA Baghdad on that strategy.

In terms of an overall bigger strategy for the country I recall I think it was September 2003 going down to Baghdad. Ambassador Bremer used to bring the commanders and governorate coordinators down monthly for meetings.

So I recall I think it was September 2003 turning up and there was a CPA strategy that was, "This is what we are going to do", but none of us had known about it before, weren't involved in the development of it.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So there wasn't a communication as such. Did you feel you were fairly autonomous in the way you wanted to

develop your strategy responding to the needs? Is that what you felt?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Certainly the first few months definitely. I mean, I was able to look at Kirkuk, speak to all the different groups there, go out broadly, very broad consultation to understand their sense of history, their sense of grievance, their aspirations, and look at all these different dynamics, understand what had happened immediately following the fall of the regime and develop a strategy to buy Kirkuk the time and the space so that the people there could work out how to live in the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural province. So that is what my focus was on. Some of the things at the national level started to go a bit at odds with this, because Kirkuk needed more time.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So were you getting any directions from Baghdad or the UK or were you left to your own devices?

**MS EMMA SKY:** There were I suppose broad outlines, but no one said to me, "Oh, you know, you must go there and you must consult with all these people and work out how to bring about stability". I mean, there was no guidance of that kind.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** What were the broad guidelines? What sort of guidelines were you given?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, there was money to be spent, so you'd be told, you know, "There's money to be spent on projects". We reported regularly. I mean, I reported all my discussions back to CPA, but I think, you know, if you were at the centre, they were so full of the issues that they had got there, they were struggling with their own issues at the centre. So everybody in a province felt that their province was the most important place and, "Don't you know there are all these issues going on and you must respond?" The CPA wasn't, you know, a developed



organisation. It had just come together ad hoc. So, you know, most of my reporting I did from Kirkuk was on my Hotmail account. There weren't the systems -- there wasn't -- you know, we were making it up on the hoof as we went.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Chairman, I just wonder if I can come back to the beginning of this conversation just to make sure I've really understood it.

When you went out there, you say you had no written briefing, no terms of reference, no instructions, and did you not have any oral briefing from anybody other than to turn up at Brize Norton and fly out to Basra?

**MS EMMA SKY:** No.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Nothing at all?

**MS EMMA SKY:** No, not before I left the UK. I don't recall any at all except for one phone call. When I got to Basra, obviously there was no one there with a sign for the hotel. So I went on to Baghdad. I made my way to the palace and in the palace there was the British team there. I met with John Sawers and I spent a week there going round the palace seeing how things work, you know, getting as much briefing as I could. They said "We have got enough people here. We don't have enough people in the north. Go north".

So then I went to Mosul. They said, "We have got someone here". I went to Irbil. They said, "We have got someone here. We haven't got anyone in Kirkuk". So I went to Kirkuk. I didn't know I was going to Kirkuk when I left the UK.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** So when you left the UK, you didn't know where you were going. You presumably didn't even know what kind of clothes to put in your suitcase?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, no. I was only going for three months.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** You were only going for three months.

**MS EMMA SKY:** You know, I have now been there over a period of seven years, but I only went for three months.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Having arrived at your post when you found it in the north, who were you answerable to? Who was your line manager? Was somebody there giving you some guidance or instructions?

**MS EMMA SKY:** In Kirkuk?

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Yes.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I was the senior civilian in Kirkuk. So the person I answered to was Ambassador Bremer. Each of the Governorate Coordinators answered to the Ambassador. That doesn't mean to say there weren't other lines. There was obviously a line to CPA North. There was very close coordination with the military.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Did it in this process strike you as slightly surprising that as a Crown Servant certainly at this point you found yourself in a conflict zone with so little preparation or instruction? Did that strike you as a professional way of going about things? I don't mean you; I mean those who sent you there.

**MS EMMA SKY:** There's nothing to compare this experience with, and I think I didn't sit there thinking, "Oh, isn't this terrible? I haven't got instructions". I wasn't thinking that way at all. I mean, for me it was almost, you know, you choose. You can decide what you can do. There was no restrictions. It was very -- the ability to be very entrepreneurial was there.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** What size staff did you have and who were they?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, the staff never really arrived. There was always talk of, you know, staff that you were going to get. So

the staff were very, very limited. There were a couple, I mean, literally a handful, but ...

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Baroness Prashar I think mentioned briefly money. Could you talk more about that? Did you just have bags of money?

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I was about to come to the question of resources.

**MS EMMA SKY:** We had -- there were different pots of money. The money got managed in different ways. Because of the staffing issue, I looked at how -- who was there, who was on the ground, how to build up a bigger team, because I wasn't given a team. We had a handful of people who were called CPA, which would be, you know, US military in civilian clothes. So there wasn't a big CPA team as such, but there were lots of other actors on the ground. You had some international NGO workers. You had consultants managing US AID projects. There were the US civil affairs, and I was in a province with 3000 paratroopers. So there were lots of people there trying to do stuff and it was all -- you know, everybody was competing against everybody else and, you know, the Iraqis just didn't know who to go to.

So I got people together and said, "Look, it's not helping anyone working in this way. We are not happy working this way and we are not serving the Iraqis in the right way. Why don't we create a new structure? We all come from different organisations. We've all got other reporting channels, but there is nothing stopping us from coming together and working together in the right way".

So we created a team, Team Government, looked at where the areas that the Iraqis needed support, so in economic development, in justice, in security, setting up government structures, looked in the room for who was the most capable to do those roles, to

lead those teams, identified those and then put people in those teams.

So all of us -- it didn't matter which organisation was our home organisation -- worked in this manner. So everyone agreed, you know, we would meet once a week. I would brief them on what was going on in the province politically. They would brief me back. So everyone felt we were working in one team to one common objective. We built up that common mission and it really worked. So I had then you can say 100 people working for me. I had a large team totally integrated with the military.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So, in other words, you were working with what you had and it was your initiative to set up that team?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And --

**MS EMMA SKY:** And it worked extremely, extremely well, because, I mean, the brigade commander was quite happy to give me some of his guys. He had 3000 of them. So he was happy to assign his guys under me, because we were completely, completely joined up.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** What about financial resources? Where were they coming from? Did you feel you had enough?

**MS EMMA SKY:** It would come in fits and spurts.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Uh-huh.

**MS EMMA SKY:** And so we --

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And come from where?

**MS EMMA SKY:** There was CPA funding. There was Commanders' -- you know, a thing called CERP, Commanders' Emergency Response Programme. There was US AID funding. There was a whole tranche of funding which we all put through a -- under this team we built up we had a project management cell. So we could see how much

money was coming in, worked with the Iraqis to identify what the priorities were, could monitor where it was going to and make sure there was a balance between the different ethnicities and regions on who got the funding, because otherwise the funds themselves could become the source of conflict. If some were getting, and some weren't getting. So we tried to do it in that way.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And -- sorry.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Could I ask a supplementary to what the Baroness was asking? You were able to set up this model, this structure. How reliant was it on the benign accident of personal relationships in Kirkuk between military, civilian, NGOs, others, because it doesn't seem to be something we've heard about elsewhere?

**MS EMMA SKY:** It was totally reliant on that. I mean, it was based on -- I'd never worked with the military before and was very almost anti-military, but when I arrived there, they were the guys with the power, with the resources, with the bureaucracy, and I could spend all my time watching what they do and reporting back on all the mistakes they are making, or I could look at how to work with them and working in a better way.

So it became -- I mean, I got on very, very well with the brigade commander. We reached this common understanding of what skills they had to offer, what skills I had to offer, what skills these other people had to offer and, "Let's do the best match".

So in most places in the country you saw this antagonistic relationship between the two. With us when we had a military general turning up, I would act as the political advisor to the Colonel. When it was Ambassador Bremer turning up, all the chairs changed. I was in the seat and the military was my

military advisor and they all -- we switched like that all the time. So all the reporting was one report. So we didn't have a separate report from the military or a separate report from the civilians. It was just one report. It is possible to do, but nothing is set up in training or in organisation to do it. So this was really based on personality.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I think we shall be asking you later in the session about the lessons you can draw or want to offer us. That may be the beginning. Usha.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I mean, obviously from what you tell me you made the most of what you actually had and you made it work. How much was of your time concentrated on security and how much was it on issues to do with reconstruction?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Issues to do with ...?

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Reconstruction.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Reconstruction.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** And capacity.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Most of my time, when I look back, was spent managing the politics of Kirkuk, because it was the politics that was driving insecurity. It was the politics that was driving the tensions.

So I used to meet with again a wide range of stakeholders, helping them understand themselves the experiences they were going through and to interpret what was happening to them; then worked to create forums to bring people of different backgrounds together. So when I was speaking to them separately, I could help them understand themselves and what others thought of them, and then to create forums where they could come together and discuss the hard issues that Kirkuk would be facing in the future.

So that took a huge amount of time, because all around the province people had issues. There'd be villages where there was a land dispute going on. So going to there, bringing lawyers with me, because in my big team I also had lawyers who could help mediate the land disputes. So doing land dispute issues.

We had issues with the farmers. There had been a sulphur fire in Mosul and the farmers were claiming the largest compensation package of all time for the damage done to crops, and so a lot of the agricultural issues had to be managed and dealt with, because if you weren't dealing with the political issues, it would respond through violence --

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Violence, yes.

**MS EMMA SKY:** -- with lots of demonstrations, so people demonstrating Kirkuk should become part of Kurdistan or Kirkuk should stay with, and not being able to express themselves for decades, people were really making up for it in a very short period of time.

So the reconstruction piece, if you like, was a piece that I oversaw, but I delegated the actual nuts and bolts of managing the money down.

What I did set up was a development commission, Kirkuk Development Commission, which was co-chaired by the Governor and myself, and we had a sort of a very representative group who were on that committee, all Iraqis from all different parts of the province, all groups represented, that would agree what were the priorities for the province, where did aid need to go, what was required.

So we would agree it and then we would instruct the project management team to implement it, but I wasn't involved in the actual nuts and bolts. You know, we would track it, we would monitor it, but most of my time was spent on the politics,

getting people together, inclusivity. We had councils for different tribes. They wanted to have some representation of some form. So lots of different bodies were being established so people felt that they were consulted and included.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So to do all this work you felt that you had enough financial resources? I mean, were there obstacles to getting financial resources?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Oh, yes. There would always be times when we run out of money.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Uh-huh.

**MS EMMA SKY:** We had done all this stuff. We had promised people all of these things. You know, construction was going on and we were bankrupt. Then we would go down to Baghdad. We would try to raid the banks which had Ba'ath funds. So there was always money and then we kept spending because we thought we had more. Then we would run out and we would have to go back and get more.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So there was no kind of agreed stream of money coming from CPA Baghdad, from the centre as such? You had to go and ask for it?

**MS EMMA SKY:** The money --

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Were there any obstacles to it?

**MS EMMA SKY:** No. I think the money would go from Baghdad to CPA North and then from CPA North it would be allocated, but there were some who would say the money should only go to Kurds not to Sunnis or bad guys. You always had that internal struggle of how the money should be allocated.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Before I pass on to Sir Roderic Lyne just the final question from me on this area is: were you content with the attention paid by the UK both in Baghdad and London to the



welfare and security of the UK staff working in the North or did you feel quite isolated from what was happening in the south or in Baghdad?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I personally felt very content, because I was below the radar. So no one really noticed. So I had my own, you know, soft skin car. I would drive myself. I was not really compliant, because no one noticed.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** What about the other staff? I mean, you had other --

**MS EMMA SKY:** There were no Brits there. I was the only Brit.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** You were the only Brit there.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** So you just looked after yourself in the way you thought best?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes, but I had, you know, a brigade who was willing to transport me and take me. If I was going to more dangerous areas, I would use their transport. If it was just going into town each day, you know, I would drive myself.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Thank you.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thanks. Roderic?

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** I would like to go further into politics, which you said was your main activity, and look at this not only from the perspective of your time in the North but also from the period you spent in the CPA governance team, which I think was February to June 2004.

How did the North influence the political and constitutional developments for Iraq as a whole?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think the North -- when you say the North, the

Kurdish leadership was very influential on the developments of the constitution. The Kurds were obviously seen as our allies. They were the group in Iraq that actually supported the coalition and liked the coalition. They had ten years' extra experience from 1991 to build up their systems, had a clear strategy, clear objectives, and for them it was to increase the powers of their federal region, and to incorporate more of the land which they saw as Kurdish land within that region, to expand their territory. So they were very clear on what they wanted to achieve and they were very influential in Baghdad.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** They were their allies but to what extent -- they were our allies, but to what extent did their objectives diverge from ours and in particular from the coalition's objective of keeping Iraq as a unitary state?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think, you know, when you look back at '03, you could say a lot of the things that the Kurds were doing was just as a step towards independence, a step towards separation from the rest of Iraq. There were some who had reached the strategic decision that it was best for the Kurds to remain as a strong federal region within the country, but a lot of the tactics gave a different impression.

So I think in 2004 there was a referendum. I was in Baghdad at this stage, but I remember sort of lorries driving up full of the ballots. The Kurds had voted on should they be independent or not. A very high percentage had voted for independence. They had come down and delivered the ballots to us, the results of the referendum down in Baghdad.

So there was obviously this tension all the time, because we needed the Kurdish support, and yet some of the actions that they took and some of their rhetoric was driving insecurity along the green line.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Sorry to interject. The rhetoric necessary for the managing of their own people and retaining public support there?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Despite the obvious downside, which they would have been well aware of, being sophisticated politicians --

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** -- of the effect it was having on their influence and effect through the rest of the country?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes, but you also had -- because the people who were in power or the people that the CPA brought to power in Baghdad were mostly exiles and these exile groups, the Shia exiles in particular, had very strong relations with the Kurds from this time in exile. You have the Hakim family and you have the Barzani family, whose relations go back generations.

So you can look at those who were in Iraq all along who had a very different sense of the country, and those exiled politicians who came back, who had again a different vision. So there were these tensions going on between different groups on the future of the country.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** How difficult was it for the CPA to manage these tensions? Did it become very confrontational between the CPA and the Kurdish leaders at the time, so that the Kurds were pushing for more autonomy and a drive towards secession, which the CPA as a matter of policy was opposing?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think, you know, there's different bits of the CPA. So different bits of the CPA had different experiences. I think those who lived in CPA North, who lived in Irbil, were very much sympathetic and understood the Kurdish position. People down in Baghdad had to deal with all of these other

issues. You know, it was wonderful when you went to visit the Kurdish leaders. They were friendly. People had really good relations.

The difficulty was for those people who were along the green line, CPA offices there, because we were having to deal with the practicality of those tensions on the ground, which would be, you know, whether it was putting up Kurdish flags in areas that were contested. It just became this constant rub.

So the CPA Baghdad had to manage the need to keep the Kurds on board, because you couldn't have the Kurds walk out of any negotiations. It could be negotiations around the transitional administrative law -- needed Kurdish support. So they had to manage keeping the Kurds on side, but calming -- trying to get them to calm down the rhetoric and some of the actions of their people on the ground in Mosul, Kirkuk, Diyala. So it was like this all the time. It was a careful management of that relationship.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Did this affect your own personal relations with leading Kurds? At times you were having to be the person who was restraining them or saying no to them.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Again there were different groups of Kurds. So people tend to just look at the PUK and the KDP but all those other group of Kurds who don't come under the PUK or KDP and don't have a voice either. Obviously there were times of saying to the Kurds, "Okay. We are going to allow each political party to have one office in Kirkuk, so every political party is allowed one office", and when we went and counted how many offices different groups had, the Kurds between them had 100 offices. That's a little bit excessive.

The one we always laugh about was the [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. It also had RPGs in its office. So we thought it

is not really what the [REDACTED] necessarily needed. So there was -- there was this constant effort to try and get people to behave more responsibly, and sometimes that would mean going up to see President Barzani, President Talabani to say, "Look, this is what's happening now. We need your help to stop this".

When you look at these land disputes, that's going to take time and legal process to deal with. When you look at the issue of mother tongue teaching, mother tongue Kurdish, which was huge, that is really, really important, but we don't want a process whereby you go into schools and you segregate all the children who have been at school together. You don't want a process which leads to communities only speaking one language and not being able to speak each other's languages. You don't want a process where the police are all of one ethnicity.

When they looked at the administration, the old administration was very heavily Arab. So the Kurds set up almost a shadow administration, which was very heavily Kurdish, and put in Kurdish leaders at the top of all posts. So the Arabs saw the Kurds in control. The Kurds saw the Arabs in control. I said, "Look, this is a very difficult issue. We need to look at, we need to talk about and we need to work out how to bring about better representation through all the administration and not set up alternative administrations". So some of these discussions, of course, there was tenseness in it.

For the US military, they had fought alongside the Kurds, gone with the Peshmerga into Kirkuk. They saw these are the good guys being liberated from the bad guys.

So in those early weeks very rapid changes were taking place and the repercussions of those we would be dealing with for weeks and weeks and months afterward and even today to some extent.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Yes. Even today Kirkuk is an unresolved and very heated issue in Iraq. What influence on the subsequent history of Kirkuk did the early actions of the CPA have?

**MS EMMA SKY:** We tried very hard -- this was by August 2003 -- to get Kirkuk recognised with special status, that it was something different, because what was driving the insecurity was the final status of Kirkuk. Should it be part of Kurdistan or should it be part of the centre? What we tried to do right from the beginning is to say, "Look, this place is different. It has always been different. Could we have special status?" You could say for five years or ten years. So look at Kirkuk for this period as a region in its own right. Build up the capacity of local leaders in their council to discuss their issues, to work through these issues of mother tongue teaching, the returning of the displaced people, the rights of those who had been moved there through Arabisation. Give them time to work this through, because when we get the scramble for Kirkuk and all are trying to pull it, nobody had the opportunity to really deal with the tougher issues.

So this was -- we looked at this. We looked at having a special rapporteur for Kirkuk. We looked at having it in the UN Security Council Resolution, and there was some traction, but again with all the other issues going on, with all the other deals being done, it never got that special status.

So today, seven years on, the United Nations is still looking at some of those same issues for Kirkuk as a potential resolution. I regret that we were unable to get it pushed through in '03 when we were more powerful to do so. So I regret that we didn't succeed.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** The "we" in that case being who?

**MS EMMA SKY:** We the coalition, CPA.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Right, and not, for example, simply a British component within the coalition looking at political development in Kirkuk specifically?

**MS EMMA SKY:** The broad coalition.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Can we just look briefly at the transition from the CPA to the handover of sovereignty? When the announcement was made in 2003 of the accelerated timetable for a handover, what impact did that have on the North and indeed on the job that you were doing there?

**MS EMMA SKY:** What it did was, if you like, speed up the competition for power. By this stage we had Muqtadr Al Sadr sent a representative to the North to Kirkuk, and because, as you imagine, a lot of the Arabisation Arabs were Shia Arabs, so you had the Sadrists concerned that, you know, Kirkuk shouldn't be taken out -- Kirkuk should remain part of Iraq. You had demonstrations. So at the government building there'd be 2000, 3000 Kurds would turn up, "Kirkuk is Kurdistan", using the fire engines and the police cars as their floats for the demonstration. After that you would then get an Arab and Turcomen demonstration: "One country, brotherhood of Kirkuk. Kirkuk must stay in Iraq".

So you would have this effect of demonstrations after demonstrations. There'd be violence. People would be killed on the edges of the demonstrations. Walkout of the provincial council. The Arabs and the Turcomen withdrew and said, "You are just handing over our province to the Kurds".

So it did increase, this sense. Of course, with that going on you would have sanctuary, if you like, given to some of the former regime elements, and it also provoked more of the nationalist insurgency to think, "Our country -- there's no place for us. Our town, our province has been given away". So it did

add -- those tensions were already there. It just increased them a notch.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** From the perspective at least of the North would a slower handover have been better?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I don't know, because by this stage so many other things had been set in place. You could say if we hadn't done this and we hadn't done that, then possibly. I don't recall looking back and thinking the handover should have been longer.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Right. You mentioned the transition of administrative law earlier. How was that viewed by Kurdish leaders in relation to their wish for greater autonomy?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think the Kurdish leaders felt they got a lot out of that. There were specific clauses that were put in to meet their concerns. So TAL 58 and I think 53, those articles looked at the legal integration of Kurds back into their original homes or back on to their original lands. So I think -- I mean, I wasn't -- I got there for the latter stages of the negotiations, but I think the Kurds were pleased with what they managed to get put into the TAL and that was later transferred into Article 140 in the constitution.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** And the final question from me at this point. You were the only Brit there at the time. Do you feel, looking back on it, that the UK as the country co-responsible for the occupation of Iraq in international legal terms for the whole of the country paid sufficient attention to the North and to constitutional developments there?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I actually think that the UK in particular had a good grasp of those issues. We had people like Liane Saunders who had a very strong understanding of Northern issues and Kurdish ambitions.



**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Could you just position her, who she was and where she was?

**MS EMMA SKY:** She was Foreign Office and based in CPA North in Irbil, and been working on Kurdish, Turkish issues for years. So I think we did have Brits who had good understanding of the Kurdish issues. What was difficult was that the issue of a place like Kirkuk, the Kurds had been very sophisticated, very experienced politicians, and yet on the national level there were not leaders of the other communities represented at the national level, and so you had sort of exiled Shia politicians who had no understanding or no resonance with the local population at the national level. There were no Kirkukis who were Turcomen, or Sunni Arab, or Shia Arab, or Christian, (Kakai), whatever, from Kirkuk represented at the national level. So there was an imbalance of the levels of influence and that's what made it hard.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Thank you.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Baroness Prashar, back to you.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Yes, indeed. Can we talk a little bit about the Iraqi expectations, because I think in hard lessons it is stated that Ambassador Bremer set some lofty new goals. In regard to (inaudible) and so on expectations were rather inflated. Was that the case in the North? What were the expectations of the CPA?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think, you know, people had such -- Iraqis had such high expectations. I think when you look around, most Iraqis were probably relieved to see the regime fall. They didn't know what was going to happen next, but they didn't themselves feel threatened. It was just not knowing what was going to happen, but they had the sense, "This is America."

America could put a man on the moon. You wait. Within six months we are going to go like this". They had huge expectations. They would say, "After every war Saddam rebuilt the country in six months. Imagine what America could do after six months".

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Was that the case in the North as well? I mean, was it across Iraq or was it just around Baghdad? I mean, I wanted to get a feel of what were the expectations in the North?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, I can talk about Kirkuk. I can't really talk about the North.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Okay. Talk about Kirkuk.

**MS EMMA SKY:** In Kirkuk there were these big expectations, people waiting for all these things that were going to happen.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And how did you communicate with local people, you know, the plans that you had and how did you manage those expectations?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, we had these -- again these different forums. So constantly in dialogue listening to people, what are their needs, what needs doing here, what needs doing there. So very, very -- I mean, every single day I would be down in the government building. Hundreds of people I would meet all the time, listening. I mean, at the beginning people were turning up to say, "We have seen Saddam. He is driving a taxi. We have found WMD". There were people constantly coming with pieces of information.

Then things started to calm down a bit. It was like, "We need this or we need that". If you start to say, "Okay", responding to everything, you can never meet those expectations. So managing them was getting the Iraqis, the Kirkukis to look, go

out, assess the needs of their town, consult, work out what is required, and then how to allocate resources. The trouble that people had was that the big decisions, decisions on appointments couldn't be made locally in Kirkuk. They were still controlled from Baghdad.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** And how did you manage that tension?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Very, very hard, because the whole de-Ba'athification issue hit us badly, because it hit one community in Kirkuk. It didn't hit all the communities evenly. So one community ended up not having any doctors in its hospitals or any teachers in its schools, and so this was driving instability. Then it had big unemployment, and we wanted to try and balance the administration so that all communities felt helped. We could set up forums that would decide -- look at all the different CVs and say, "Look, these are the most suitable people", but then we couldn't get those people put on the payroll.

So this was a constant frustration. With de-Ba'athification we tried to contest the law. We went down to Baghdad and said, "Look, this is having really bad effects on our environment, you know, particularly in the health and education sector". So we tried to contest it. General Odierno who was responsible for the area gave an amnesty to teachers and doctors.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** On his own authority?

**MS EMMA SKY:** On his own authority, yes. He wrote a letter. So people would turn up with the letter of amnesty. So that was fine for a certain period, but again Baghdad controlled the payroll. So what the military did then was hire people back as janitors on their CERP funds to keep the schools and the hospitals going, but there was a limit for how long this could go on.

So this -- the province wanting -- you could get the forums to get people to discuss what needed doing, but then they didn't have the authorities and the responsibilities. So that was constantly going down to Baghdad to say, "Look, we need the authorities to do this". We never got them, but we tried.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** You tried, but you did not get a positive response from the CPA?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Because the system itself, even if it had said "Yes", it didn't have the bureaucracy to implement a lot of these decentralisation issues.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I want to understand how far this is a matter of a centralisation philosophy of Baghdad by the CPA and how far it is a matter of imperfect bureaucratic communications and systems and processes.

**MS EMMA SKY:** In one aspect. CPA wanted to make sure the centre never became strong again. So it wanted decentralisation, and yet the centre didn't necessarily know how to devolve those powers, if that makes sense. It's --

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** A supplementary supplementary. Was the centre being driven by a sense, "We're dealing with chaos across Iraq as a whole. The only way to make order out of chaos is to take all the big decisions ourselves"? Was that in the Bremer period how they felt do you suppose?

**MS EMMA SKY:** An element of it, but you also have these centrifugal forces and things trying to rip the country apart. You know, you are going to get every province declaring independence and going its own way. So you were trying to keep things together, because until you have elected officials -- we didn't have elected; we had selected or caucus selected in those days -- until you have elected officials how are you going to

have legitimacy in who gets appointed in which position? So the legitimacy issues were always contested.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** But talking about your position, the sense I'm getting is that you had a good communication. You had got yourself a good system. You were communicating with people. You know what the local issues were. You were trying to influence CPA Central. Were they not listening to you? I mean, what was the impact of that communication, if any?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, I'll give you one example. We had three people who were prisoners of war in Iran. When they had come back, when they had been released, they were given Ba'ath Party membership level for al-firqa. So they were given housing and they were given jobs.

De-Ba'athification comes along and these people, their jobs are taken away and their housing is taken away. So trying to go down to the Ministry of Oil, whose payroll they were on, to get the Ministry of Oil to overturn this order for these three individuals, months and months trying to do this, and yet who had the payroll? Where is it? How is it controlled? It was beyond the capacity of CPA to -- everyone was saying, "This is a terrible situation. It is not meant to be for people like this". I mean, their psychological health, their mental health, it was terrible the pressure it put on people.

So some of these things, there wasn't the capacity of clear organisation. It wasn't computerised, that they could just do a switch and pay came back. So all those people who got the de Ba'ath orders that were then overturned, sometimes they still didn't get back on to the payroll. So it was hard, very hard. A lot of it was a capacity issue.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I mean, looking back, would there be any sort of lessons how the CPA engaged with leaders and local people

that you want to --

**MS EMMA SKY:** If we were to do an Iraq again?

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Yes.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. I mean, the main lesson -- the main lesson -- there are so many lessons, but one would be to work with the existing structures as best you can. We were too radical in what we tried to do. So, okay, you know, the military, the security forces had all melted away. Yes, that is true, but we could have called them back. The administration should have been called back and we should then been much more discerning about who were the individuals who were responsible for crimes, and not to put a blanket order that put so many people outside the new Iraq. And you can think, okay, most people in the Ba'ath Party, the majority would have been Shia, but you didn't get that same response. I think for the Sunni population it was all their leaders were Ba'athist. There was no strong Sunni opposition group in exile. With the Shia population they knew that the changes were going to bring them power in the future. Their leaders were coming back from exile and, of course, were very anti-Ba'athist, and so I think the communities probably absorbed those who were de-Ba'athed, and also de-Ba'athifying didn't go as deep in the Shia community as it did in the Sunni community. You see Shia who were Ba'ath members who were forgiven and brought back in. It had a much more profound effect on the Sunni community.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** Okay. Thank you.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** In a few minutes we might take a break for tea or coffee. Before that could I round off with a few rather general questions?

The first is taking Iraq as a whole and the CPA policy, it

was essentially one of dividing Iraq into sectors, different nationalities leading in different places, different arrangements set up in different sectors.

Was there any practical alternative to doing it that way? Could you have had a uniform approach throughout Iraq with a contract between military and civilian responsibilities within the CPA?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think there are two ways of answering that. One would be if the CPA had not been so radical, it would have had kept the existing Iraqi structures and wouldn't have had to have an international presence across the country. So it could have worked just removing a tiny little elite and then you're working with the rest. You can manage that in many different ways. You wouldn't have had to have such a strong -- but because the policy was more radical --

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** And that started with de-Ba'athification and disbandment or at least failure to recruit the army?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. I mean, the idea, this was not just about removing Saddam. This became, you know, a liberal democracy and became much more ambitious in its goals.

So how would you manage the international effort differently? It is hard, because I think the model that we created in Kirkuk was a great model, and when I speak to people from that time, people still come up to me and say, "Do you remember that time?" because we have never felt so effective working in a post-conflict environment as we did then.

Could you do it by design? I am not sure, because what makes you -- what was so good then was we all brought something different. Put us all in one organisation; we become one beast.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** So the Kirkuk model is not something you would feel confident in offering as a model for wider application or in

different countries or situations?

**MS EMMA SKY.** Well, I mean, the model was -- you know, the model was taken back to the US army war colleges. It affected very much how different US military adapt to their PRTs in the future after that.

So it did have a big impact, but the tensions between military and civilians were always going to be there. I think if there's training, if there's things you take away -- it is how you work with people to develop your common objectives. If you get -- it is not so much the bureaucratic structures, the jobsworths. It is looking at what are you trying to achieve, what is the mission. If you realise you can come together, a whole bunch of people with very different backgrounds, to realise, "We have a common objective, which is to see Iraqis running their own business and us going home", then everyone starts to work towards that and they will adapt their own bureaucracies accordingly, but to have people who were NGO and who had never worked with military, and to have people who were technical advisers, and to have people who, you know, had Balkan civil affairs experience, to be able to benefit, to have an environment that benefits from the synergy of those was great. We have spent years discussing, "Should you have this standing civil capacity that you can send out at any moment to do anything?", and it goes on and the debate will go on.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Given that there was a sectorisation approach pursued for Iraq as a whole, and looking at the main UK responsibility in the south, south-east, you said that in effect there was no direction, strategic or otherwise, coming from London to you personally. There were a few Brits scattered around the North, yourself notably included.

Do you sense that a more directed strategy by the UK,



fulfilling its share of its responsibility first as joint occupying power and then with the coalition, could or should have led it to concentrate as much of the UK resource as possible, including staffing, in the south-east --

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think --

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** -- as opposed to spreading it round?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, you can debate it. From looking at the British contribution over the last seven, eight years, I think the British contribution has been in a way more effective when it has been as a good ally to the US. When it does it separate, it tends to almost be less influential on the overall thing, because you always get, you know, "We are Brits and we know how to do this better than Americans". When it is actually working within an American environment, when Americans tend to be better resourced and are more a culture which is much more can-do than a British environment, there is opportunities for Brits to be very influential in the overall strategy.

You can see this when people have been embedded how that has worked and how that has been appreciated. So I'm not sure this idea of carving out fiefdoms, whether it is the Kingdom of Helmand or the Kingdom of Basra, is the best way to go. I think, given the expertise that the UK does have and experience that the UK does have, but the lack of resources that the UK does have, it can play better in a multi-lateral -- an international environment than it can on its own.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. Just a couple of last questions, again I am afraid rather general, but one is something Jeremy Greenstock said to us when he was offering his reflections and giving his evidence. He said in his view the year of the CPA was and I'm quoting him:

"... fundamentally a failure and I", Jeremy, "have to take

some responsibility for that."

Is that too pessimistic and downbeat a view, looking back from 2011 to that year?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think it's very, very hard for anyone who served there. You will see people who worked so hard, who tried so hard, and you can say there were many successes at a tactical level and yet the bigger picture didn't go as everyone hoped. Thousands upon thousands of people lost their lives because of it. You can look at the whole Iraqi endeavour. It has been hugely costly in blood and treasure.

Can we judge it yet? What will Iraq be in the future I think remains to be seen. Nobody denies the huge cost or the mistakes, but I wouldn't look back and write it off like that yet. You know, it set up the conditions for all these different insurgencies. It drove the country towards a civil war. We lost hundreds, the Americans lost thousands, the Iraqis lost tens of thousands of people, but there is still a potential in the years to come that the Iraqi people have a much better future, much better lives than they ever had under a Saddam regime or what might have followed with his sons.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** So if one is attempting to strike such a conclusion about the worthwhileness, you would say, first, it is premature and anyway 2010/11 is far too soon to judge?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. One last point. You have spoken about the working relationship you formed with the Americans and the American military not least. Can you say something about how rapid, how responsive the American military system is, and I have contrasted it with our own, of course, in learning lessons from mistakes, failures and misunderstandings? Is it quick, slow?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think the US military is probably the fastest learning organisation I've ever come across and you can look at '03/'04 and the sense of, "Oh, my God! What have we done with all this power? What reaction have we caused? Why? Why couldn't we call an insurgency an insurgency? Why can't we call a civil war a civil war?", because it always meant you were applying the wrong -- the wrong responses.

They put huge effort into understanding Iraq, learning why things had gone wrong, then readapting their military. I think when you look at US military today and you compare it with '03, you would think it was 20, 30 years had gone by.

So they were very keen to take learning from people outside the military. I've gone to the US on numerous times. I've gone to the US army war college, helped them develop new training materials, helped them understand what is happening in Iraq. They're very quick to learn and adapt, learn and adapt and to come back as a much more professional and better force.

I think on the UK side there was always a sense that, you know, "The Brits know how to do this sort of thing: Malaya, found the ultimate truth in Northern Ireland. We now how to do this. Look at them". So there was far less introspection at the time. So even though much smaller, the UK's development, learning and adapting came later than the US's.

I think now if you go and look at the British military insurgency doctrine, it really has changed but there was a lag behind the US. There was a lag in that.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. We are about to take a short break, but before we -- after that we will turn to Baghdad and 2007 onwards. Before that, though, are there any other general reflections you'd like to offer us from the '03/'04 period? We have covered quite a lot of ground, but there may be more to say.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think something we did that was interesting with the former Iraqi army, because we obviously had a whole bunch of people who were former Iraqi army who had lost their jobs when we disbanded the army, so what we did was bring together a Military Affairs Committee. So we went out, we found out who these guys were and brought them together in this committee, and we would meet with them regularly and ask them to advise us on the resourcing, the recruiting of the local security forces, and it made them feel a sense of worth. Okay they couldn't -- they were no longer in the military. They would even turn up for the meetings sometimes in their uniforms. The US military, if they were higher ranks than them, would call them "Sir", treated them with great respect and brought their -- listened to them, sought their advice on how to set up -- we had this thing called the ICDC, Iraqi Civil Defence Corps -- so how to recruit the ICDC, to look after the rights of those who had been put out of work, the old army. So that was just another way we dealt with that group of people and I think that went -- I think that was a good idea.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** And that was both the substance of it, the substantive value of the input from the former army officers and also the management of attitude?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Conferring status, dignity on people?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Good. Thank you very much. Let's come back in about seven or eight minutes. Time for a cup of tea.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Thank you.

**(Short break)**

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Well, let's restart. I'll ask Sir Lawrence

Freedman to take up questioning. Lawrence.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Thanks very much. So after you left CPA you'd been doing things as far as I can see in Israel and Afghanistan and so on. Then how did you return to Iraq? You became part of General Odierno's Initiatives Group. Can you explain how you came to be involved in that?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I knew General Odierno from 2003/2004. He had been the Commanding General for Kirkuk, Diyala and Salahdin. So he visited regularly. I'd gone down to Baghdad with him every month to the Ambassador Bremer conference<sup>1</sup>. So we got to know each other very well through this period.

So I'd seen him again when I was in Jerusalem. He was military advisor to Condoleezza Rice. So we met up then. I was in Afghanistan in 2006, and just as I got out he was appointed to be the future Corps Commander for Iraq. So he sent me an e-mail saying, "Please will you come and be my political advisor?" So that's how it happened.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** So that was the actually the role in which you went back?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. I was his POLAD, political advisor.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** And were there any issues about the fact that you were a Brit coming to do this?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, I mean, I said "Look, we don't have a coalition any more. So it's not the same. I am obviously not an American. Any problems?" The military doesn't care. I mean, normally that role is for a State Department role, but then you've all the tensions between the military and State

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<sup>1</sup> The witness clarified after the hearing that she was referring to the monthly conferences Bremer held for his Commanders and Governorate Co-ordinators.

Department. So having me who doesn't belong to anybody makes it easier in a way.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** And what sort of institution affiliation did you have back in the UK at this point?

**MS EMMA SKY:** None.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Did you have --

**MS EMMA SKY:** None.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** So you essentially were going as a private citizen?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. There was no way back to the British Council after my sort of experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** So can you tell us a bit about the Initiatives Group itself and what role -- well, its make-up, purpose and the role you played within it?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, the Initiatives Group was just a minor piece. I mean, I was the General's political advisor. Everywhere he went, every meeting he went to I went with him. So I was closely involved right from the beginning when I arrived. Obviously it was an assessment of what's the situation in Iraq? So sitting with him we brought in a few others who became known as the Initiatives Group to look at that situation and to think, "Why have we got all this violence? What can we do about the violence?", and this was the start of discussions on what to do, the surge, how to make use of those extra forces.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Just to go back into your role as political advisor as an unaffiliated Brit, now, as you say, normally they would come from the State Department, and presumably have reporting lines back to the State Department. Did you have civilian reporting lines?

**MS EMMA SKY:** No. My reporting line was purely to the General. All I had to look at was the General.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Were there other State Department people? They must have been around and about.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes, but they weren't in the inner circle. So I was in the inner, inner circle.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Did you find that a -- that created any particular problems, tensions within the civilians? People all talk about civilian/military tensions, but there's a potential here for civilian/civilian tensions.

**MS EMMA SKY:** There is, and it's always going to be those who [REDACTED] would love to have the opportunity to be in the seat that I was in. That tension is bound to be there, but it all depends on your boss and how the boss manages that.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** And presumably he was responsible for your welfare, force protection and all those sort of things just flowed naturally from --

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. Well, I was with him all the time.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** -- your position?

**MS EMMA SKY:** He was the best protected man in the country.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Were there any other British, UK personnel around?

**MS EMMA SKY:** At headquarters, yes, I mean, because you had all the military. So you had the embeds. There was a deputy commander -- General Petraeus had a deputy who was British. So there were other Brit military.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** But your basic relationship was with him.

What about relationships with the Ambassador in Baghdad, Dominic Asquith and Christopher Prentice? Did you see much of them?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I would go with him to his meetings with them. So he might have dinner with them once a month or something like that, but our relationship was obviously much more with the US Embassy.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** What about with Graeme Lamb and Bill Rollo? Was that -- they were the senior British military representatives. I presume you did see more of them?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I saw a lot of Graeme Lamb, because we worked very closely with Graeme Lamb on the reconciliation work.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Right. So essentially you were accountable purely to General Odierno. Your links back with the UK were pretty limited and confined largely to the people you were working with.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. I was seen by the Brits more as an American.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** With a British accent.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. "It sounds like us, but isn't", you know.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Okay. Fine. Thanks very much.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. Sir Martin Gilbert would like to turn to campaign strategy and such issues now. Martin.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** When you arrived in January 2007, what was your assessment or your view of the security situation?

**MS EMMA SKY:** My assessment was, you know, this is the greatest strategic failure since the foundation of the United States. The country has collapsed. We've got civil wars. Baghdad has been ethnically cleansed. US reputation around the world has been hugely damaged and US military reputation, obviously how it will



survive as an institution after this is, you know, is in a troubling situation.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Did you arrive before or just after the Bush announcement of the surge strategy, and that was on 10th January?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. It was before. I arrived at the beginning of January.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** And in terms of the new strategy, what was your understanding of its genesis and of the input from theatre?

**MS EMMA SKY:** You see, with the surge everybody thinks they did the strategy for the surge. So for us where we were on the ground the President had approved we could have extra forces if we needed them. We knew that was going to come, but for us no thinking had been done on how to bring down the violence, what you would do with those extra forces. There was no advice that we saw telling us that.

So for us, as we see it, our version is we were the ones who designed the strategy for how to bring down the violence in Baghdad. So General Odierno and his small circle, we were the ones -- we believe we were the ones to design the strategy. You hear all these people in Washington saying they designed it. For us they designed -- they did enough to get the policy approved. For us we did the operational piece. So for us it was the analysis.

I mean, when I gave the assessment that I just gave to you, General Odierno's response was, "So what are we going to do about it then? You know, we're not leaving it like this". So it was a very different sort of response, let's say, the UK had. With him it was, "What are we going to do about it?", and so we used to -- we sat and we talked what drove the violence. Why do people use violence? The enemy had been referred to as the enemy or anti-Iraqi forces or anti-coalition forces. I mean, who were

these people and why were they using violence? So having that discussion banning the use of the term FREs, FRL, all these different abbreviations, call them by their names, find out who they are and call them as such was a big shift in the mindset, and that's when a lot of the discussions with Graeme Lamb ...

So once we got a better understanding of what was driving instability in Iraq, framing it in terms of drivers of instability, not enemy, then looking at: what is it we can do to change the situation around? How do we get people to stop using violence? How do we separate the reconcilables from the irreconcilables? How do we bring down this violence? How do we protect the Iraqi people from the violence and not put all efforts going after the bad guys at the expense of the Iraqi people? So a total change round.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** And in terms of risks associated with this, was this something you were able to make an input on?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Yes. I mean, I worked very closely with developing this strategy. So looking again, the previous strategy had been we hand over to the Iraqis and we go. We hand over to the Iraqis and we get out, but within the Iraqi security forces you had death squads. You had an Iraqi government that was seen as sectarian. It wasn't targeting the Shia extremists. It was just going after one group. So you had this sense among the Sunni population that they had no future in Iraq.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** And in the -- you've written in your RUSI piece about the integration of the Sons of Iraq. Can you tell us a little bit about that and what problems that created and what opportunities?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Back in 2006 you could see that within the Sunni community there was this big struggle for power going on between Al Qaeda and Sunni nationalists, foreign fighters with Al Qaeda.

The Sunnis I think by the end of 2006 realised they were losing the civil war. Baghdad had been cleansed hugely, and for them their existence, if you like, in the new Iraq was under threat, and they started to see Iran as a much bigger threat to them than the US.

So one way that they found round this was changing their relationship with the US. It started in Anbar where Al Qaeda had killed some sheiks, and the tribal sheiks had gone to take revenge on Al Qaeda and asked the US and then asked the government for support and said, "Look, we are going to stand up against these guys". By so doing they then became on the same side as the US and the US helped them broker their relations with government.

In Anbar the government found this easier to deal with, because it was far out there. Then it started to spread. It started to come into Abu Ghraib. A guy called Abu Azzam comes forward and says, "Look, hey, I want to turn and fight Al Qaeda", and Abu Ghraib is right on the -- it's like the door, if you like, the door to Baghdad. So the government is much, much more nervous of these people who one day are Al Qaeda and the next day take off the patch, put on another patch and say, "Now we are Sa'hwa, Sons of Iraq".

So we worked very hard to get the government to come with us and meet these guys and get a sense of who they are. Sa'hwa then spread from Abu Ghraib into Amriya, so right into Baghdad, and we then started going round to other areas and working with the local community and said, "Look, don't you want to set up a Sa'hwa too?"

So the numbers grew to well over 100,000. Every time we went to see the government to talk to them about it it was like, "Well, it's 50,000". "It's 55", "60", "70". They had no idea how big this Sunni army, as they saw it, was going to be. They

were very nervous that we were setting up alternative security forces to the Iraqi Security Force.

So one of the ways we tried to deal with this nervousness was say, "Instead of this being an American project, take it over". So we worked jointly how to transfer this programme to the government's programme so that these Sons of Iraq, these Sa'hwa, became integrated within the Iraqi security forces, became local police for their areas, which previously didn't have police, or were integrated into civilian jobs.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Were there long-term problems which you feared or which eventuated as a result of this?

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, yes, partly because these civilian jobs don't exist. How can you bring that quantity of people into the public sector? As a government can they be seen to be giving jobs to bad guys before they give jobs to good guys? Some of the government felt that they were really just trying to infiltrate the security forces and then, you know, turn against. There was a lot of suspicion, but by this stage, you know, all the details of these people, all their biometric details were in the government's hands as well, which meant it was hard for them to revert back to being insurgents. Many have made the transition, but there's a number who haven't made the transition and they hang in limbo. You have Al Qaeda taking revenge on them. You've got some people released from jail going after them now with legal cases, and there are some leaders who have fled the country. So it is a mixed bag.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** You have mentioned and we have heard from General Lamb also about his input into the reconciliation. Were there other HMG initiatives that you know of that played their part?

**MS EMMA SKY:** At the central level, Baghdad level -- sorry -- the

national level that was probably the main initiative. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Local commanders in their areas were given the guidelines of how they can go out and help broker deals to turn insurgent groups. So the guidance was given out.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Can we move on to your 2008 assignment as special advisor to General Petraeus? Can you, first of all, tell us something about the transition from one to the other and then what your role entailed with him?

**MS EMMA SKY:** So 2007, I was there for all of 2007. That was meant to be the surge period, and after that General Odierno was supposed to go and become Vice Chief of Staff of the army. So for me I thought, "This is it. I'm leaving Iraq now", but during this period Admiral Fallon had his sort of issue with that magazine and so stepped down, and all the seats started to change again, and General Petraeus looked like he was going to CENTCOM and they were going to bring back General Odierno.

So there were problems with the Reconciliation Committee, the Iraqi Reconciliation Committee that I'd been working closely with. So Petraeus wanted to get me back anyway -- I was on sort of leave, extended leave. He wanted to get me back anyway to work with the Iraqi Reconciliation Committee, but also I looked at this as coming in a couple of months before Odierno to get the sense of the job before Odierno came back. So I went back in May/June to work for Petraeus.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** At the time you went back were you aware of and were there very clear differences in approach between the American and British approach? We were somehow still pursuing our transition strategy that British and Iraqi control is somehow the goal and the immediate goal.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, the differences really came in 2007, you

know, because we all had the same assessment at the beginning of 2007. The Americans had said, "We are surging" and the Brits said, "We're getting out". So that was the time when you started to see the split coming.

What was difficult I think was the assessment of the situation. So you would have down in Basra they would be saying, "Oh, you know, the situation is so good. That's why we're leaving", and so it just kind of got that narrative that fitted the British withdrawal, which sometimes you wondered, "We don't know because we're not down there, but is that quite right? Is that the way it is?" and there was this mantra, "It's Palermo, not Beirut".

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** While we're on this subject of differing analysis and drivers of instability, I just wonder if I can ask you to go into the analysis of this in just a little more detail, because I know you've written about it in the article that was published in the RUSI magazine in April of 2008.

We have heard from some witnesses that the fundamental cause of instability in Iraq, the reason why the security situation became unmanageable was outside interference by Al Qaeda and by Iran in Iraq, and that these were things that could not have been anticipated.

Is that right, which it was really the critically difficult factor in driving instability was outside interference?

**MS EMMA SKY:** The level and the impact of outside interference changes over time. You can go back and think okay, our policies, our actions in '03/'04 led to a number of different insurgencies. You had before the fall of Saddam there were some foreign fighters that came into Iraq [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Following the fall, you had many more come in.

There were no borders, no control of borders. So you had this whole swathe of foreign fighters who came in.

By 2004 I think Zarqawi then linked himself to Bin Laden, to Al Qaeda. So that was one of the insurgencies<sup>2</sup>.

The other insurgency was a nationalist Sunni insurgency. An other insurgency is the former regime element, who wanted to bring the regime back to power. But you also had a Sadrist insurgency which, when they saw the setting-up of the Governing Council which did not have a seat for Sadrists, they saw their sworn enemy ISCI who they saw as the pawn of the Iranians, you know, and their militias coming into the security forces, then returning to power, they were very suspicious and that caused an insurgency, because they thought they were being cut out of power.

So that's what's caused the different insurgencies. We by trying to build up the state we were in effect taking one side of a civil war, because the state was seen as being the Shia and not just any old Shia, but Islamist Shia, and because these parties were born in Iran or bred in Iran, they were seen to be linked to Iran. So that was a driver in the civil war. Because we had not been like a third party standing at the side, we were building up government: you are either with government or you're the enemy. We had trained and equipped some of the security forces which were doing bad stuff. So we in the way that we had dealt with it had become -- if you like, helped to push the country further into civil war unintentionally.

I think we had to some degree over-emphasised the impact of Al Qaeda, because there were all these different insurgencies. By saying everybody is Al Qaeda, you are undermining the

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<sup>2</sup> Following the hearing the witness added that, "In late 2005, Zarqawi declared all our war against Shia as infidels. The relentless targeting of the Shia population by Al-Qaeda helped drive the country into a civil war".

different insurgencies that are going on. They all had different long-term goals. At one level they wanted to get rid of the occupation, but one group wanted to bring about -- bring back the old regime. Other group wanted, you know, to collapse the state to bring about an Islamic state. Another group wanted to be -- you know, "We want an equal say in power. We don't want to be kicked out of power". Then the Sadrist group again different -- they put them in a separate category, but there were different reasons and different effects.

With the Shia militias obviously Iran has been funding and training them. You know, this is accepted, but what are the conditions inside the country that allow these militias to recruit, to have influence? I mean, it's not just -- external influence has played a part, but there are many factors inside which are going on which suck in, if you like, the foreign influence and allow that foreign influence to have traction.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** You used the term "civil war", which implies essentially something that is internally generated, even if there are external elements supporting it. I mean, is that a correct interpretation of the way you saw it.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, what drives instability in Iraq is the struggle for power. It's a struggle for power and resources and it's not Kurd, Sunni, Shia. It's very simplistic to view this and we viewed it in purely sectarian, ethnic terms since '03. You have within the Kurds PUK and KDP. They had their own civil war. Within the Shia you have huge differences, and it's based on, you know, your ideology, or the Wilat al-Faqih or whether you believe the cleric should have a different -- you know, a non-political role, whether you're merchant class, whether you're rural, whether you are educated or non-educated. You have got all those divisions.



Sunnis had never identified as a community as such. You have the Islamists. You have the tribals. You have the professionals. You have all of these different groups. You have this huge power struggle. You have taken the top off and you have this power struggle going on between all the different communities. Everybody wants a bit and we'd said, "You can have" and "You are bad".

So it was building up a state before you had a mediated solution between the different groups, not that that mediated solution is easy -- but it is inherently -- the conflict in Iraq is inherently a struggle for power and resources. The different groups will go outside to foreign benefactors to help their side, but it's -- it's developing the mechanisms whereby this dispute can take place or this competition for power can take place peacefully rather than violently. That is the challenge.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Thank you very much.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Before returning to Martin Gilbert, I think, Usha, you have a supplementary.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** I do. You very clearly described as to what was happening. Was this understood at the time by those who were trying to deal with the situation or were they having a very simplistic view of it? I mean, you did make reference that, you know, we tended to look at it through the ethnic, sectarian divisions and didn't understand it is part of a struggle. Was it understood at the time?

**MS EMMA SKY:** You know, the way in '03/'04 there was -- we can't call it an insurgency. '06/'07, we can't call it a civil war. I think by any definition, any definition of the term, Iraq was in a civil war. How else can you describe that level of killing of -- you know, Sunnis were being killed with drills through their heads. Shia were having their heads chopped off. You could see

who was killed by a Sunni and who was killed by a Shia on the types of murders that were taking place. You could see a spiral of attacks all the time: blowing up of mosques, chopping off or drilling of heads. You just see this constant cycle.

**BARONESS USHA PRASHAR:** But what I'm asking is: was it understood by the coalition as to what was happening at the time, that this is something --

**MS EMMA SKY:** Well, they won't call it that, because it was politically too difficult to call it that, but people would start to say "the sectarian violence" and the coalition by the beginning of '07, when we were having our discussions on what to do, could understand that government was part of the problem, that we had to stand back a bit and act a bit more like a third party to shape everybody's behaviour. So it became a virtual circle, because we started changing our behaviour. Sunnis start to change their behaviour. Government starts to change its behaviour. Sadrists, the Shia community start to change behaviour. So everyone started to react differently in what became a virtuous circle.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thanks. Martin, back to you.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Can I just turn briefly to the question of MND(South-East) and Basra? First of all, from your perspective, from the Baghdad perspective, how important was success in Basra to the overall campaign, to the overall situation?

**MS EMMA SKY:** You know, at the beginning of 2007 we were so focused on Baghdad. Basra was down there, but hey, you know, this was about Baghdad. The surge, everything, was about Baghdad, because most of the violence was there, and the future of the country would be defined there. So in '07 I don't remember being focused on Basra.

By the time I get back the Charge of the Knights down in Basra has happened, but I am in Baghdad May/June 2008, and I had been working -- I had not only been working with the Sunni Sa'hwa, but I'd been working with the Jayash al Mahdi ceasefire in '07 in a particular area of Baghdad called Jihad.

So I went -- as soon as I got back, Baghdad, where we were in the Green Zone, was under attack from Sadr City. They were trying to draw attention off what had been going on in Basra by attacking the Green Zone out of Sadr City. So Shia politics did become a big issue.

I went back to Jihad. I could see -- you know, the virtuous escalator where you bring everyone out of insurgency into peaceful existence was sort of suddenly going the other way, because when Basra comes under attack, Sadr City comes under attack, they feel their community is coming back under attack, so everyone gets nervous again.

So I started to see more then of -- started to look a bit more into what was going on in the south, but I never spent much time in Basra.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** What coordination was there between the US and the UK in terms of the approach to the Sadrists?

**MS EMMA SKY:** It's different, because with the Sunnis, the US and the Sunnis found a common enemy, if you like. They came together against Al Qaeda. So you can create a narrative and come together on the same side doing this, and the US was negotiating this from a position of strength, real position of strength. "With the surge we are not defeated. We are coming back". So any of the Sunnis who thought, "Hey, we can get rid of the US. They have no political will. They are leaving", the surge, massive psychological effect just by saying, "We are not leaving it like this".

With the Sadrists there was no common goal. There was no like, "Okay. We have joined together". The Sadrists were very clear they wanted occupation out. They viewed the occupation as the root of all the problems. They saw the occupation as the ones who put these Shia aligned with Iran in power, the ones who were excluding them from power, the ones responsible for sectarianism, the ones who were going after Muqtadr Al Sadr for involvement in the killing of Abdul Majid al-Khoie. So they had real anger at the coalition. So it was much harder to find common understanding, much, much harder.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** Thank you very much.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. I think, Lawrence, it's your turn.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Thank you. Just carrying on from Martin in terms of the type of approaches from the UK and the US -- and you've alluded to this already -- the British line by the start of 2003 crudely was in MND (South-East) we had become part of the problem and that therefore we must extract ourselves from the situation.

Was that how you saw things from Baghdad at that time as being the position in MND(South-East)?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, we obviously received the MND(South-East) briefing.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Yes.

**MS EMMA SKY:** For General Odierno he is not going to second guess his commander on the ground. He is not on the ground. So he takes the assessment. What we had found in Baghdad, which you could say yes, the US had been a driver of violence at a particular time, but by the era that we were in, by 2007, the fighting was against each other. It was the internal power struggle. It wasn't us. So they each had more problems with

each other and in their own communities than they had with us. Particularly the Sunnis, they were like, you know, "The Americans in comparison with the Iranians, the Iranians are the problem. The Iranians are never going away. The Americans will go away, but we need the Americans. They will push back the Iranians".

Obviously in Basra it is different, but it's still an internal power struggle. It is not cross-sectarian, it is intra-sectarian that is going on, a struggle for control, a struggle for resources, and it's that battle, you know, that where does insurgency become criminal? It's hard to say one or the other. It's very linked in this power struggle that is going on, and I think many times there was a failure to understand that just because we said, "These people are government forces and we see them as government forces" didn't mean to say that the local population saw them as that.

Particularly you have all those people who fought in the Iran-Iraq war and those militias coming back had been on the Iran side in the Iran-Iraq war. So you have all of this internal stuff that we are never going to understand that was going on. Sadrists splintered all over the place, immature, irresponsible, very hard to do deals with, angry, excluded, no political strategy, so certainly not an easy group, certainly not an easy group to deal with.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** So in the face of all of this the British withdrew. You said that the impact of the surge was a statement that the Americans had not been defeated. Do you think the British gave the opposite impression?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think it has been perceived by some in that way. The Sadrists will claim that they are the ones who won and they pushed out the Brits. I think the Iraqi government will claim that the Brits didn't stand there and fight and at the end when

it came to Charge of the Knights, when Maliki launches his operation to go down, because he has had enough of this challenge to his authority, and he goes down to Basra and he is like, "Oh!", he had over-estimated his own forces, it was the Americans who came down and bailed him out, because the risk of him failing in Basra would have been catastrophic for the country.

So Basra by this stage -- because the security overall had improved, the economy is becoming a bigger issue and Basra is obviously a power house of the economy. So Basra is now really important. It had not been so much on our radar when we were focused on the Al Qaeda threat, but Iraq quickly moves on to the next stage. You have to keep reassessing, and so yes.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** You have indicated why the locals and the Iraqi government may have thought the British had been defeated. What was the American attitude? I mean, did -- you know, because -- we have heard that you characterised from your CPA times the British confidence that we knew how to do this sort of thing from Northern Ireland and so on. Then we find we are not quite in the position we would hope to be in Basra. So the Americans having been told by the Brits, "Follow us and we will show you how to do it" -- you have shown how they learned, how the British took a while to learn as well. How did that affect American perceptions of their British partners?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think, you know, to be perfectly honest the Brits think far more about what do the Americans think of them than the Americans think about them.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** I feel that's true.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Again it is not like the Americans sit around all day talking about, "Gosh! Our allies, the Brits, are they good allies or not good allies?" At the highest level there was always that gratitude to Britain, to Tony Blair for being a good

ally for coming along with the war. So at the highest level you've got that.

There's an understanding that, okay, the political situation in the UK was such that there was no longer the political will to maintain troops in country. So at that level there is that understanding.

When you go down a level and look at the guys sort of mid-level officers who had spent all their time reading the British experiences, American officers reading from the British experiences in all of these places who have learned British history, if you like, more than the Brits themselves by now, because they put so much investment into this, and you will get some -- I think there's been some rub, "You were the guys who said you knew how to do counter-insurgency. So hey, what happened?"

So when the deal is done down in Basra, the analysis by some is the Brits negotiated from a position of weakness, not from a position of strength. That's why their deals didn't work, and so the Brits have got out of Basra, not -- you know, in a way if you look at the US, the surge created the strategic narrative to depart. Surge forces. Violence comes down. At one level you claim success and you leave. Of course, all the causes of conflict still exist in Iraq. It's still this power struggle that's going on. It's not like anything has been resolved, but the strategic narrative for the US military is a positive one due to the surge, the conditions under which the US departed. With the UK it doesn't have that same narrative, and so much more angst even within the British military. We can't afford to leave Afghanistan in the same way, because what impact will that have on the British military, its use in the future, its self-esteem?

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** I think that's very interesting.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Could I ask a supplementary?

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** If you wish, yes.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I do. It's whether it is possible to speculate about Maliki's strategy with Charge of the Knights. Given that he went down with, as we hear, a very unprepared plan, with insufficient or insufficiently robust forces, would there have been in his mind do you suppose a sense he could rely on the US to come in in the South-East behind him, if needed, or even that it was a way of drawing US military forces into the South-East?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I have not heard it was calculated like that.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Nor does he operate like that.

**MS EMMA SKY:** You know, if he wanted US forces there, he would have that conversation. He never had that. I don't recall him ever having that conversation. You know, it was clear the Brits were leaving and the US would assume greater control, but I don't think he went down there and said, "Look, I did it as a ruse to get the US down there". I mean, he could have just said, "Look, I want to do this operation. I need your help to do it", and that would have happened.

So I believe he really --

[REDACTED]

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** I just really have one more question.



You have partly answered it I guess. What you are really saying is that the Americans are running a big operation and the British are there doing what they can and there is gratitude for what the British are doing, but the British worry a lot about what the Americans are thinking. The Americans are not thinking quite in the same way.

So does all of this have a big -- have a serious effect on the UK/US relations or is it perhaps in the American eyes not as important, not so important as really to make much difference either way?

**MS EMMA SKY:** It's difficult to answer, but I think time will tell on this. I mean, again you will hear when General Petraeus speaks, he will always speak with great appreciation of the UK forces. When you look, okay, you have got the US military, the best in the world, but who is second? The British forces are still -- you know, when they operate in Afghanistan, they are operating with none of the caveats of other European nations.

So there's still this sense, of course, the Americans wish the British were bigger and had more resources. There is an appreciation of them, and I think when you have had embeds -- I mean, General Lamb and General Petraeus' relationship was superb. General Lamb, the right person at the right time, managed to get people to see things differently. If he hadn't been there, it might not have gone in the way it had gone. So I think playing that role as embeds, as good allies is a tremendous role, because even if you are from another military and it is a plug-in culture, you are still bringing something which is a bit different, and full credit to the US military to being open to incorporate these differences.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Yes. It is hard to imagine embeds necessarily in the same way. Perhaps an equivalent political

advisor working to a British general might be.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Still we have had as deputy commanders, we have had as planners. When you look at the plan for 2007/2008, I mean, there were Brits who were working on the strategic plan for General Petraeus.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** The final point that I want just to put to you is we heard quite a bit of concerns on the British military side that the scale of the effort will determine the degree of the influence that we have on Americans. What you seem to be saying is actually the individuals were working most closely and their quality, including yourself, that will determine the degree of impact.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think it's probably a bit of both, because obviously I would never have got to Iraq in the first place or done anything if it hadn't been for the coalition. The willingness to show preparedness to commit and when committing the troops is important, but it is not to think that is our effort and we are going to do it better. It it's how to be a good ally, how to work better. They are always going to be more equipped and more resourced. They come from a country that's going to be much more appreciative of what they do. So it's easier in a way, but there are real skills and experiences which Brits have that they can contribute, and whether it's Brit military or Brit civilians, there is an acceptance in the US to accept this.

I mean, years of the BBC have made them still think when they hear the British accent, you know, that Brits are educated and experienced. So there is a willingness to have allies there. It's not easy. A lot of it is based on personal relationships, but I don't think you can say it's this or that.

We still need to have willingness to commit troops, but to

also work fully in headquarters and contribute in all the other areas. You can look at the British Special Forces when they operated in Iraq were very, very well received by the Americans, great reputation for the work they did out there, particularly

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** All sorts of particulars.

**MS EMMA SKY:** All sorts of particulars.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thanks.

**SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN:** Okay. I think on that point thank you very much. It's very helpful.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Rod.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** You talked earlier about the relationships between the military and the civilians when you were in Kirkuk and the way that you were able to join them up there, but which wasn't necessarily happening in other sectors of the CPA.

Rolling the story forward to the period we are now talking about when you are working for General Odierno, General Petraeus, had by this later stage a lesson been learned about the need to join up the military and civilian efforts within the coalition?

**MS EMMA SKY:** It again comes from the top I think and it's the culture that is set, and when you look at the time when you get General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, the absolute commitment of the two of them then permeated down. So you had them having offices in the Republican Palace which were virtually next door to each other, doing a joint campaign plan, bringing teams out that had military and civilians on them. It was very, very good, and I think that relationship between Petraeus and Crocker and later between Odierno and Crocker set a model for it. It's never going to be easy, because you don't have unity of command. You don't have one guy who is in charge of the military reporting to

the civilians, civilians reporting to the military. You don't have that in the US systems. You have this - parallel system, if you like, but if the people on the ground decide to make it work, then it can work. They manage their masters back in Washington.

So by the time we had that combination between Petraeus and Crocker we were getting there, and to look at -- you know, in the joint campaign plan we looked at politics as the leading line there, not security but politics, and so you saw everything the commanders on the ground were doing. Their roles were highly political in managing tensions, protecting people, working out who the good are, who are irreconcilable. So that -- there wasn't competition, "This is our place. This is your place". There was a real development of a common approach.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** What from where you sat, if anything, were you able to perceive of the way that the British, who also had parallel civilian and military chains of command down in MND(South-East), succeeded or failed in joining the two together or coordinating them in the way that Petraeus and Crocker did?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think, you know, when you look at the comprehensive approach, the British comprehensive approach, the theory looks great, but the reality is you get the competitions of Whitehall transferred into country. So you end up with these three equal competing parts. In the US system the war was won by defence. No one doubts that. Defence got all the resources. You know, look at General Petraeus. He has a PhD from Princeton in International Relations. No one is going to question his intellect or knowledge of diplomacy. So you didn't have the same clarity on the UK side.

So you still have, "This is the role of DFID. This is the role of the military. This is Foreign Office". If the military says, "Okay. We're leaving", but the Foreign Office are saying,

"No, we're staying" -- so you don't have DFID giving the military the resources to do counter-insurgency in the same way as the US can. So -- and you can see with the PRT not quite knowing who it reported to this was unresolved.

So it sometimes felt like dealing with three different countries rather than one country. So I think that the comprehensive approach or the 3D approach, whatever you want to call it, the actual implementation of that certainly has meant I think that not all the British resources are having the impact they could have, because it's not aligned necessarily how it could be.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Sorry, Rod. Can I ...

Is that disjunction also apparent in the British presence in Baghdad after the CPA era as between embassy and Deputy Commander of the Multi National Forces?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I mean, this reflection was really on what I saw in, let's say, 2007. The CPA, you know, it was all over the place, but then it was certainly a sense that there would be different messages and certainly with the -- you know, the British forces looking with envy at the US forces and the tools they had to do counter-insurgency, and the British military not feeling they had the same tools.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Uh-huh. Thanks.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Then you could even look at rules of engagement and interpretation of rules of engagement of the political impact.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Going into a more granular level, General Petraeus set up some civil/military fusion cells in areas such as the rule of law and health and energy. Were you involved in that activity at all? Are there any lessons to be drawn from that?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I wasn't so much involved in them. I mean, that was just when you got a huge -- I mean, US, you know, it's such a huge machinery, and his efforts were to align the different US pieces in it bringing -- I mean, you've got so much capacity within the military. How do you bring the expertise so the capacity is used in the right way? So that did -- I mean, because it's such large scale, that did serve to make sure all the different US bits were working to the same objective, but I didn't sit in those bits.

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** Thank you.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I think we're coming to the reflections part of this session. The first one I would like to ask you about is whether there is a contrast between the relationships between the UK and the US within the coalition in the CPA era when we were joint occupying powers in international law, if not in weight and scale, and later when that role had changed for both the US and the UK and the sovereign Iraqi Government.

Did the much smaller scale of the UK contribution then mean our influence was diminished or diminished even further than it had been in the earlier time? I am looking at influence in terms of strategic policy-making.

**MS EMMA SKY:** In '03/'04 the Brits were co-located with the Americans in the palace and so there was every opportunity to be involved in all of those discussions, to be there influencing the policy. There was one policy I think. I don't think people thought there was a separate policy.

Afterwards not co-located, so it depended a lot on personal relations, on maintaining that level of influence and that -- some of that is up to individuals and some of that is structural. The Americans always laugh because the Brits always go on holiday every six weeks. The Americans take fifteen days' holiday

a year. So you have got some practical differences, but also then it becomes what are the Brits bringing to the table. When you are coalition, you are all in it together. When you are separate, how does Britain influence the overall US strategy? How do you make the European countries influence the US strategy? How do you get a common Western strategy?

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. I suppose one other question which, because this Inquiry operates with the advantage of hindsight, if it is an advantage, but essentially looking for lessons, with hindsight is it possible to speculate whether, for example, the reconciliation process could have been introduced earlier? Could there have been more foresight in the need for such a thing, or was it determined by the gradual learning that the coalition forces underwent over the period from '03 onwards?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I don't believe there has been real reconciliation in Iraq yet. I think we have ceasefires. So what drove particular groups to ceasefires? Some could argue that the Sunni community need to go through this traumatic experience of, you know, having Sunnis as leaders in power to not having Sunnis as leaders in power. They had to come to terms with that, and so you might say it was inevitable that there was going to be some level of violence. Some will argue that the only thing that brought the Sunnis to the table was when they realised that they had lost the civil war. If they thought they would win, they would continue. Likewise with the Sadrists. If they thought they could win and overthrow the government and get rid of the coalition, they would have continued. What forced them was -- well, I explained with the Sunnis, but with the Sadrists, once the Sunnis had stopped -- once Al Qaeda had stopped doing these attacks on the Shia community, the Shia population became less tolerant of having Shia militias running petrol stations,

collecting taxes, running their own Sharia courts. They became less tolerant of that. So they no longer had sanctuary among the population. The coalition and Iraqis were targeting them. It forced them to -- eventually Muqtadr Al Sadr to freeze and later after the Charge of the Knights to disband his group. He was forced into it.

So it's not like the different groups have come together, and we tend to or the US might try to take credit for, you know, "We brought the violence to an end", but the US was a player that helped shape an environment, change a psychology that other groups then took different choices, but it was these groups that made the choice to end the civil war through their own reasons. We could have put less people outside the process in the first place. Our actions did put these people outside. So we could have done that differently.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** One of the general questions which this Inquiry has to look at is the level of awareness, knowledge of Iraqi society, the condition of things at the time of the invasion. Given the extraordinary granularity of Iraqi society and given the extraordinary dynamic of events as they unfolded right across the country at different times in different places, was there the possibility of knowing more and doing it better from the start of the invasion or really was there an inevitable process of acquisition of understanding and learning that had to be gone through by the coalition?

**MS EMMA SKY:** There were always things that we could have done differently obviously and there were things we probably could have done worse. I think the impact of the Iran-Iraq war, the invasion of Kuwait, that war, sanctions, we didn't understand the impact that this had all had on this society, a huge, huge, huge impact. Look at the Iran-Iraq war. How many people had died?



Most of those would have been Shia foot soldiers fighting Shia Iran.

You can look at the 1991 war and that war in which we killed -- I don't know how many people that we killed, but when they heard President Bush say, "Rise up and overthrow Saddam" and those people rose up and no one came to help them and they were massacred.

You then look at sanctions and the impact of sanctions driving so many people to either flee the country, the educated, the talented people to flee, and just to erode their institutions, really, really erode them. You know, you look at -- you meet Iraqis who will talk to you about the '70s and it's a country you don't even see how is it possible, because you can't see it's there.

It's a society that was pushed backwards. It is the impact of sanctions on the education system, on the health system. An estimated half a million children died from this. It was huge. How corruption was introduced through the institutions. They didn't suffer from corruption, so they tell me, really before this period. It had a huge impact.

So what do we think about how people would greet us, given our responsibility for some of those policies?

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** And that was knowable up to a point?

**MS EMMA SKY:** That was knowable. I didn't know it then, but I've learned it since, what their institutions would be like.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Question: was that knowable? We have accounts from various witnesses of the shock and surprise at the broken-down nature not only of the physical infrastructure but of the social and governmental institutions.

**MS EMMA SKY:** More was knowable. I mean, I remember saying to Iraqis, "How could we be expected to know you were going to go

mass looting after the fall of the regime?" They said, "Haven't you read our history? It is what we do every time the regime falls. We go out and we loot. It's kind of what we do. We take revenge on the state".

I mean, you can look at other countries when you take off the top of a totalitarian regime what impact will it have. So there was more knowledge we could have had. I don't think anybody's imagination could have led them to understand Iraq. I mean, there is no literature. There is no Iraqis who could tell you what was going to happen. The exiles were so disconnected from Iraq. Particular people go into exile and they have particular experiences. They are not reflective, and bringing this bunch of exiles back into a county and saying, "These are your new leaders" ...

So these things we could have done differently, but I don't think it was kind of, "Look, there is a right path and there is a wrong path and we took the wrong path". I don't think it's simple like that.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Last chance to look backwards before I ask you about how one should look to the future or indeed to the calculus of the whole period in question, but any other key opportunities that were well taken or badly missed or things that could have been done? You have covered quite a lot of that ground.

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think the bigger thing in terms of the bigger strategy, bigger policy was, you know, Israel/Palestine, because you can question why we went in. You can question all of that, but to show the sincerity, it really show, "Okay. We are trying to shape the new Middle East", people there, people in the region, it matters to them, and you can't just disconnect these issues. If we are sincere about really wanting to bring democratic systems, to bring freedoms, we have to have a much

more coherent policy that will stand up to scrutiny.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I'm going to ask my colleagues if they have any final calls for reflection before I turn to my final one, which is about how things are going to look in the future. Martin?

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT:** No.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Roderic?

**SIR RODERIC LYNE:** No.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Well, we saw the election in March last year and the formation of a government or the beginnings of the formation of a government while this committee was visiting a few weeks ago.

Is that indicative of the fragility of the political future in the near to medium term for Iraq or is that just how things go in that kind of place?

**MS EMMA SKY:** General Petraeus refers to it as "Iraqracy". It has its own uniqueness. It was a very, very good election event, and we saw with the provincial elections, we saw with the national elections all of these people who had been involved in the insurgency, all of these groups we had been dealing with all came in. So that wonderful sense of saying, "Okay. Great. People are going to try politics rather than violence to achieve their objectives", but it is not politics that -- you know, it is so dirty. The rules are not agreed yet.

You know, we have competition for power in our own countries, but we agree the rules. We understand we all abide by these rules, and if you don't abide by the rules, then there's some legal process, but in Iraq those rules -- the rules of the game aren't clear. They are contested. The constitution is contested, and the vision for the state isn't clear. You don't

have people who subscribe to the same vision.

So you've got elections in this sort of environment. Through the elections -- a good election event -- Iraqiyya wins by two seats and no one can believe this result. Everyone thinks this is amazing. The Prime Minister obviously is suspicious of the result and believes there has been fraud, and so demands a recount. De-Ba'athification is used to try to take away votes and the international community had to do an awful lot to make sure that those results stood. Will the international community be there in the future?

The political leaders were absolutely adamant that now was the time to get rid of the Prime Minister, Maliki. "Yes. We all agree we don't want him, but most of us agree it can't be Allawi either". So you end up with okay, they can all say what they don't want, but there's no consensus on what they do want.

Some might argue it was foreign intervention that created this impasse. In the ultimate argument it is foreign intervention that helped bring about a result, certainly when you had Iran supporting Prime Minister Maliki to remain as Prime Minister and the Americans basically having the same, but it was the Iranians who pressurised the Sadrists to agree to Maliki that gave him -- made it inevitable that he would become Prime Minister. Then people say, "Oh, look, the Iranians are so influential America couldn't even get the Kurds to give up the Presidency". So Iraqis always see this battle going on between America and Iran, America and Iran. Of course there is a certain level, but in people's minds this becomes a big issue.

So you haven't got real reconciliation yet. You don't have agreement on the rules of the game. You could say that through our endeavours, through our counter-insurgency approach what we tend to do is build up the power and push down the opposition. So you build up the power of a leader to maintain himself through

strong security forces and not necessarily through the consent of the politicians or the consent of the people. Yes, he got the most personal votes, but that was still only 20% of people voted for him. So some people will argue, "Look, you are just putting stability before democracy. This hasn't created the right framework and the right institutions whereby this competition for power can take place peacefully. All it's done is, you know, you've changed the old order, but the new Iraq is beginning to look a bit like the old Iraq but with different people in charge", and this is the challenge with Iraq. You don't know which way it is going to go. There's that current that pulls it back and there's that new opportunity for a different future.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** I'd like to abstain from asking you the question, "What's going to happen next?", because you have already pre-empted it elegantly.

Any other final reflections you'd like to offer us?

**MS EMMA SKY:** I think after Iraq, after Afghanistan there's going to be this sense of, "Gosh! Mustn't go there again. Mustn't do that again". I think it's important that people stop and reflect. It's not about whether you should intervene or not intervene, but it's how we go about this. It's important that people do understand threats, risks and how to approach them.

So I think there's going to be this sort of, "Oh, it's all our own fault", this sort of whipping that will go on, and ignoring of the threat, and I think we're facing the world in which there are different threats and there is different pressures, and we need to look at how we respond.

So whether we use -- I don't think we'll be sending big armoured brigades overseas again in the same way, but there will still be a need for smaller, cleverer, smarter, less visible interventions. There will still be a big need of using aid,

political diplomacy.

Iraq isn't finished. The legacy which way Iraq goes isn't yet clear. So it needs continued international engagement to help it build those institutions, to help train individuals. We have the brightest and best of Iraqis came to the UK over the years. We have a wonderful Iraqi diaspora here. How can they have the opportunities to contribute back to Iraq?

So we mustn't just say, "Finish. Mustn't go there. Cut off. Disengage". I think there is still much that needs to be done to help Iraq using soft power, opportunities for education, opportunities for exchange, and much that we can do in the rest of the world.

There are learnings from Iraq and Afghanistan, and they are not all negative.

**SIR JOHN CHILCOT:** Thank you. I think this has been an exceptional evidence session, analytically penetrating, very illuminating and stimulating too. We are all very grateful to you. Thank you.

**MS EMMA SKY:** Thank you.

**(Hearing concluded)**